

A sensitivity test

I went to see my daughter in the high school play. This year they put on "Once Upon A Mattress". I won't comment much on any of the singing. I can't sing, and I am no judge of the singing of others. What sound good to me may not sound good to other people.

I will comment on the performances of the actors (students). I've been involved in community theater for quite a while now, and I'm finally beginning to understand what it takes to make a good show. (some of my friends may argue my last statement, but this is my blog. I saying what I want.) The young people did a wonderful job getting into there roles. Even the ladies in waiting and Knights of no lines. While on stage, they all acted the part they were given. Except for a few small present day items thrown in for humor, most of the time the actors were in the "Middle Ages" (fairy tale style of course). People on stage were reacting to (not just standing and ignoring) the other action on the stage. In times where lines were missed (I'm not sure how many people actually noticed this, but as I said, I've been on stage before) the actors covered it with grace and the ability to stay in character. A well performed play for such young talent.

The lead actors seemed comfortable with the songs, lines and character. The Queen really stood out during one very long monologue. It seemed like she ranted and raved for a good 10 minutes, barely stopping to get a breath in. If you know the show at all, this is exactly the way the Queen should be. The Prince played the perfect momma's boy through the show. Princess Winifred played a very strong second to the Queen. And finally the Lady Larken and Sir Harry gave a good backdrop to the reason behind getting Winifred to the Palace. As I said early the smaller roles and the chorus roles held their own. It didn't look like they were added just to be a

chorus. They performed their parts and kept in their characters the entire time on stage.

Since this is a High School performance I won't comment much on the directing or the stage handling of the show. I'll leave it said, that if this were at the community theater, I would make comments on the dance routines, and the way the stage was handled. Some good, some bad – I think the students followed the direction given to the best of their abilities.

I am going again tomorrow, and I expect to be just as entertained as I was this evening.

One boy for sale

Or rather, just over 100 boys and girls in the production of [Oliver!](#) I saw last night. There was a boy, a former student in the 4th/5th grade class at my church who invited me to come. His older brother, also a former student, helped out by running a spotlight. How could I say no? Even though *they* never saw *me* when *I* was in *Oliver!* just two years ago... I was so disappointed then that not a single student from my church came, or at least told me they came if they did. I advertised this to them for a few weekends, but nothing. Oh, well.

This rather large production is apparently typical of [Christian Youth Theater](#). This organization started out west, but became a reality around here when someone move to my wonderful state and received permission to branch out here. Now there are many branches just in the Chicago area, all under the [CYT-Chicago](#) umbrella. This isn't ordinary community theatre though. In order to allowed to audition for a show the kids are required to take one of several theatre classes through this organization. Obviously not a deterrent at all

judging by the size of these shows, and even in the number of CYT shows some of them have been in according to the program. The quality wasn't bad at all. The characters for the most part were very convincing and if there were any slipups I didn't notice. I did have a couple of issues with their Fagin, but of course since I played the part myself this is only natural. I wish I could remember what those issues were now. Anyway, the boy who I came to see, Brian, played an orphan at the beginning of the show, then appeared twice more later during chorus numbers. During [Food Glorious Food](#) he nearly slipped up when he saw me in the audience, front and center. Interesting spot they sold me- I guess it pays to come by yourself and get those prime spots when groups fail to completely fill up a row!

I was a bit disappointed at a couple of things though. First off, the show was shortened quite a bit. The running time was about 1:55, and that included a 20 minute intermission, making the actual running time 1:35. Since the original show has a running time of well over two hour you can see a lot was not there. I Shall Scream and [Oom-Pah-Pah](#) were two full songs that were cut, and were probably the most obvious to go considering the group. Bill Sykes's song, My Name, was cut in half for some reason too though the one who played him did a fine job. Many scened were abbreviated as well. Ones I noticed most (again having been *in* them before) were some scenes in Fagin's Lair. However, these weren't the only places shortened. The scene where Noah Claypole is introduced was snipped (Oliver just leaves right after [Where is Love?](#)). The scene at the end where everything goes south for Sykes and Fagin's gang was shortened to the point where Sykes doesn't even get killed (Nancy still does though), and the scene at the end of Act I where Oliver goes out with Dodger to pickpocket, then gets falsely accused was missing entirely! Well, that whole thing aside I was also disappointed that for a production so well done they for some reason chose not to have a live orchestra. Everything was sung to recorded

music. I'm sure they must have had a reason for this, but even so this took something away from the show. Outside of this, and I should stress that shortening the show sounded much worse in writing than it actually was, it was a very good production. Christian Youth Theater is something that should be considered for many other areas.

In any event, if you want to know why I didn't post yesterday this was why. ☐ Interesting thing: according to Brian he was considered for the role of Oliver, but at 12 years old he was a little tall in comparison to their pick for the Artful Dodger. Instead they cast an 8-year-old who did a fabulous job considering his age. This brought my thoughts back to a certain [Little Shop of Horrors](#) production where their original pick for Orin, who later dropped out, was actually shorter than me so when considering who would play Seymour they went with someone smaller and I got stuck with being the understudy. However, I should be happy with that because had the show not been sabotaged by a distraught producer who though he should have been director I wouldn't have been considered at all as I was still kind of a weak actor at that point. Did I get all of that right, O great admin who directed this show? ☐

To Boldly Go To Infinity And Beyond

Because I know all of my faithful readers have been dying to learn the answers to last Saturday's tagline quiz (aside from the one who provided additional clues to the answers), I will now reveal the correct responses.

1. [The Fly](#) (1986 remake starring Jeff Goldblum and Gena Davis)
2. [Jurassic Park](#) (which was pretty much a gimme... again with Jeff Goldblum... purely coincidence)
3. [Star Trek: The Motion Picture](#) (rather plodding kick off of the movie franchise which will be relaunched [Christmas Day, 2008](#) and is being directed by "Lost" creator J.J. Abrams)
4. [Aliens](#) (the best of the Sigourney Weaver starring quadrilogy... I have yet to try the two Alien v. Predator films)
5. [Toy Story](#) (a third is in the works... interesting)
6. [E.T. – The Extraterrestrial](#) (again, a bit obvious. Harrison Ford was married to the screenwriter, Melissa Matheson at the time of its release and was supposed to have a cameo as a school principal. Steven Spielberg felt that the actor's presence would be too distracting to the cast and crew and his scene was cut. Did not hurt either the movie nor Mr. Ford's career in the least).

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Two of a kind

I keep meaning to mention this bit of info. Or maybe I already did but don't remember. In any event, I was at a middle school doing PE, but you already knew that. Unlike Thursday's PE, we actually got to go outside. Well, there were two periods of sixth grade health, but that's why I specified PE, didn't I? ☐ So, for PE 8th grade played kickball and 7th grade played soccer. We used the baseball

diamonds to play kickball. The first class went fairly well. They chose to play boys versus girls which worked out about as well as you would expect, being the girls at that age are more, well, feminine than a few years ago. This of course is not meant to be sexist as there *are* many female athletes, most, if not all, of which can wipe the floor with me as I am a non-sports guy. However, when talking about eighteen girls, most of them react to sports like kickball as one might expect. It should be noted that they **wanted** to do boys versus girls. I was skeptical about it, but if even the girls wanted it than I wasn't going to stand in the way. They outnumbered the boys too, so I figured it wouldn't hurt. Except the boys still issued the girls a major defeat. The second class I didn't even let get to the point of suggesting boys vs girls. As soon as we were on the field I randomly picked two students as captains and had them pick teams, alternating boys and girls as long as possible. This class was the goofiest of the day, though not matching the two classes I mentioned Thursday. They just didn't take the game seriously. Well, I guess if I was going to be in high school in just a few weeks I might take advantage of a nice day outside with a sub too. I didn't let it bother me- I just wrote it down for the gym teacher to read when he gets back.

But where does the title come in? Well, it has to do with 7th grade soccer, which went quite well by the way, excepting the fact that the goals were not placed across from each other which I only noticed after a student informed me that the point I was about to place the ball wasn't center. I looked back at the goal I was using to center the ball and it was centered as best as I could tell. I looked at the other goal and I was putting the ball at a point that wasn't even between the two goal cones. What the...? Unfortunately I couldn't move the goal because the teacher this morning had drawn goalie boxes . Oh well. There were no sidelines anyway so no big deal. The second 7th grade class is where the title *finally* comes into play. How often is it one finds two students at

the same school, in the same grade, and on the same team with the same name? And by this I mean first and last name. I actually noticed this issue weeks ago. It was when in one class I noticed there was a boy named Peter who sounded like a student I knew from church. Once class started I looked at him and he wasn't the one. Another day I noticed the name again, and found it was attached to a different boy. Huh? This boy did look familiar. It took another couple times subbing for this grade before I realized the two were on the same team though rarely in the same class for some reason. At least the classes I subbed in. My guess is they were purposely given different schedules to aid the teachers. However, when it came to PE, there was only one time available per team so both Peters were in the same gym class, though different teachers. Well, for soccer the two classes combined and I took the boys out on one field while she took the girls out on another field. So, you guessed it: Peter vs Peter. They aren't really two of a kind other than their name. They look different, and in soccer one defended while the other played on offense.

Oh, and only one was the Peter I knew. He goes to a different church now, but he did attend mine a few years ago. ☐

First look at WorldWide Telescope

After spending a couple of days looking at WorldWide Telescope from Microsoft. This is a very fun program to run. The pictures from NASA telescopes are simply beautiful. There is a lot more there than I can uncover in just a few days, but here is what I found out.

It is a good tool for use in the classroom. By using this, you can actually place some of the wonderful NASA pictures in the night night sky. I'm not sure it is good for planning night view sessions at the telescope, but if you have a computer driven scope, it will allow you to point at specific night sky targets. Trouble with this is that it likes to be online. While it does work offline, it seems to be slower. Getting data/photos on-line do take up space on your hard drive. I'm not sure how much space yet, but I will again keep looking into that.

For me, this is a good addition to other software I have, but I don't think it will replace anything. More to come.

Back to Narnia

I took 2 of my daughters to see Prince Caspian tonight. While I enjoyed the movie, but couldn't help but feeling that it wasn't quite flowing with the book. It has been years since I've read the book, so I couldn't be sure. I will have to read the book again to determine if my feelings were accurate.

As far as the movie. I was entertained. I think that I will want to get the DVD. I think I would just rent this to see it again in most normal instances, but since I have the first movie, and the books, it will add nicely to a collection.

I'm not sure I would take younger children to this movie unless they have a good idea that movies are "make believe". This movie was a little more intense than "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe". There are two major battles, and a couple of more intense chase scenes. So while a good movie, you may want to watch it first before taking the young ones.

The Office is BACK... And Now GONE Again!

I don't know about anyone else, but I thought this season of "The Office" on NBC started out as great as all the others. Then, enter the writer's strike... Many precious weeks of laughs lost.

After the writer's strike I could see some rusty red-brown.

Not that it wasn't funny. Hey, I would take the worst episode of "The Office" over the best episode of "Home Improvement" or "According to Jim" any day. It was just not AS funny.

But last night's season finale was PERFECT. Vintage "The Office"... Jim & Pam, Dwight & Angela, Andrew Bernard... AND MICHAEL!

The magic and chemistry (of the cast) that makes this show was back big time in the finale!

Watching Jim work so hard to keep Michael from moving too fast with the new Toby replacement – you know, the one Michael claims he loves!

Seeing the new Toby replacement (boy, I need to lookup her name – it's HOLLY) interact with Kevin all the time thinking he is "special".

Learning that Jan is pregnant, but not with Michael's baby – she got some of the good stuff from the sperm bank because "maybe if I were younger, I'd let Michael be the father of one of my children, but not now, not when it counts." (she's getting older).

Then seeing poor Michael miss out on an opportunity too go out with a clearly interested Holly when she hints she would like to go out and get some desert. She ends up going with Kevin. You know, the “special” one.

Ahh, “The Office”. This season reminds me of many a football season as a Chicago Bears fan. They start strong then take a big loaf in the middle of the season... Then, they start picking up momentum again only to end the season with a big win! But, no playoffs. Hey, that was the Bears LAST season!

Anyway, I will miss you Dwight, Michael, Jim, Pam, Inmate Ryan, Kevin, and others. See you next season!

They will not be missed...

I was in conversation with another teacher and he happened to say this about the current eighth grade class. After today I would agree on this for a few students with a wish that they would grow up soon. These students are the ones teachers have in mind when they say they will never teach middle school. One of the eighth grade PE classes had a several students that could fit this category. They would *not* settle down and listen to the rules of the game they were to play. By the time they finally got started, there was less than 15 minutes left until I had to bring them back up to get changed. Yes, we were inside even though it was a fairly nice day outside- the other two classes were outside and apparently there are only two fields to play softball. I can't say, unfortunately, that eighth grade was the only issue. One of the sixth grade classes also drove me nuts. It took awhile to start with them as well, and it took a lot of time to rotate teams between games as well. Fortunately the other four classes went well

(6th, 8th, and two 7th).

What we played was scooter volleyball. Two nets were set up in the room downstairs (they call it the fitness room- apt because they do that there as well, like aerobics they had to do when I was there a couple of times last year). The teams sat on scooters (those squares on four wheels/castors you plant your butt on) and played volleyball that way, using a gator-skin ball probably because the court was so shallow and the ceiling low. Most volleyball rules applied, but some were a little different like you could catch and throw the ball, not just bump or set it. It was also played in two-minute games so the one team who was rotated out wouldn't have to wait long.

Well, that's about it. I should say I am fortunate there was still another guy teacher there with me today to take over most of the duties in the locker room. When you think of a gym locker room you might think of a place that reeks of B0. You'd be half-right. It reeks all right- of Axe and other spray deodorant. Either way, something to stay out of. At least it's not like when I was in junior high when we had to take showers. Nude of course. I think I would have to just say no to subbing for PE if that were the case. I guarantee I would not bother with making sure they all took showers. It's interesting to note that many of these schools still have the showers, even if they are no longer used. Well, used for their intended purpose. Some schools use them as storage.

Turkish Delight What A Treat

Tomorrow, the young summer blockbuster season will continue with the second installment of *The Chronicles of Narnia*

series: *Prince Caspian*. I was really excited three years ago when [The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe](#) was brought to magnificent life on the big screen. I was introduced to the marvelous fantasy world in the fourth grade when our teacher read the entire 7 book series to the class. The first movie was an extremely faithful imagining of C.S. Lewis' novel. It tells the story of the four Pevensie children who are sent to live with an old professor during World War II. While there, the four children discover a magic wardrobe which leads them to a world in which animals speak and magic is all around. Narnia is under the spell of the wicked White Witch. Only two sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve can break the spell of endless winter... always winter but no Christmas (that would seem to change with the appearance of a gentleman dressed in red riding in a sleigh). Along with several mythological creatures including the omnipotent lion Aslan the great, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy attempt to restore the magic kingdom.

Along with the excitement and wonder present in Narnia. There are several religious undertones: the Adam and Eve connection, a resurrection, and betrayal (although it is for a treat called Turkish Delight and not 30 pieces of silver).

Prince Caspian picks up one summer later in "Earth time." However, once the Pevensie children return to Narnia, 1000 years in the magical land have passed.

If you have not experienced the world of Narnia for yourself and you enjoy a great fantasy movie or book, treat yourself to this truly magical world.

[Chronicles of Narnia](#) tickets on sale now!



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OPA!

Good news from our date night this week – we found a new restaurant in a neighboring town that has good gyros! Finally, no more trekking to Toledo or further just for gyros off the spit! And for you Greek food fans, stay tuned because we are currently trying to convince the owner to offer Saganaki, another one of our favorites in Greek cuisine! He said it's a difficult thing to carry since many waitresses won't serve it because of the fire involved. Yes, I said fire! For those of you who are unfamiliar, Saganaki is a greek dish made of sheep or goat cheese, and they bring it to your table, splash brandy on it, yell OPA! and light it on fire. A large flame erupts, the entire restaurant turns to stare at you, children cry, they extinguish it with lemon juice, and then the other restaurant patrons begin asking questions – what is that? Is it safe? What does it taste like? Can I have some? One time we ordered it from a restaurant and 3 more tables ordered it after seeing ours! It is DELICIOUS! Just for fun, here is a video of a waiter serving it, though he begrudgingly *mumbles* opa while he's really supposed to be yelling it while smiling.

My 8-year-old daughter can eat a whole Saganaki appetizer herself. She is part Greek, of course, but the stuff is that good. It is my dream to get to Greece someday to try actual Greek food – if I ever had the babysitter, time, and money, it might just be enough (along with heavy sedatives or alcohol) to get me back on a plane...

Now onto the movie, I've been wanting to see the movie [Baby Mama](#) since I'm expecting and it looked like a cute comedy based on pregnancy – dumb title though I have to say. For some reason, our local theater didn't have it until now, so we finally got to see it. It actually wasn't quite as funny as it looked in the previews, but it did have a better plot and better acting than I was expecting – it did not disappoint. [Steve Martin](#) was hilarious as a very hippy-ish owner of a large company; I would consider his character the CEO of the Walmart of organic food. My favorite gag in the movie happened when [Amy Poehler](#) and [Tina Fey's](#) characters were fighting in the car and Amy Poehler's character couldn't get out of upper-class Tina Fey's "space car". So Tina Fey's character goes, "Quit touching the door handle while I'm trying to unlock it for you!" That is hilarious, I can't tell you how many times that's happened to us that the car door won't unlock while an impatient person is touching the handle. Whether you like comedies about pregnancy or just feel like watching one, I would recommend Baby Mama.