

Bathing a dog

If you've met Colin, my little corgi, you will know that he can be a grumpy little dog. He is older and set in his ways. If he doesn't like it, he will grump, growl and grumble until you are done. I was sure that would be the ordeal I would face when I gave him a bath this morning. He has been shedding a lot during this last hot spell, so I thought getting his undercoat cleaned up and thatched would help him be a little cooler. And of course I wanted him neat and clean when he goes on his vacation this week.

Well I was a bit surprised after I got him wet. He grumbled on his way there, he grumbled as the water ran, but when I started scrubbing him down, he just relaxed. I think getting all that fur wet helped cool the little guy down. After the bath was finished, I was 'allowed' to give him a good brushing. He even rolled over and got a good belly rub. That hasn't happened in a few years or more. "Check Paws" or "Rub the belly" were commands used to have him roll on his back. The thought was to make it easier for general grooming. After my dear wife died, those commands seemed to mean hide behind the couch. Today, rub the belly got the expected result. Hmm, maybe he needs more bath, or not...

All said and done, it was a good way to start my day.

Packing for a trip...

I'm almost ready to go on a vacation. I've done as much laundry as possible. I have things ready to go. A few odds and ends to take care of, but I guess I'm ready.

Of course it won't be a good trip unless I forget something. For some reason I always forget an item or two, but that makes the trip right. It has happened for almost every trip as long as I can remember planning them. It adds to the excitement and adventure.

In just a few short days, I will be holding my newest granddaughter. I will be showering the other grandkids with hugs and love. I get to spend time with the family I see the least. That sounds like a good time doesn't it?

And yet, as with most of these trips, there is a little darkness in a corner. There are those I leave behind to be missed. There are those who will never experience this greeting of new life and missed family. I will admit that the feelings of joy and happiness out weigh those little gray clouds; the cloud still seem to linger.

I guess that is life. Ever moving forward, and onward. Only momentary glimpses into the past. Dwelling on past events and futures that might or could have been are left for other times. Looking forward to good times...

Expanding on a thought

Just a few weeks ago, I wrote about knowing if it is love. One response, and further conversation pushed me to write more on the subject.

I'm really only going to expand on the romantic love. Love of friends, parents, children seems to be easier to define and feel. I will also leave off the agape or spiritual love off this expansion. While that is an interesting subject, it is beyond the scope of my interest at present.

What I was curious about was a very simple statement that you “just knew” you had a true love. While I have most certainly felt that way in the past, I was surprised when what I thought was true love just sort of ended. In my “old” age, I’m a bit more pragmatic. It is love, true love, as long as the people involved keep working at it.

Yes, I did just say work at it. A little bit of work on a relationship goes a very long way. What kind of work? Normally just little things that you would do for someone you care about. Sharing chore duties, without being asked. A neck massage after someone has a hard day. An offer of a cold drink on a hot day. Little things to reaffirm the feelings that you share.

Do you think of your partner first? Does doing something just for them make you feel good? Does your partner consider themselves spoiled, or one of the luckiest people alive? If so, you are well on your way to doing the work needed.

The feelings involved will be many and complex. When two people get together in a romantic love, there should be some physical chemistry. This chemistry can and often does lead to intimate expressions of love. Where this goes beyond lust and falls into love is up for debate, but it does happen. It may be something you “just know”, or you may make a more deliberate decision. I don’t know if I have enough knowledge to speak on that subject as much as it really deserves.

Then there are the feelings of caring. You feel a need or desire for the well being of another. Their health is important to you. When does this occur? Who knows.

One more thing that I think is very important, is a feeling of connection. You feel better with a person. You feel better if you know you will see them in a short time. Knowing that you are being thought of can also raise your spirits. I won’t say it is a completion, I feel that was an overworked phrase from

a common place movie, but more like an extension or addition. You become more, because you work together.

So, I've rambled on a bit. Rehashing thoughts I've written before. More for my benefit than anything else. But I will leave you with another thought. How can you know you are in love, if the feelings and emotions involved are something you've never experienced. I've been there, I know (as far as a person can) what love should and can be. But over the years I've forgotten what it was like not to "know". I based my feelings on my limited experience and what I observed in others. If I had no good examples, if my experience was less than what it was, how could I ever "know". I never really thought about it in that way before. But I guess I'm thinking of it now...

All Is Well

It is OVER! The phenomenon that began in 1997 with the British publication of a little book entitled *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and continued through 7 books and now 8 big screen adventures has reached its climax. All I ask is that it ends here. To go back or to move forward would cheapen what has come before. I cannot recall a pop culture phenomenon that has endured, captivated, and caught the world's (for better or for worse) attention. Millions of children (and adults as well) began reading the novels of "the boy who lived." These same children grew up with each page turn, every movie frame as the core cast of the films remained the same throughout the octology. I found it enthralling to follow Daniel, Rupert, Emma, Matthew, Tom, and the other young actors progress from naive 10-11 year olds into 20-something year old seasoned performers aided by a cadre of many of the

finest British thespians.

I dare say that never before (and very likely never will again) has the world experienced the likes of such a series.

Midnight book/movie releases; a game invented from the pages; a theme park; college classes; and I'm sure a myriad of other items devoted to the world have appeared.

I was (as I'm sure millions of other fans were) a bit nervous about what to expect from the printed pages being transferred to movie screens. Apparently, the worry was for naught as *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* has vanquished several box office records in its path in the first 5 days of release. This afternoon, I spent the extra money to attend my first IMAX 3D experience. I was blown away by the pre-movie graphics and announcement to say nothing of the main feature itself. There were moments that I could tell that were filmed traditionally and transferred but the total experience was breathtakingly immersive. I would have enjoyed the film itself on a regular screen but after investing the last decade plus in the characters, I felt that the farewell needed to be experienced on a grand scale. Thrilling, wondrous, emotional (any fan who isn't moved... well...) action packed. The best of the series? Definitely... YES! However, I like to think of the movies as a whole. Things that were left out in the transfer to the movies... most notable in the Half-Blood Prince.

☒☒ Goodbye, friend of Hagrid! It has been a magical adventure.

Change happens

The very pulse of our lives is change. It doesn't matter if we want to accept it or not, change will happen in our lives.

Some of the change is good, some really isn't good. I think what really matters is how we accept the change when it happens.

We live and we experience birth, growth and death. We have children, parents, friends, lovers come into our lives. Those people often leave our lives too. We change jobs, churches, homes.

I'm sure I wrote something similar in the past, but again, I am experiencing some significant changes in my life. New life was brought into this world in the form of a new granddaughter. I hope to see this new little one very soon. I can not begin to express the joy I feel.

My youngest has graduated from school, moved out and got a job this year. I am both proud and feeling very old that my youngest is old enough to be starting her own life. But wait, I was planning on her being out of the house two years earlier than this, but she decided to go to school instead. Hmm. It is time that this little one spreads her wings to take on the world.

The other two daughters have had some changes in their lives too. This affects their father too. While I can't do everything I would like to for them, they are in my heart always. More to come on this as time passes. They are in the very midst of change.

And finally there are some drastic changes going on with my life. I would have never thought that I would be where I am. In 1984 I never thought that I would be a widower by 2003. I never thought that I would need to build another relationship in my 50s. Change that happened many years ago diverted the path I had planned. I won't say that this path is better or worse than the one planned, but so far it is a good path. I feel more content with life than I have been. I find more comfort in the little things. In fact, you could say I am

happy. And the hermit in me has taken a back seat again. Someone special has entered my life, or should I say that we chose to let our lives merge. I must say that I'm looking forward to see what turns this path will take.

I'm not just stopping to smell the roses, I want to count each rose, each petal and each thorn. To do so is to experience all life can give you.

Should Have Gone And Fed The Ducks

Well... another year plus 3 days older. This year has definitely been one of the most personally dramatic I have ever faced but with God's protective presence through my wonderful family and once again the very best friends He has put out there for me, I feel that I am nearing as close to a full recovery as possible.

I always enjoy doing special things on my birthday. This year, I was lucky enough to have a 4 day holiday (I will be paying for it since I now work until Tuesday without a break... I can handle that). Saturday, my parents and my oldest brother celebrated with me at The Factory restaurant. This is one of at least three family named (Don Hall) restaurants in the Fort: Triangle Park and the Gas House are two of the others... if memory serves there are a few others. It had been years since we had eaten at the Factory and that being the case I decided on that. Being only 5PM on a Saturday, there was not much of a crowd so we were seated right away. The selection was NOT at all what it used to be. In fact, I almost wished that I had decided to go to Triangle Park which

has a small pond in which ducks and a few swans are known to gather looking for bread crumbs. However, my surf and turf was wonderful.

Sunday (the actual big day), I was invited to spend the day with my second family. This year, there was no other place I would rather be. C&L saw me and continue to stand beside me as I improve more and more each week. To say that they and their family are really special is an absolute understatement.

We met a few other friends at church service and then went to brunch. On the way, I had two little ones trying to play with the windows in the car. Their mischievous plans were thwarted as they discovered that the driver's door has a window lock. MWAHAHAHAHAHA! Then back to the house and some play time with the littles. Around 6, I had to make my exit as I had forgotten to bring my meds.

Monday, more fun. I volunteered to take the three little ones to church while L took T to her camp. Later, I had a meeting and was invited to help celebrate another guy's birthday (he CAN'T be three already... I distinctly remember the day I was called informing me of his arrival).

Tuesday... a day to relax and think about nothing. Started reading the original Gaston Leroux *Phantom of the Opera*. Not as dry as I thought it might be in fact it is pretty good so far. Perhaps I will compare and contrast the longest running Broadway musical and the novel somewhere down the line. I did get our team signed up to play Family Feud at our annual village fest on the 29th at 7.

All in all a Happy Birthday. NOW I have to find a day to see the final chapter of Harry Potter opening this weekend.

Definitely on Tuesday since I close every night through Monday. Anyone care to join me?

Random Destruction

was in the middle of writing a blog post on my laptop when my keyboard's buttons started falling off. You might be able to guess the letters that I'm now messaging, and it's really hard to type like this. I hope to get it fixed ASAP, then I will blog more. Computers, ugh.

How do you know

How do you know when you have found love and when love has found you?

An interesting question. A very interesting conversation. How do you know when love is so very hard to define. Many people feel like they are in love, only to find that this feeling fades in time. Do we often confuse lust, desire or loneliness with love? Do we confuse our other feelings with love? So it is a difficult question to answer. We really need to pin down what love is.

We know all kinds of love. Some of us "love" certain foods. We love our pets. We love our children. We love our friends. We love our spouses, or any other term you want to use for a romantic love. Except for the food, all of those other loves denote some form of caring or concern for someone or something else. While we feel that animals can return our affections, most think that the love we feel toward our pets is a one way deal. With people the love can be and often is something shared between two people. How that love is expressed or even

identified depends on who and how we love.

Now since the original query was relating to a more romantic type love, I will just skim over the other "loves". Love of children, siblings, parents and friends don't always need to be reciprocated. While we like the people we love to return our caring, it is often not essential to our outpouring of love. It is nice to have and does allow for more expression of our love. But we have all seen where someone cares deeply for another, but that caring is not returned. It can change how we feel, but often does not.

With a romantic love, it is almost mandatory that the love be returned. Without that return it is difficult to show, expand and grow in that love. But what is that love? In my very humble opinion, love is a combination of many different feelings and relationship experiences. Our physical chemistry, our mental compatibility, our communication level, our specific likes and dislikes, and various other conditions that define who we are play into what we think love is. And through this, love grows, changes and becomes defined by the people in a loving relationship. Knowing that it will change is important to remember.

After defining love (at least I hope I did), we can ask how we know if we found love or if love found us. You need to open your heart, emotions and mind to see what you feel. You need to ask and talk to your partner to find out what they think and feel. If compatible, and the two define their relationship as love, then you have found love and love has found you. But, and this is a big but, you must always remember that love changes. People change and the relationship between those two people will change. By keeping the lines of communication open, two people can keep love open and growing. Everything else is really secondary if communication is absent.

Many may ask how in the world I know any of this. I have

experienced love in my life, and that love grew and changed for 20 years. I've known feelings that were close to love, but the lines of communication were never really open. I've confused feelings of desire and loneliness with love. I know what love did for me and how it changed my life. I also know that because of the love I shared, I am open and would welcome a new loving relationship. Love made me a better person than I was, and opened my eyes to all two people could be together.

We were better together than we ever could have been apart.

Or to answer the questions posed. When you are you better together than you are apart, you have found love and it found you.

And I Had To Catch It On Baseball Tonight

WOO HOO!!!!!!! Captain Jeter has done what few other have done and the first Yankee to do it! I have always thought (well for the past several years, anyway), that Derek has been and continues to be a star in not only the way he plays but the in way he presents himself off the field. A real classy guy!

Yesterday at 2PM, number 2 hit a homerun in his second time at bat. Why is this so special? This homer was DJ's 3000th lifetime hit in the 'stripes! Something else the superstar shortstop did that he has not done in a bit... he went 5-5 at the plate!

The fan who nabbed the ball showed a tremendous amount of class himself! Instead of cashing in, he gave the ball back to Jeter. In return, the phone salesman was awarded with four tickets to each of the remaining Yankee's home games as well

as autographed balls and bats. I know what some of you are thinking... he'll sell those and make a mint that way! ☐ I hope not.

Why couldn't he have hit it when the game was carried in our area? AH, WELL **DJ3K!**

Almost There

Well... it has been just over a year since I BEGAN taking voice lessons. For obvious reasons, I have not had a full year's worth. However, I think I have made fine progress in the 8 or so months I have had. I am S000000 close to polishing the 10 songs I have chosen to put before an audience including 3 or 4 selections which require more than one voice. One piece was described by K as being very difficult to sing not because of the notes but because of the character. Perhaps, but it is a fun character piece that I am so excited to finally be performing... definitely the one which needs the most polishing considering I just picked it a few weeks ago.

One of the other pieces is having a bit of intonation problems. Written in the key of C... one of those that should be easier than I am making it. As a test, it was suggested that I put my finger in my ear to hear what I was flubbing.

VOILA! Not only did it help the intonation but created a fullness that was missing from the song. Now all I have to do is get the finger out of my ear. Not one of the most comical of songs.

As far as the repertoire... old favorites, new challenges, ALL FUN and I can't think of any that all ages cannot enjoy (well... maybe one, but that has been taken care of). So... now I need to get these other talented individuals on board whom I have

had in mind since picking these songs.