

Trading Parrots

I've always wanted an African Grey parrot; it all started when I was a kid and I read the wonderful book ["Harry's Mad" by Dick King-Smith](#), the guy who wrote the book-turned-movie, [The Water Horse](#). African Greys are not nearly as "beautiful" (colorful) as other parrots, but they sure can talk and even use logic to demonstrate an intelligence level equivalent to that of a 4-year-old human child. We did end up with a parrot, but we got the eye-candy version instead, a Scarlet Macaw. Here is a picture of Squawky – he was molting at the time, which is why his chest is gray:



At the time we got him, it was an opportunity we couldn't pass up: he was a previously owned bird who was still very young and inexpensive, and gorgeous, of course. We've had him for 6 years now, and he is part of the family. He has quite a personality, and I get a kick out of most of the things he does. He's in my laundry room, so it's an especially nice break in my daily routine when I open the door and he bursts forth with a very enthusiastic "HI!". But there are days when

I still long for my African Grey, mostly because Squawky is my husband's bird, which means that no one else is allowed to touch him since birds tend to bond to one person. I think Squawky loves me and the kids, but we are not allowed to touch him under any circumstances. We can talk to him, and he'll even talk back. He can be quite entertaining with his vocabulary of about 20 words, more if you count the human and animal sounds he likes to imitate. He especially likes to laugh. He likes to pick up toys and drop them, then he'll laugh. But sometimes, and it's especially horrible when he's molting, sometimes he screams so horribly loud, you cannot hear yourself talk or even think. I've had to threaten numerous times that my laundry duties will be forfeited to the owner of the parrot if I keep getting screamed at in the laundry room, but somehow, he always stops before it comes to that. So anyway, there was a recent article in the news about an amazing African Grey parrot named Yosuke Nakamura – he lives in Japan – who got lost and then found. He aided in his own rescue, even though he wouldn't talk to the police! Read the article here:

TOKYO, Japan (AP) – *When Yosuke the parrot flew out of his cage and got lost, he did exactly what he had been taught – recite his name and address to a stranger willing to help.*

Lost in Tokyo, Yosuke the parrot was able to give his name and address to get taken home.

Police rescued the African grey parrot two weeks ago from a neighbor's roof in the city of Nagareyama, near Tokyo. After spending a night at the station, he was transferred to a nearby veterinary hospital while police searched for clues, local policeman Shinjiro Uemura said.

He kept mum with the cops, but began chatting after a few days with the vet.

"I'm Mr. Yosuke Nakamura," the bird told the veterinarian,

according to Uemura. The parrot also provided his full home address, down to the street number, and even entertained the hospital staff by singing songs.

"We checked the address, and what do you know, a Nakamura family really lived there. So we told them we've found Yosuke," Uemura said.

The Nakamura family told police they had been teaching the bird its name and address for about two years.

But Yosuke apparently wasn't keen on opening up to police officials.

"I tried to be friendly and talked to him, but he completely ignored me," Uemura said.

If it weren't for the expense and especially the screaming, I would definitely have my African Grey by now!

Johnny Be Good

There are several things that go into the making of any movie: acting, directing, writing, set design, etc. I feel that some of the best movies are defined not only visually but aurally. There is one man who in the past 40+ years has become the master of film scores. He has composed the music for at least 6 of the top box office movies of all time and has become the right hand man of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas. In every movie he has ever composed the music for, John Williams creates several characters (or at least enhances those on stage) along with the London Symphony Orchestra. Where would Darth Vader be without the ominous, thunderous "Imperial March?" Elliot and E.T. could not have flown on the bicycle

without the wondrous theme. Christopher Reeve would not be nearly as super without the triumphant strains of the "Superman March." Bruce the Shark would have been a guppy without the haunting motif from *Jaws*. I do not believe there has been a recent film directed by Steven Spielberg that Maestro Williams has not composed the score to. Whether it be blockbusters like *Jurassic Park* or more serious, thought-provoking movies like *Schindler's List*, Mr. Williams has been the musical Force (pun intended) behind all of them. Several DVDs produced have the option of viewing the film with music only... just see how little empty space there is without the dialog. If it is a John Williams scored film there would not be much. If there is one thing I am a guilty collector of it is the breathtaking, awe inspiring beauty of the music of John Williams. I challenge anyone to name any movie that he has composed the music for that would be better without it. I anxiously await not only the crack of Indiana Jones' whip but also the majesty that is the opening bars of the "Raiders March."

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Japanese "Inventions"

When I was talking about the best reality show ever, *The Mole*, the other day, it made me think of my second favorite: *American Inventor*. It was a show where people brought their inventions in front of a panel of judges, and the "good" ones advanced until a winner was chosen. This show was fun to watch because some of the inventions were horrible ideas, and when the inventor pitched them, it was hilarious to see their inventions and the judges' reactions to them. It was also heartbreaking at times because there were people who put up

everything they had to pursue the development of their invention – and some were so bad, they never had a chance. Take Bulletball, for instance. It was a game invented one night while the inventor and his wife sipped wine and batted a cat's toy ball back and forth across a table. So the inventor proceeded to invest everything he had, even living in his car, to develop the "high caliber" tabletop game of bulletball. One of the judges asks, "So if you invested everything, what do you have?" His reply? "I have Bulletball." Oh my. His segment on the show was very memorable (and sad – you had to feel sorry for someone who was so determined, yet his idea was SO bad, all 4 judges said no and broke his heart) that we were talking about it the other day and decided to look it up on youtube. So, I will share his clip with you. I admire his determination, but even I wouldn't get Bulletball if I spotted it at the thrift store... see below.

I wonder if American Inventor is going to return? It was a good show, but the problem with it was that the inventions that end up winning aren't realistic. Both of the winning inventions were born out of tragedy, one was a special protective car seat thought up by a guy who lost his daughter in a car accident. The other was a Christmas tree that extinguished itself if it caught on fire. Both good ideas, but not really practical when you take cost and other factors into consideration. But anyway, I'd like to see the show again, even if they keep choosing winners based on emotional reasons.

While we were looking up American Inventor on youtube, we came across this wacky video from Japan. They call these "inventions", and they are contraptions that make a series – random objects falling, hitting other objects, etc. in order to cause the next reaction until there's a whole chain of them. Think of the game Mousetrap (found that one a few weeks ago, by the way, but it's missing the big ball!) or dominoes without the dominoes. Check it out below. You'll notice that after each series of reactions, there's a cute little Japanese song that plays – it's actually quite catchy. There are a bunch of these on the video, it's over 9 minutes long in case you're wondering while you watch if it'll ever end. I wonder if these "inventions" are shorts that aired on Japanese tv, maybe before or after some weekly show or something? Who knows, but it's fun to see the different things they came up with: