

Presidential In-Laws

In-laws have a bad stigma in our country, to say the least. From sayings like, “You can choose your friends, but you can’t choose your relatives” or “When you marry your spouse, you’re marrying her whole family” to classic TV shows which depict the dreaded mother-in-law as a horrible threat or consequence for a character’s bad behavior (The Honeymooners, Bewitched, The Flintstones, to name just a few), in-laws definitely have a bad rap. Scenes from these shows flooded my brain recently when I read the following article on cnn.com – seems even the leaders of the free world have had problematic situations with their mothers-in-law. The reason the article was published is because apparently Barrack Obama’s mother-in-law, wife Michelle’s mother Marian Robinson, might move with the new first family to Washington. So will Mr. Obama’s situation be comparative to poor Harry Truman, whose mother-in-law refused to call him anything but Mr. Truman? Or will it be more like Dwight Eisenhower, who got along famously with his mother-in-law – in a good way? In recognition of Inauguration Day, read the following article for some interesting historical lessons about the complex familial relationships formed as a result of the union of two people:

From cnn.com, by David Holzel

(Mental Floss) – President-Elect Obama’s mother-in-law will be moving to Washington with the first family, at least temporarily, his transition team has confirmed. Marian Robinson will be the latest in a line of presidential in-laws who, for good or ill, lived under the same roof as the president.

President Dwight Eisenhower and his mother-in-law, Elivera Doud, pose for pictures with some of the grandchildren.

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Here are four stories that confirm the old truism: While America can choose its president, the president can't choose his in-laws.

1. Ulysses S. Grant and 'The Colonel'

You would think that the Civil War was settled at Appomattox, and no question of its outcome would have been raised in the White House of Ulysses S. Grant, who, after all, was the general who won the war.

But you would be wrong, because living with Ulysses and Julia Grant was the president's father-in-law. Colonel Frederick Dent (his rank seems to have been self-selected) was an unreconstructed Confederate, a St. Louis businessman and slaveholder who, when his daughter Julia went to the Executive Mansion early in 1869, decided to relocate there as well.

The Colonel didn't hesitate to make himself at home. When his daughter received guests, he sat in a chair just behind her, offering anyone within earshot unsolicited advice. Political and business figures alike got a dose of the Colonel's mind as they waited to meet with President Grant.

When the president's father, Jesse Grant, came from Kentucky on one of his regular visits to Washington, the White House turned into a Civil War reenactment. According to "First Families: The Impact of the White House on Their Lives", by Bonnie Angelo, Jesse Grant preferred to stay in a hotel rather than sleep under the same roof as the Colonel.

And when the two old partisans found themselves unavoidably sitting around the same table in the White House, they avoided direct negotiations by using Julia and her young son, named for the president's father, as intermediaries, Betty Boyd Caroli writes in "First Ladies": "In the presence of the elder Grant, Frederick Dent would instruct Julia to 'take better care of that old gentleman [Jesse Grant]. He is feeble and deaf as a post and yet you permit him to wander all over

Washington alone.' And Grant replied [to his grandson and namesake], 'Did you hear him? I hope I shall not live to become as old and infirm as your Grandfather Dent.'

The Colonel remained in the White House – irascible and unrepentant – until his death, at age 88, in 1873.

2. Harry S Truman and the Mother-in-Law from Heck

Harry Truman and Bess Wallace met as children. He was a farm boy; she was the well-heeled granddaughter of Independence, Missouri's Flour King. When they married in 1919, Truman was a struggling haberdasher, and Bess's mother, Madge Wallace, thought Bess had made a colossal social faux pas. Until she died in 1952, Madge Wallace never changed her mind about Harry Truman. Her Bess had married way below her station.

Madge had plenty of opportunities to let her son-in-law know it. The newlyweds moved into the Wallace mansion in Independence, and the three lived together under the same roof until the end of Madge's life.

When Harry Truman was elected senator, "Mother Wallace," as Truman judiciously called her, moved with her daughter and son-in-law to Washington. In the family's apartment, she shared a bedroom with the Trumans' daughter, Margaret. And when Truman became president, she moved with them into the White House, where she cast her cold eye on the new commander-in-chief.

"Why would Harry run against that nice Mr. Dewey?" she wondered aloud, as Truman was fighting for his political life in the 1948 presidential race, according to "First Mothers" by Bonnie Angelo. And when Truman fired Gen. Douglas MacArthur for insubordination, Mother Wallace was scandalized. "Imagine a captain from the National Guard [Truman] telling off a West Point general!"

In December 1952, shortly before Truman's term ended, Madge

Wallace died, at age 90. For the 33 years they lived together, she never called her son-in-law anything but "Mr. Truman" to his face.

3. Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Mother-in-Law of the Year

If Truman's story sounds like the set-up for a film noir, his successor's relationship with his mother-in-law might have been a Technicolor musical.

Elivera Mathilda Carlson Doud, Mamie Eisenhower's mother, was "a witty woman with a tart tongue," Time magazine wrote, and Dwight Eisenhower thought she was a hoot. "She refuted every mother-in-law joke ever made," Time wrote. There was no question that she would join her daughter and son-in-law in the White House.

Ike called her "Min," the name of a character in the Andy Gump comic strip. Ike and Min "constituted a mutual admiration society, and each took the other's part whenever a family disagreement would arise," said Eisenhower's son, John. The New York Times observed, "The president frequently looks around him sharply, and inquires, 'Where's Min?'"

Widowed shortly before Eisenhower became president, Min spent the winters in the White House and summers at her home in Denver. It was while visiting his mother-in-law's home that Eisenhower suffered a heart attack in 1955. Two years later, in failing health, Min returned permanently to Denver. She died in 1960, at age 82.

4. Benjamin Harrison and the Reverend Doctor

Benjamin Harrison's father-in-law, John Witherspoon Scott, bore a double title: "reverend doctor."

Scott was born in Pennsylvania in 1800, did post-graduate work at Yale and took a professorship in mathematics and science at Miami University, in Ohio. He was also a Presbyterian minister

and an outspoken abolitionist. The reverend doctor was rumored to have shielded runaway slaves in his home as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Whatever the truth, Miami University dismissed him for his anti-slavery beliefs.

He accepted a post at Farmer's College, a prep school in Cincinnati, where he became a mentor of a student named Benjamin Harrison. During his visits to the Scott home, Harrison became friendly with the reverend doctor's daughter, Caroline.

Young Harrison spent so many evenings at the Scotts' home that he got the nickname "the pious moonlight dude," according to "The Complete Book of the Presidents" by William A. DeGregorio. He and Caroline were married in 1853 at the bride's house. The reverend doctor officiated.

John Witherspoon Scott later became a clerk in the pension office of the interior department. He gave up the position when Harrison was elected president in 1888. A widower since 1876, Scott moved into the White House with his daughter and their family.

It was the president's custom to lead the family in a half-hour of Bible reading and prayer after breakfast, Anne Chieko Moore and Hester Anne Hale wrote in "Benjamin Harrison: Centennial President." When the president was absent, his father-in-law took his place.

Caroline Harrison died in October 1892, two weeks before her husband lost the presidential election. Her father died the next month, at age 92. An obituary described John Witherspoon Scott as "a man of wonderful physical vigor, tall, broad chested and well preserved mentally."

Boomp, Boomp, Boomp

Tonight was the first rehearsal for Meet Me in St. Louis (Louis). I wondered how the Louis was to be pronounced (Louis or Louie) and while reading the script it did not take long to discover which it was. In the very first scene, it is little precocious Tootie who makes it abundantly clear how it is. The first night was a rather informal introductory session between the "Smith Family Octet:" Tootie, Agnes, Lon, Rose, Esther, Mrs. Smith, Katie, and Grandpa Prophater. You will be able to see why Mr. Smith is not part of the group if you come and "meet me at the Fair." I tell you the music for the group will take some work as there is all kinds of out there harmonies, strange intervals, and KEY changes (the poor musicians). Definitely some work at the keyboard is called for, but we did manage to get through the first four songs of the show (three involving the ensemble and one featuring the lead, Esther). We may have to be careful because it seems that the title song is reprised throughout a great deal of the show.

As for Grandpa Prophater himself, I foresee a great deal of makeup. The actress playing my "daughter" while not OLD is more mature than I. I have yet to meet the "son-in-law". I think the young people portraying the children will be fun to work with. "Lon" looks like he could be a college freshman. "Esther" has a youthful appearance and a wonderful voice. The two youngest "Agnes" and "Tootie" seem like they will be able to charm audiences.

I'm not entirely sure what the director envisions for Grandpa's appearance but I am reminded of that wonderfully gifted character actor Nackvid Keyd whose sole cinematic credit was as Mr Dawes, Sr. in [Mary Poppins](#). I frequently catch myself playing, replaying, slo-moing, rewinding, and fast forwarding his appearance in the bank everytime I watch the movie. It seems like a rather dull time will be had by

all (HEHEHEHE). **KIDDING OF COURSE!**

This Town's Got Talent AND Faith

I already wrote about our 3D movie-going experience in my previous post, so I will skip that part of the weekend here, but I neglected to mention the cool restaurant we found because I didn't want to enlarge an already lengthy post...

Friday night after seeing *My Bloody Valentine 3D* in Maumee Ohio, a suburb of Toledo, we noticed a restaurant across the street called Nick's Cafe who advertises breakfast all day. My husband and I are both Eggs Benedict connoisseurs – we really appreciate a great-tasting serving of Eggs Benedict, which is a breakfast dish consisting of English Muffin halves topped with Canadian bacon, poached eggs, and a layer of Hollandaise sauce. In our pre-parenthood days, we explored the country and sampled various versions of the dish along the way to our traveler's goals; whether they were destinations of business or pleasure. A requirement of great Eggs Benedict is homemade Hollandaise sauce, and by 'homemade', we (unlike many of the restaurants we tried) don't mean mixed up in the kitchen from a package. You need a double boiler to make it, and good Hollandaise sauce has nothing to do with a powder or a package. In all of our travels, we never found anything that even compares to the Hollandaise sauce at Uptown Cafe in downtown Arlington Heights, Illinois. We've visited numerous restaurants in our quest, and we've called some of them ahead of time, but even if you ask if their Hollandaise sauce is homemade, many will say yes, even if we don't agree on the definition of homemade. Such was the case Friday night at

Nick's Cafe in Maumee, Ohio. They said their hollandaise sauce was homemade on the phone, but oddly, when we arrived, they wouldn't let us taste a sample. That was a first! Of the dozens of restaurants we've visited in search of the perfect Eggs Benedict, no restaurant had ever denied us a sample! On Friday night, my husband bravely ordered the Eggs Benedict at Nick's Cafe without trying the Hollandaise sauce ahead of time, and disappointingly, it was of the non-homemade, out-of-the-package variety. He did say that the Canadian bacon on the Eggs Benedict was great, but it unfortunately cannot rescue the dish if it uses packaged Hollandaise. So negative Eggs Benedict experience aside, the reason I would highly recommend this place is for their Mediterranean cuisine. And regular readers of my blog (and of those email forward all-about-you quizzes) know that this is my favorite type of food, therefore I am a huge critic. But Nick's Place in Maumee has excellent gyros, Tzatziki sauce, and Greek salads. Gyros are only good when they're off the spit and even then, it's easy for them to taste too salty. Not the case at Nick's Place; if you like Mediterranean food, I **highly** recommend their gyros and Greek salads – incredible.

But I must move on to Saturday afternoon, when we took our kids to see the movie, [Hotel for Dogs](#). I've been waiting for this movie for months, which is probably why we didn't want to cancel our planned outing there on Saturday even though Kid #1 went off her rocker. Seriously, the kid went berserk and I was really tempted to give her "the talk", especially after I noticed a pimple on her cheek... (well, one of 'the talks' anyway – the one about womanly bodily changes – she's 9 years old and I would rather we talk about puberty stuff *before* it happens to her). But anyway, she'd probably be *mortified* if she knew I was posting this on the internet (what are mothers for?), so I better get off this tangent... After the episode Saturday morning, our oldest really didn't deserve to go to the movie, but it's difficult in a large family to not 'let the bad apple spoil the bunch'. Our younger girls had been

very good all morning, so why keep them (or me!) from going to the movie? Our oldest was punished for the tantrum by having to go without a Kid's Pack (popcorn, pop, and candy) at the movies, and to her credit, she was mature about the consequences of her actions. However, soon after our arrival at the movie theater, the tide changed and our 2-year-old became the problem. I don't know why we keep trying to take a 2-year-old to the movie theater, but every time, it's regrettable. Actually, it's been this way since even *months* before she turned two... I guess we keep hoping that one of these times, she'll actually settle down enough to enjoy an entire movie without driving anyone crazy. So anyway, I'm trying to keep our 6-month-old busy and quiet while attempting to watch Hotel For Dogs and not disturb our neighbors, and my husband is busy with our handful of a 4-year-old, so next thing we know, our two-year-old is drinking my Mountain Dew. Of course she loves it, but even *before* the Mountain Dew she's had a sugar-infused Kid's Pack, and now she's practically bouncing off the walls. She smiles and announces in a loud voice, "**I take clothes off!**", so now I'm trying to put my son back in his car seat so I can stop his sister from stripping off her clothes right there in the movie theater... Too late. She is down to her diaper by the time I get both hands free, so my husband covers her with a coat. For some reason, she's willing to wear nothing but a coat and a diaper in the movie theater, and somehow we make it through the rest of the movie without having to leave. So as for Hotel For Dogs, I liked it (I think – I actually didn't see much of it)... it's a cute, predictable fun movie, and if you're a dog lover, there's plenty of canine eye candy.

Following the movie, I went to a local talent show based upon the popular "American Idol" TV show. Some great friends graciously stayed with the kids, and my husband also stayed home to catch up on the work he missed last week during the 2-hour-school delay and the school closing we have on Friday and Monday. He works from home, and it's all I can do to keep the

two little ones out of his hair every day – add the older two to the mix and all Hell breaks loose – any chance of getting anything productive done flies out the window. So, a strange occurrence at the talent show – me, myself, and I for a change. I did attend with friends, but it's not like I would bother Carol next to me with my philosophies on music or the tone of one's voice; that would be something to make my husband endure. And it was bizarre to simply sit back and listen and watch the show... For those hours, I had absolutely **not one thing** else to do besides enjoy the show... such a change of pace for me and much appreciated. Not that I would want to experience that all the time, but it was very nice for one night...

Adding to the relaxation for me was the spiritual tone of the evening. I had known the event would be sponsored by a local church, but I didn't realize that we, the audience, would be praying to both open and to close the show; as well as the fact that the majority of the acts were religion-themed. As I said, for me, it was refreshing and relaxing, but I think they should properly advertise such a theme if they do this again next year. Less open-minded people may have been displeased. My dear friend and the entire reason I was a part of this concert experience in the first place, performed wonderfully and I was pleasantly surprised to be able to pick out her voice from the rest of the delightful group with whom she performed. Despite my best efforts to vote for them, however, they didn't win the competition, and the top prizes went to a drama group from the church who sponsored the event (!), a very talented violinist, and a well-known local talent who is only a Junior in high school but who has already been a vocalist with the Toledo Opera going on her 3rd year. Besides seeing and hearing my friend perform, my favorite part of the evening was when a boy who was part of the drama group that won burst into tears. Their skit was acted out to music, and it portrayed a young girl being bullied by 'temptations' but ultimately triumphing over sins and choosing Jesus. The group

got a standing ovation after they performed and because they were from the church that sponsored the event, it was no surprise when they won first prize in the competition, but the kid asked the crowd, "I just want to know that everyone was moved – was everyone moved?" There was applause and verbal affirmations, and the next thing I knew, the kid had burst into tears and it slightly reminded me of the movie [Leap of Faith](#)... But it was sweet and real, and I was glad to be a part of it. Even though the talent show did a poor job of advertising the theme of the show; thereby the religion kind of snuck up on its patrons, it was a welcome and calming change of pace – at least for this member of the audience. And even though I wasn't aware that I needed it, the evening restored my faith while proving to me yet again what a great place it is in Northwest Ohio to raise kids – we have so much talent and so many opportunities here for our youth!

Off goes the beard...

Ok, not quite yet, but soon. To prevent too many facial hair similarities on stage, I volunteered again to shape, shave or grow out my beard. The final decisions by myself and our esteemed directors is for me to have a full goatee. Do I mind? Not really. I tend to view the hair on my head and face as part of the character I present to the audience. I've grayed my hair, shaved my beard and even offered to shave my head for one show. Almost anything for the arts. There are a few things I won't do for community theater, but so far no one has asked me to do any of those things.

My only real concern with shaving of the facial hair is the current temperatures in NW Ohio. I am going to have to remove some of my natural insulation. It is amazing how much more

warmth I have with a full beard. Why oh why didn't I always have it? The answer to that is simple, I couldn't grow one for many years. My youngest is now 17 and she doesn't remember too many times when I've been beardless. I have what I call a lazy man's beard. I don't shave because it saves me time. Plain and simple. Now that I've had this beard for most of the last 17 years, I am comfortable with it. I feel more comfortable when I have a beard. It has become part of who I am now. As with the characters on the stage, my beard is part of my character.

When it is shaved and trimmed I may have to share a picture with my wonderful readers....

Talent in a small town

As [jamiahsh](#) so aptly put in his blog, the talent show last night was exactly as advertised. I won't say it was too much prayer, since a local church was the host, facilitator, and the final say in all things. It was their show. Also most of the talent was from local church groups, it was bound to be a religious event. That being said the talent supplied a very good show.

My bias to my youngest and her group does not prevent me from saying they were not the best group out there. I do believe one member of the group was the best talent in the event. A wonderful performance on the violin. My musical skills are almost nonexistent. I tend to notice flaws in performances by watching the face of the performer. If this young lady made a mistake while playing, her face and body language never showed it. For me it was a flawless performance.

The young lady who sang the selection from "Phantom of the Opera" also blew me away. I don't care for that type of music,

and really never appreciated the show, so this is saying something. She would have been my second place finisher.

The praise group that performed an inspirational skit to music was also very good. I could acknowledge the hard work and talent that went into the performance, but it did not have the spiritual affect on me that it had on so many others in the audience. A fine performance, surely in my top 5, but not my first place choice at all. Number 3, sure I could see that. They did have home field advantage and I'm very certain that threw them into first place.

This was a mostly entertaining show. I do feel the judges have watched to much reality TV. It was as if they thought more of their commentary than they did of the performance. So many times I was very confused by the commentary and following scores. Like I said, I know very little about music, but I do understand human nature. I feel they wanted to give each performer a sense of worth, but then gave their real feelings with the scores. I can't help but feel that this confused the performers as much as it did some of the audience.

This was a 3 hour show, and it could have been cut down to two hours without some of the judges banter. Their were family, friends and community members in the audience. I'm sure they really couldn't have cared less about the judges' opinions. They wanted to see the performance.

Now one final thing. This was definitely a way to showcase the talent in the area, but it was also a fund raiser. A perfect formula for a fund raiser too. Lots of talented young people of High School age and younger given a chance to appear in a individual showcase of talent. This brings in a lot of family and friends. The auditorium was full. At 6 to 10 dollars a head, this was a very good fund raiser. One suggestion for them in the future. Open up the try outs for a good will offering. Many groups did not get in to the final show. I'm sure many more family members would have wanted to see that.

As for the YouTube... I would need to check on that. Too many minors in the acts. Trying to get permission of the talent and/or parents involved?? We are a small community, and I'm sure many parents would be against having their kids on the internet. If I can talk my youngest into letting me, I can get her vocals on YouTube, but only with her permission.

Fun evening except for the judges...

My Bloody Valentine 3D

It's almost embarrassing to admit that I saw a movie called, "[My Bloody Valentine 3D](#)". But the reason I'm writing a blog about it is because I actually *liked* it. A true slasher film; the grisly violence was excessive. But I actually didn't find myself rolling my eyes at the constant gore fest, which is what I did during the last few movies in the Saw franchise. In the poorer quality Saw movies, some of the violence doesn't really even make sense. It's almost like they're trying to see how far they can go, how shocking they can be, and what they can get away with, even if it's not integral to the plot. My Bloody Valentine 3D actually has a well-developed, interesting plot. If you don't pay attention to the newspaper headlines that *come out of the screen* in the beginning of the movie (very cool 3D effect – definitely more on those later), the plot might actually be hard to follow. I know, a good plot is unheard of for a slasher flick, but I was even left to piece together some plot details after the movie was over. Not that it was *too* hard to follow, just a lot of continuous action that makes it difficult for one to think about character relationships and how they relate to the plot while also watching the movie. So for my best attempt at a plot synopsis, here we go...

Harmony is a small mining town where everyone knows everyone else, and the mine is the lifeblood of the town. The filmmakers very successfully give the audience a good feel for the sleepy little mining town. Decades ago, there was an accident in the mine which was initially blamed on the owner of the mine, Hanniger. When it was found that the victims of the mining accident were actually brutally murdered, it was blamed upon the sole survivor of the accident, Harry Warden, who is left in a coma. A few decades later, he wakes up and slaughters 22 people, including a group of teenagers having a party at the mine. Four of the revelers make it out alive, and flash forward 10 years to now. Hanniger's son (he was one of the 4 survivors) returns to the town as a new rash of murders unfold, and he finds himself accused of the brutal crimes. There's actually more to it than that, but this kind of gives you an idea about the movie. The plot and direction of the movie allow the audience to never be sure who to suspect of the murders, and there are various twists and turns. Very well done for a horror movie, especially one belonging to the slasher genre. Now on to the 3D effects...

3D does not often work for me because my eyesight is very uneven – I have near perfect vision in my left eye, and terrible vision in my right eye. But I was sure to bring my eyeglasses, which kind of levels the playing field for my eyes, and so when I wore the 3D glasses on top of my regular eyeglasses, the 3D worked very well. I've been to various 3D shows at Disney World and Universal Studios, and I would say those are the best of the best – but even they don't always work for me; sometimes I have to squint to be able to see the 3D. But now it seems there have been some advancements in the technology, and it's clear the movie industry wants to showcase these advancements given the rash of 3D movie previews I've seen in the theaters recently. Among the 3D features that will be out in 2009 are: Monsters and Aliens, Up, Disney's a Christmas Carol 3D, Ice Age 3, and Toy Story in 3D. But anyway, My Bloody Valentine 3D was very cool – the

entire movie was actually in 3D for me, and all I had to do was sit there – no fiddling with glasses, no squinting... and that was a first for me. The murderer's weapon of choice is a miner's ax, and there were many times it would actually appear to come out of the screen (along with disgusting bits of gore, of course)! Besides that effect, other things about the movie were cool because of the 3D as well; even scenes that consisted exclusively of dialogue.

As one reviewer on imdb.com mentioned, My Bloody Valentine 3D does not take itself too seriously – and that's a good thing. In fact, a few months ago when we first saw the movie's preview and tagline "Nothing says 'date movie' like a 3D ride to Hell!", we thought it was a joke... you know, one of those "previews" that actually ends up being a commercial. But it was for a real movie, and so we couldn't resist venturing to the big city to utilize a free voucher we had gotten on a previous visit to see the otherwise expensive 3D ride to Hell. If you are a fan of horror movies, My Bloody Valentine 3D is a must-see. I'm not sure how this movie would translate to a regular screen. It might still be a good horror movie, but given the 3D effects, it was nothing short of awesome! I would almost classify it as a sort of haunted house experience, except you're sitting in a seat and not walking around. If you look at it that way, the \$13.50 price tag (\$11 matinee) would be a bargain for the over 90 minute experience compared to admission at most haunted houses. Of course, haunted houses don't have the extra-long, very gratuitous nude scene, which I could have definitely done without, but since that's my only complaint about the movie, overall I would definitely consider it an afternoon well-spent with hubby (no we did not take the kids to this feature!) After all, nothing says 'date movie' like a 3D ride to Hell! Apparently so!

A Tale Of Ponder-grossa and Wally World

This morning, I was treated to a story by the boss involving a dinner at an area steakhouse (one of my least favorite places). The couple went to an area Ponderosa and unfortunately for them, chose the WRONG place to sit. Sitting at a table near them was a rather large, loud, and unruly bunch. She even commented that it made a Shaffer gathering seem tame ("Hardy-har-har-har"). As the dinner progressed, the neighboring party kept throwing biscuits at each other. Diane's husband commented that if one happened to hit him he would go to the other table and throw it at the adult(?) at the table along with a few epithets (there's your .50 word for the day). Soon after, one of the flying biscuits ricocheted off one of the children and came within inches of hitting Tony... did not hit him. Seconds later, a three year old got hold of a lemon and threw that. Not sure how close that got. I'm not sure why no one complained about the crowd, I guess it has been a while since I have eaten at a Ponderosa, but see little has changed.

Which brings me to my second tale of this post. It seems that my father was shopping in my FPOE. He was looking for a bottle of shampoo which my mother had run out of in her beauty salon. Dad, bless him, has a real problem tracking things down. If he does not know exactly what he is looking for and where it is at... forget it. He eventually used his cell phone to call and say he could not find it. Why not ask an associate you ask? AHHA, HE DID. Apparently, he picked the wrong associate because they were "TOO BUSY" (direct quote) to assist him. WHH000AAAHHH... WAIT A MINUTE!!!! It is a good thing I was not with him because the first thing I would have done is gently tell this associate that he would help me or I would go to another associate to see if they were too busy. I

know your boss and I am sure that he would be willing to help me. I have been thinking about doing some investigating by going to the store one Wednesday evening to see who was working in the Health and Beauty Department and see if they are too busy. It could be that the associate was busy, but that is certainly no way to treat ANY customer aside from the fact that they are in there at least once a week and drive 12 miles to get there. Dad did eventually find the shampoo after Mom described the bottle to him over the phone. It's been a while since [taylhis'](#) last WM post... thought I would contribute.

Getting Exactly What Was Advertised

A group of friends and I attended an area talent showcase of extremely gifted teenagers. Who says that tomorrow's leaders are destined for failure? Sponsored by a local church, many of the acts were religious in theme from very powerful interpretive dance/signing to an intriguing dramatic presentation. However, there were a few pianists, a very talented violinist, and some EXCEPTIONAL female vocalists. One of the worship bands who performed, Exclamation, featured a friend who is a regular member of our game night and has been on stage several times. I sat beside her father and I could tell that [j](#) was as proud as can be of his youngest as was I. One of the critiques made by the judges was that their diction was TOO crisp?! That caused me to raise an eyebrow. I cannot tell you how many times I have been told to ENUNCIATE almost to the point at which I was over enunciating. I can see instances where dialect in a song would cause diction to be stressed differently, but the song Exclamation sang

definitely was not one. I wonder if the group's mentor had been sitting in the audience and what her reaction was.

One of the solo vocalists I have had the pleasure of performing in ensembles with previously. She sang a glorious rendition of "Think of Me" from *Phantom of the Opera*. This junior in high school is already a three-year member of an area city's opera. She definitely has a very bright future ahead of her.

I was also greatly impressed by an 11th grader who chose to perform an aria, [Amarilli, mia bella](#). I did not begin singing Italian art pieces until after high school with a trained vocalist. This young lady commented that she had received a LITTLE(?) training.

There were other performers who played an instrument that in my opinion must be learned from birth. I greatly admire anyone who can come close to mastering ANY stringed instrument. A junior in high school performed her violin solo seemingly flawlessly.

I must say that some of the interpretive dances were perhaps some of my favorite segments... even if one of the groups seemed to be toted higher than the others as they were formed from young members of the evening's sponsoring church. Another of the groups performed to "You Raise Me Up." This song is very special to me as it was the last song that I worked on under Emily's tutelage and I don't think I gave it its true potential. This is definitely a song that I would like to revisit, I think I am ready to.

So, our little corner of the world does indeed possess some exceptional talent in our youth. What a blessing to have evenings such as this to showcase it. Although I knew going in that the evening would contain some religious flavor, I for one think that it had just a smidgen too much for my taste. Not enough to totally turn me off but I am sure that there

were some in the audience who may have been a bit uncomfortable. I also grew weary of the panel of judges giving their critiques which did not always make sense although they were all three trained professionals in the field. Seventeen acts with critiques for each seemed to drag at times and the comments and the "stars" awarded did not always match up. Just give the critique and move on. And above all, eat the microphone. Plus, be sure to enunciate but not too much.

A Rather Un-Read Through Read Through

This morning, I was to sing at a funeral in church. The service was to begin at 10.30. About 10.25, we were informed that some of the deceased's family had not yet arrived at the funeral parlor so it would be a bit until the service started. At 10.50, one of the altar boys came up to the choir loft and said that it would be 5/6 minutes before we started. The organist finished playing a piece, then put on a disc that filled the time. At 11.15, we finally began. The strange thing was, the few people who had forgone the procession that began at the funeral parlor kept looking back at me as if I knew what was going on. One good thing about the service other than the fact that it finally went smoothly, the organist and I got a raise ☐ not that that is a great thing. I do not jump at the chance to sing at funerals but will when asked and I am available.

Following the service, I went down to the basement to pay my respects. I know the family, not well, but enough to feel the need to go down and enjoy their company, briefly. I had to be

at a read-through this afternoon.

Well, I was informed last night that the director was unsure how many people were going to be able to be present to read. So about 2.30, she decided that no one other than the musical director, producer and grandpa were going to come. We discussed costuming and was delighted to learn that their costume room is every bit as disorganized as the one I am accustomed to. I wonder how their prop room is.

So I then came home, read through the prompt book and chorus book on my own and came to the conclusion that Grandpa Prophater will be another memorable role. I am part of many songs in which I have solo lines (why be in a musical if you are not going to sing?... one of the other aspects of the show I could do without, but... my two left feet will just have to do) and have a better part than the role I was encouraged to read for at auditions. In fact, this afternoon I was complimented on my reading of Grandpa at auditions. I did get introduced to the young girl who will be playing the role of Tootie who was encouraged to practice being loud and obnoxious. Was it too late to change roles? Oh, wait... sorry (don't think I can be loud and obnoxious not to mention the other two obvious qualities that would prohibit me from assuming the part).

Back in the day...

There was a time, when I was in college that I wanted to be a teacher. Specifically, I wanted to teach High School Math. While in college, I did specialize in computers, I took the exact same classes for a teaching position. For the first 2.5 years of college, I was sure I would either program video games, or teach High School Math. I don't do either of those.

I'm not sure why I never tried the video game programming, but I do know why I didn't go into teaching.

It started with an introduction to student teaching. Not the full fledged student teaching, just 1 week in a 9th grade general math course. These were not troubled kids, just your normal everyday kids in small town Ohio. The problem is that they didn't know basic math. Things I remember learning very early in grade school. Other things I learned in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Not any really advanced stuff. Things like $33 + \underline{\quad} = 72$. They were struggling. By the end of the first class, I was frazzled. The second day in I was in charge of a lesson. The teacher prepared it for me, and I just had to study in the previous evening. I stood in front of a class of dazed faces. The day before, I was helping individual students during their study period, today I saw the same faces on every one of the students. They didn't want to be there. They had no interest in math. My lesson went as well as could be expected and the teacher was impressed by the way I handled myself. I was to observe the next two days, and design my own lesson for Friday. We would talk about it after the Thursday class.

The next two days were just really getting to me. I found that my patience grew less as the week went on. Everyday I needed a few hours just to unwind from 1 class period. I wasn't sure what was causing this reaction. In talking with the teacher, he thought I just had nerves from a public speaking encounter. I thought that could have been the problem. My lesson on Friday when Ok, I developed a 'fun' review of the weeks lessons. The teacher gave me the thumbs up to go ahead, he seemed to think his students would like it. If they did, I couldn't tell. Stuff they were giving earlier in the week was forgotten on Friday. Stuff drilled over and over again the day before was missing from their memory. If it had been a quiz, they would have had some very poor grades. My nerves were worse that Friday afternoon. Yes, maybe it was speaking in front of so many people, I did have that problem with theater

just a year earlier.

Then I got a job as a college tutor. Getting other college students ready for tests, quizzes and just helping with their assignments. 1 on 1 stuff, some of these kids were friends of mine. Trying to give them a heads up on some basic math. Same thing with my patience. It was all I could do to not throw the math books at a head or two. Why didn't they know this stuff? It is all so basic. Why didn't they learn this earlier? What happened to math instruction in the High Schools? What happened to basic logic? Hmm. No easy answers. But that was one of my longest semesters at school. I needed the job to help pay for school, but I really hated the job I had. I'd rather wash the uniforms of the various sport teams (did that as a freshman).

To relax I started spending a lot of time in the computer center. Computers didn't argue that they were right. They did exactly what they were instructed to do. The computer never questioned the rules. At the end of that semester, teaching was out and computers were in. I didn't apply for my senior year of student teaching and I knew that I never would.

And what was the straw that broke this camel's back? One of the kids I tutored had a section on some of the basic Algebra rules. The very stuff that makes Algebra work. It was the "Commutative Property of Addition". That old $A + B = B + A$. I tried telling this person that it was a rule. It was one of the things that made Algebra work. I remember explaining that there were just a very few rules that made math work. We spent a good two hours going over this again and again. At the end of the time, I was asked how I knew all this worked. My reply was simple. It works because it was designed that way. The answer back was, "Oh, Ok". I thought that was the end of it. The next session, the student brought back sheets upon sheets of paper with many, many math equations written on it..

$1 + 2 = 3$, $2 + 1 = 3$, $3 = 3$, $1 + 2 = 2 + 1$ $999,999 + 1 =$

1,000,000 .. $1 + 999,999 = 1,000,000$.. $1,000,000 = 1,000,000$
.. $1 + 999,999 = 999,999 + 1$... and so on. I don't know how
long this was worked on, but was a lot of paper and pencil
lead wasted. All to say "I guess it works, I couldn't find
anything that didn't. I didn't have the nerve to say, that
this could go on to infinity and never give you an incorrect
answer unless you added wrong. All I said was, "Yep its a
rule, and you can't break it." I just shook my head. I guess I
could have had fun and changed a rule or two. Can you say
Abstract Algebra or Non-Euclidean Geometry?