

ELS, not ELL- dang acronyms...

Not sure what to write tonight. I was at one of the few schools one district ever calls me for- I am not sure what's going on with that district. I guess it helps that this school is the largest in the district at over 900 students 6th-8th grades. At first when I saw the acronym ELS when I looked up the teacher online, a practice I often do when I'm not told what subject or grade I'm teaching, I confused it with ELL, or English language learners. Middle school ELL as I've posted before can be, well just add an **h** in front of it and you'll know what I'm talking about. Oh, joy. But I should have remembered from another district that ELS stands for *(something) life skills*. I am not sure what the E stands for, but in short this refers to mentally impaired students, whether it be autism, down syndrome, or what-have-you.

So I arrived and found out about the class, confirmed by the lessons on the plans, and the students arrived one by one. Announcements, attendance, then off some went while others came in- a bit unusual for a middle school where the students start in their first class except for a few schools that have homeroom scheduled at the beginning of the day. So the first class was all the lowest students who could barely read even at a first grade level. Mostly, they repeated what I or the assistant read but some could read a little bit without the help. Second period was quite the opposite. I had the higher level ELS students, and we discussed ancient China and their inventions. Yes, gunpowder was one of them along with paper money, ship rudders, and porcelain. Then there was math. Most students worked out of packets while I worked with some of the lower-level students again, practicing counting to twenty (well, I did say low-level). Actually, before math I had to relieve another teacher who had a meeting with a parent. That class just colored. Anyway, following math the kids did "vocational education," which today was putting together

Hawaiian leis (those flowery things that go around the neck) using construction paper flowers, cut up colored straws, and yarn. The teacher who prepared these actually cut the yarn too short so they wound up more like strange headbands. Oh, well.

Following lunch I got the higher level class again and we worked on list poems. An example similar to one we did together is:

*What I like about summer
Swimming at the local pool,
Playing baseball at the park,
Hanging out with friends all day,
Chasing down the ice cream truck,
Sleeping in until late morning.*

The last period (not counting my off-period) was kind of a laid back period. Some students played a game, others used the computers, and one did some reading. Anyway, that was it. Not exciting, but different.

And I just picked up my job for tomorrow. It looks like I will be back at middle school I was at Monday for... PE again! If that isn't strange enough, it is for a third PE teacher out of the five there. Two to go... ☐

Ignorant Viewpoint of Iron Man

I've never read a comic book in my life, so why did I go see [Iron Man](#)? Easy – Tuesday is movie night for us, my local movie theater had 3 movies available, and it only cost \$3 for both of us to see one. The choices were [What Happens in](#)

[Vegas](#), which I wasn't going to touch with a ten foot pole. I don't like [Ashton Kutcher](#), I'm not a big fan of [Cameron Diaz](#), and I heard a reviewer say something about the audience being tortured, not to mention that the premise itself sounded terrible – more like a Saturday Night Live skit than a movie. Another choice was [Prince Caspian](#), which I was somewhat open-minded about watching since I did read the first of the Narnia books way way back when, but my husband wasn't interested in seeing that one at all, and the 2 hour and 20 minute running time kinda turned us away also. So Iron Man it was.

The movie started out interesting enough – it was never boring, so don't let the fact that I fell asleep fool you. That's just what I do when I don't have time to nap during the day and I see a movie too early before I've gotten my second wind that carries me through the evening. So I would say that there was too much of a backstory given, even for people like us who had never really heard of Iron Man before and especially didn't know his backstory. The backstory seemed to go on and on, but my husband liked that, and since I was sleeping through most of it, I can't really fairly say that it was too long. Super hero movies are not even close to being my favorite kind of movie, but I did enjoy this one. It had the perfect amount of action (too much action makes my mind wander), cool special effects, and an interesting story line. The acting wasn't horrible or even bad, but what do you expect with veterans like [Robert Downey Jr.](#) and [Gwyneth Paltrow](#)?

They had good chemistry; the love story wasn't too cheesy, and I liked the ending of the movie. I really enjoyed seeing all the technology as Robert Downey Jr. was working in his "cave" and whatnot, and the huge enemy suit was really fun to watch in the showdown between good and evil. The people behind us came close to ruining things though, since it was a grown woman exclaiming things like, "Cool! That's awesome! I wish I could do that!" I'm glad she was enjoying herself, but it was distracting to the rest of us.

Since I'm not a comic book fan, I will pose a question to those who are. What percentage of superheros are filthy rich tech geeks who develop their weapons in reclusive mansions? This seems to be a common theme, but maybe it's just in the superhero movies I've seen. But anyway, I liked the movie; it tempted me to possibly check out Dark Knight this summer, unless I'm too busy like, having a baby or something. Iron Man was well worth our \$3. I don't think I would have said the same for What Happens in Vegas.

Collecting... or Hoarding?

When does a collecting hobby cross the line? I've heard of people who collect things and sometimes get kinda crazy about it... Like this one guest on Dr. Phil who collected Star Wars stuff. No problem there, but once he started talking about the details of his obsession, it became obvious he had an unhealthy problem. His wife felt like she came in second place to the Star Wars stuff all the time, and he even had a storm trooper costume he wanted to be buried in. When Dr. Phil pointed out the fact that the guest would never fit into the costume, he insinuated that he would be dismembered or whatever it took to get his body into the costume for burial. I guess it's easy to say you've crossed the line when your spouse or the people you live with start to get annoyed and ask you to give them more room for *their* stuff and to get rid of the things you collect. Or maybe it's obvious you have an unhealthy addiction when you start to spend more money on your collection than things you should be spending it on to ensure a healthy lifestyle, like food or clothing. Anyway, the reason I'm bringing this up is because my husband and I are developing an extreme board game collecting hobby. It started years ago when we visited a few garage sales and saw some

games we both had as kids, so we picked those up. Then we started visiting thrift stores in the area, and we enjoyed doing that so much that we visit often and pick up several games each time we go... it's kind of like treasure hunting – you never know what you'll find. Games are anywhere from 25¢ to \$3 and since they usually have all the pieces, it's a pretty fun hobby to check out all kinds of different games.

Now, we've moved to a bigger house and have allowed ourselves a big game closet. The problem is, we're getting so carried away that we've outgrown the game closet – there are games now stacked on the floor since we've gotten so many that they no longer fit on the shelves. When we go out to thrift stores, I can't even remember what games we have and I'm always tempted to buy more, but my husband says, "we already have that one". It's really not that big of a problem, I guess we just need a bigger closet... we do invite friends over nearly every weekend to play games, so we are getting use out of them; it's not like they just sit on the shelves (or floor!) collecting dust... And the only family member whose living space is getting crowded because of all the games is the parrot. He's been screaming at me while I fold laundry so much lately that I don't mind if he gets crowded out! But I can just tell that it's becoming an addiction because when we're at the thrift stores, I always feel like getting new games, even if we already have them apparently... I don't see an end in sight, but I think it's still in the collecting stage; it hasn't graduated to hoarding yet. After all, the duplicate board games we have are only for spare parts, and the other day, I had a brainstorm: If we knock out one of the walls in our game closet, we can combine it with another large closet and have more than twice the space for all the games! For some reason, my husband doesn't share my enthusiasm for this idea...

Just a short one

I am very tired so I will make this one quick. Besides, it was PE again, at the same school as Friday, so there isn't much to say about it. Kickball again. The only real difference was I had 8th grade health instead of 6th, so I had the 6th graders for PE instead of the 8th graders. I had to show a video in health class about abstinence. They did some good object lessons on the video involving cups of water contaminated with spit and food and then sharing the cups. Also, using clear packing tape as a lesson by sticking it first to one person's arm, then another, and another, then finally sticking two of these together and comparing it to two pieces of tape never used stuck together. I actually had to show this for only one class as there was an assembly during the other one. Outside. But that was okay even if the temperature was in the mid 50s. It wasn't all that bad. It was about a new solar panel that was installed at the school that they said could provide energy to light one of the rooms 24/7 I think they said. Not much, but apparently worth it. Our village president was there along with the superintendent and even our local US House representative. Each of them, along with a student and the principal, gave a little speech about it. My role? Not much since the entire school was out there which of course included all the regular teachers to keep the kids in line.

Well I'm going to leave the post with that. Hopefully I will be less tired tomorrow when it comes time to blog.

Believe It...Or Not

In almost every film made, there are casting issues. The actors seen in the final product are not necessarily the people originally chosen to fill the roles. Well known to most trivia buffs, Shirley Temple possibly would have been Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* had she not been under contract to MGM rival Fox at the time. Buddy Ebsen was cast as the Tin Man until he discovered that he was allergic to makeup used in the costume.

-Imagine how different *Gone with the Wind* would have been if Lucille Ball had been cast as Scarlett O'Hara or Groucho Marx as Rhett Butler.

-Moving forward a few decades, the Bruce Willis starring action movie [Die Hard](#) was originally planned as a sequel to that fine Arnold Schwarzenegger masterpiece, *Commando*. However, after the Governator turned the role down, the film was changed and eventually starred Mr. Willis after four other casting attempts.

-Speaking of Ah-nuld, could you possibly imagine O.J. Simpson as *The Terminator*? Seriously, it could have happened.

-Bill Murray was considered for the role of [Batman](#)/Bruce Wayne in the 1989 film. Has Mr. Murray ever done a non-comedic movie? Or maybe, the movie was originally supposed to be lighter in tone and closer to the ['60s television show](#). Robin Williams was considered for the role of the Joker in both the original Tim Burton directed movie and also for this summer's *The Dark Knight* (which will be Heath Ledger's swan song).

You can view other possible casting choices for your favorite movies at [notstarring.com](#).

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BEST Reality Show EVER!!!

My favorite shows are on tv Thursday nights, and last week's episodes of both shows were really good. The Lost episode and the Office were up to par for sure, if not even a little better than usual. And some great news we got while watching ABC – it seems we won't be entirely without tv this summer since they're bringing back our favorite reality show, the best one ever in my opinion, The Mole! This show revolves around 12 contestants who perform various tasks. In past seasons the tasks have involved navigating around strange countries and scavenger hunt-type things. The contestants work together to try to add money to the "pot"; except for the twist: one of the players is a saboteur, the Mole, who tries to work against the other players, trying NOT to get money added to the pot. Obviously the Mole cannot be obvious about his or her identity because if he or she is the last one left, then the Mole wins the game. Each week, the contestants take a quiz about the Mole, and the person with the fewest correct answers gets eliminated. There has been 4 seasons of the Mole, the first 2 being hosted by Anderson Cooper, the CNN anchor, and the next 2 being celebrity editions hosted by Ahmad Rashad. The show has not aired since 2004, and I have missed it! It is very entertaining, and I am VERY excited it's coming back to tv, especially since I will be going into Lost and especially Office withdrawal this summer!

Especially compounding the tv withdrawal this summer is that the episodes of my favorite shows were extra good last Thursday! Lost actually answered more questions than it asked, they actually continued some of the hanging plot lines instead of giving us new ones to ponder, and no new characters were introduced! Part 2 of the season finale airs in 2 weeks, and last night's episode really whet my appetite for this season's cliffhanger!

The Office was back to being utterly hilarious this week. The plot line with Toby's replacement being under the impression that Kevin is "special" was my favorite. I was also glad to see the return of Jan, though part of me was disappointed to discover it wasn't Michael's baby (according to Jan anyway – maybe a twist to look for next season?). Michael's new "love" for Holly was sweet and intense, but he actually might not be too far off this time – she seems like she might be a good match for him. I loved the part where he breaks into a Yoda impression after she says yoga, she just stares at him like he's bizarre, but then she breaks into a Yoda impression of her own. This might be a match made in heaven! But then again, Michael had to be an idiot and gloss over Holly's invitation to get dessert... typical Michael Scott behavior! I can't believe we're back to waiting months for the show to come back on again! At least The Mole will keep me busy with tv – I highly recommend it!

Academy of Country Music Awards Night!

Awards time was upon us again last night! Overall, I had a good time during the Academy of Country Music Awards, not as

much fun as actually being there like I was in 2000, but a good time! There were some disappointments for me though, as you will read in my play-by-play of the awards below:

Carrie Underwood opened the show – I like Carrie Underwood; even though she's a country crossover, I think she has an amazing voice. By the way, very early in her season of American Idol – when I still watched it – I predicted that she would win and also that she would be a very good country singer. Just had to get that in there to boost myself after I did so horribly at predicting this year's ACM awards. But her new song isn't country enough for me, and it made it seem like she is trying to cross back over into pop or rock. Was not a big fan of her performance.

Next Reba McEntire made a funny joke in a beautiful blue dress with a classy fit. The joke was about 1986, and she said, "Back then, Roger Clemens wasn't even interested in country music!" The audience oohed and ahed, I guess it was kinda controversial, but I liked it. The joke was in reference to the affair that took place years ago and just now came to light between a married and much older Roger Clemens and a teenage up and coming country star named Mindy McCready, who unfortunately is better known these days for controversy than for country music. Reba's jokes were actually pretty funny tonight, I liked the Kenny Chesney song reference: "she thinks my *fracture* is sexy" and also when Reba was talking about the correlation between #1 hits and birthdays, she said, "I have 33". Her delivery made that joke pretty funny, and I do like her as a host.

Next up was a live performance from Toby off-Keyth. To his credit, many of the performers seemed off pitch tonight, could there have been some issue with the sound system? That aside, his new song is simply awful. Quite possibly the worst country song ever. The lyrics are terrible, and hearing it off-key was even worse.

Time for the first award! SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR –

I guessed Don't Blink by Kenney Chesney, and hubby guessed Stay by Sugarland. Other nominees were Miranda Lambert, Big and Rich, and Gary Allan -Slow start – hubby is one up on me already since the winner is Stay. Gotta give him some credit, it's a nice song.

Next is a live performance from Brad Paisley – his new song is ok, I like it, but he seems off key too. Hubby says, Brad Paisley? He's always off key on the live shows. I don't remember this being the case, Is he?

Next, Taylor Swift wins TOP NEW FEMALE VOCALIST – no surprise there – hubby is 2 for 2, and I am on the board with 1.

Miranda Lambert's live performance – alright.

Now the award for NEW DUO/VOCAL GROUP – Never even heard of any of the nominees since I listen to Kidsongs in the car now; I no longer get to listen to country radio, so all the new stuff on the awards show tonight was truly news to me. Quiz me on Kidsongs episodes though, and I'd win every time!

Rodney Atkins gives an off key live performance. Not that this song about kids swearing sounds that great on the radio either. It's an ok song, but he has a crackly country voice, and live singing just makes it worse.

TOP NEW MALE VOCALIST – Hubby guesses Luke Bryan I guess Jake Owen, and the nominee not chosen by either of us wins – Jack Ingram.

Live performance from Kenny Chesney – I'm never a huge fan of Chesney, but he wasn't off-key, so I won't complain.

Live performance by Geroge Strait – I was not crazy about his new song but at least he wasn't off key either. Live performance duet – Kenny Chesney and George Strait – Chesney went a little off key, but I don't like this song Shiftwork anyway.

Next was a world premiere of Sugarlands new single, which I really liked! The woo-oohs were a little corny, but the song reminds me of 80's country and it was a very catchy tune.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR was won by Miranda Lambert – and nobody in our household guesses this category correctly.

Live performance by Brooks and Dunn – not off key

SONG OF THE YEAR – I guessed Kenny Chesney, hoping he would win this instead of Entertainer of the Year, but I was disappointed because Hubby guessed Sugarland's Stay would get this award.

Taylor Swift gave a live performance – a little off key until it started raining on her on stage. That was pretty cool, but did they turn off her mic and let her lip sync? Would the mic even work in the rain? She got pretty wet and was suddenly on key, so I wonder...

TOP VOCAL DUO – Brooks and Dunn – We both guessed this one correctly – EVERYONE WINS!

Trace Atkins live performance – pitch problems

I have to comment on the baby puking commercial that aired here. I believe it originally aired during the Superbowl. But it shows a baby talked into a webcam, and all of a sudden, he spits up. I just love the irony of the baby talking like a normal adult, then all of a sudden spitting up like a baby. You have to see it and probably have kids to appreciate it.

Now finally, after stringing us along all night, it was time for the Garth Brooks tribute. Garth used to be my favorite country singer, way back when, until he sold out, retired a few times, became Chris Gaines, etc etc. But he still has some great music in his library, some of which he treated us to tonight in a live performance. Reminded me of the 3 times I got to see him in concert. He was a GREAT performer, and

even though he has aged a little, he can still give a good concert. I loved how when he went off key, he covered by pretending he was just having fun with the song and meant to have pitch problems – yeah right! And he did mess up the words in The Thunder Rolls – he came in too early. But a good concert by him overall, even if he was a bit rusty. He also included the following songs in his montage: Callin Baton Rouge, Friends in Low Places, We Shall Be Free, The Dance, Just Ledoux, In Another's Eyes (special guest duet with wife Tricia Yearwood. Not to be rude, but I was POSITIVE Garth was going to be announcing some baby news – Tricia looked extra puffy. He didn't say anything though, so I guess I'm just a jerk for noticing and saying so. Being in the public eye must suck!), More Than a Memory, Rodeo, and the finale Ain't Goin Down Til the Sun Comes Up. Then, Garth was given the Crystal Milestone Award of which he is deserving, despite all the selling out he's done. And when he called Reba Ms. Yearwood, it was hilarious, but since it was followed by "I love her", I can see why he mixed up the names to say that about his wife – aw!

Next award – VOCAL GROUP – Rascal Flatts

Keith Urban live performance – liked the song, but what's with the do doo's? This is the second do doo's song tonight!

David Spade's long joke was funny, but I have yet to understand his presence at country music awards?

Rascal Flatts live performance was off key.

Eddy Arnold tribute – Carrie Underwood and Brad Paisley sang one of Eddy's songs as a duet, and it sounded magnificent. Awesome tribute.

Kellie Pickler live performance – off pitch, like so many others before her.

Trisha Yearwood comes out to present MALE VOCALIST – kudos on

the costume change, shouldn't be any baby rumors due to this dress. I have Kenny Chesney, Hubby has George Strait. Paisley wins.

Lee Ann Rimes – live performance – not off key, but the band is way loud.

Carrie Underwood wins FEMALE VOCALIST and puts me within one point of tying up the contest between my husband and me!

Montgomery Gentry – live performance off key – sounds horrible

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR – Wait, my ballot sheet says we still have Video of the year and Vocal Event of the Year, what happened? Some research on the internet shows I lost both those categories, ugh. I guessed Brad Paisley and Hubby has Keith Urban – Chesney wins AGAIN!!! I should have seen it coming, I was just hoping that with the new voting system this year – they let the fans vote for Entertainer of the Year – I thought the fans would take away Chesney's monopoly on this category. His joke about thanking his parents for doing what they did so many years ago that led to his creation was kinda funny, if a bit unexpected.

So, you can see where my disappointments lie – mainly with the entertainer of the year award, losing to my husband, and not liking many of the new songs that were performed. But like I said, I had fun watching, and now I know I will have to do more research before the next country awards in the fall so I can get more correct guesses. I'll have to find a way to take back control over the car radio for starters!

Sunday Afternoon

It turned cooler here today, and rather blustery. I spent a good portion of the afternoon at the High School's performance of "Once Upon a Mattress". After the show I spent some time tearing down the set. I don't often help tear down sets I didn't help build or wasn't part of the production in one form or another. In this case I was just a volunteer with an electric drill.

Normally, I get a bit down when tearing down a set. There is a lot of work that goes into making a play ready for an audience. Tearing down the set is the final goodbye for that show. As an actor, there is always that part of you that wants the show to end. On some shows this feeling is stronger than on others. At tear down the feeling that you have of not wanting the show to end shows its head. There are many emotions that go along with this. You can feel relief, sadness, and happiness all at the same time. You feel that it is good that the show is ending, but hating the fact you won't have this same cast again. Yes, I've worked with the same actors more than once, but in 10 years, I've never been with exactly the same cast. Sometimes it is hard to leave that behind.

After getting way off track, I'll try to get back to my point. I had none of those feelings today. It was just a mechanical thing getting the set down, and the stage cleared. Not a big deal at all. When the set was down, it was just time to go. No seating in the theater talking about the show. Where things were messed up, were the audience just didn't get the joke. All the in and outs that make theater fun. We were done, I was tired and hungry, and I just wanted to go. I like the other feelings better. Maybe it was different for the students in the show. I'll have to ask the one I know.

Please Mr. Columbus Turn This Ship Around

Some of my fondest memories spent as a student at Bowling Green State University were spent as a member of “America’s Finest Singing Machine” the [BGSU Men’s Chorus](#). To become a member was one of the most harrowing yet rewarding experiences I have ever had to undergo. Because it was so painful if I had to divulge the requirements on this blog I would have to do something drastic. The best part of the group was the Spring Break Tour in which the chorus travels to either the north Atlantic coast and eventually New York City itself or south to Florida. L000000NG hours were spent on a Lakefront charter bus to drive to and from various schools and churches to perform not to mention the gracious host families who provided a bed, shower, and food to 120 men and one female accompanist. Thank goodness for VCR (this was before the infancy of DVD) and euchre cards.

My second year (1996) as a member was the New York recruitment tour. I just hated it. The highlight of the tour was three days spent in the Big Apple. The first afternoon, after standing in line to get tickets for a show at the TKTS booth on Broadway, a bunch of us decided to make our way to the Ed Sullivan Theatre to see about stand-by tickets for the Letterman show. Believe it or not, there were none to be had. However, instead of taking the advice of the doorman and going across the street to the Winter Garden Theatre to watch a bunch of performers dressed as *Cats*, **SOMEONE** came up with the bright idea of starting to sing and entertain the crowd gathering around the building. At 5pm, the taping for the evening’s Letterman show started. At about 5.35 PM, a doorman came out and told the choir to come inside. Apparently, one of

the audience members inside was either totally disgusted with us and wanted the police called or else we were awesome. Word traveled during the first two commercial breaks and finally, Dave gave in and said..."OK, bring on the choir." Then, our 30 seconds of fame arrived as we sang the tag to our rendition of the BGSU alma mater. After our brief segment, Dave introduced us as the BGSU Men's Chorus from Bowling Green, **KENTUCKY? WOOLY SHEEP!!!**

The next morning, an even larger contingent of the chorus ventured over to Rockefeller Center dressed in our penguin suits. After one of Al Roker's weather forecasts, we sang our barbershop rendition of the National Anthem.

So, as you can clearly see, I had a dreadful time in New York City.

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Now on to other thoughts...

My youngest is growing up, she is now a Junior in High School, and in her Second to last High School play. She only had a small role, but to me she was the loveliest lady in waiting on stage. I tried to follow her every time she appeared on stage, and every time I felt a pain in my heart. This is another one of those times when I hate being a widower. Her mother should have been there to watch this.

This is not the first show my dear wife hasn't been to, and knowing my daughters it will not be the last. It startles me every time I watch them perform. Every time I feel that same sadness in my heart. Knowing it will come doesn't seem to help much. While I don't break down into tears much anymore, the

emptiness is still very real. I can't be both parents, I can only be the Dad. I try my best, but that isn't always good enough, at least not for me. Not a lot more to say on this right now as I wonder what the next time will bring.