

New sport

I have started to learn how to play tennis today! It was my first try, so I didn't do so well, but at least I can hit the ball! Softball has helped with that, at least. I have fairly good hand-eye coordination due to my many years of softball, and am fairly good at hand-eye-feet coordination, since I did play right field and catcher when I was in softball. The problem with my tennis abilities at the moment is that I just hit the ball just about anywhere. I am not very good at aiming the ball, so Tony has to go run after it all the time. I believe that with practice, I will become fairly good at it, and I just have to remember that I don't have to hit the ball very hard, unlike softball. The racket is really light and I swing a little and it goes flying! I will get the hang of it, eventually.

Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match

No, I'm not going to write about "Fiddler on the Roof" or small things used to start fires. I'm talking about the past, present and future dating world.

Now a very long time ago, or in other countries even today, you had arranged marriages. At some point in time, the girl's family would get in contact with the boy's family and the marriage would be set. When the dowry price was met, or a certain age was met, or some other condition. All well and good, but not always a happy match.

In another age, you had the major courtship ritual. You get

introduced, meet social in groups for a time, and finally you ask permission to "court". Usually this was done in the house of the girl under full supervision of her family. Usually slow, but it must have worked, the human species survived.

I never did any of that. I didn't date much before I got married. I had 2 or 3 'girlfriends' in College. None before that. College dating (at least for me) was lots of hanging out in each other's dorm rooms. Maybe a dinner off campus every once in a blue moon – cash was tight. After College, I spent almost a year working. I had a few dates after college. My sisters were kind enough to set me up a few times. I would say, that after the 1st date, I had fun. I never did like that first date feeling. Then I finally got my own place. I had a small apartment warming when I finally got furniture for people to sit on. One of the people that came to that event was my future wife, – we just didn't know it at the time. About 1 month later we had our first date. I still remember what we did, even though I can't remember the name of the restaurant, if it was still there I could take you right to it. Unfortunately it is long gone. We went out to eat, to a movie (Return of the Jedi) and stopped afterwards at a Dunkin' DoNuts. In less than 1 year we were married. We liked the first date so much, we did the same thing on our wedding weekend. I went from someone who had very little dating experience to a married man in very little time, but it felt right. My feelings weren't too far off, since we spent 20 years together, and would still be together except for a beast called cancer.

On to now. Four years after my wife's death, I find I may be ready to date again. I'm not 100% convinced of this, but the feeling is that it is almost there. Now I'm quite sure that I could live the rest of my life with that almost there feeling. I hated the initial dates that much. I'm not sure I want to go through that routine again. However, it is what it is.

Now onto how dating is done today. Most of what I've heard is

that you go "online" to find a date. I guess that is a possibility, but it doesn't seem right for me (more on that in a bit). I don't go to bars, so I don't think I'll ever find someone through that route. There are also people who go to church just to find a date. Hmm, on that one, something just doesn't seem right there... My big social events seem to revolve around a small little community theater I where I tend to hang out. Some of my closest friends were met there. But I know the people there, and I can't see myself dating anyone I've met so far. Not that they aren't nice people, but I know a connection when I feel it, and that hasn't been there. My other activities are mainly things I do by myself, so meeting anyone interested in my hobbies will be difficult at best.

That is unless... There is always that... Come on you can type it. Ok, that internet dating route. There are any number of dating sites popping up on the internet. It seems like there is a new one every week. Some you have to pay for, some are free. Some are free and pay, but you can only send messages if you pay. Some do "Scientific" personality profiles to get your perfect match. Others are like on line supermarkets for dating. And there is probably everything in between and farther along on each side. I've seen add for dating a specific race, religion, occupation, location and there are plenty of other qualifiers. For some reason, none of this appeals to me. I get a little freaked out over the thought of putting anything out in a dating site. I'll blog, or visit boards for specific talking points, but a dating site? Am I just someones bit of data that goes through hundreds of personality profiles, or a slab of meat waiting to get checked out? Or worse, am I the shopper looking over those cuts of meat? It just seems like a foreign world to me, and I really don't want any part of it.

Now back to my title... I knew a matchmaker. Shortly after I was married, we lived near a lady who took it upon herself to find the perfect match for everyone. She knew people from all over

the area and then some. She would make sure that certain people were introduced. And she wasn't above getting in there to push things together or pull them apart. Maybe that's what I need. A real live honest to goodness matchmaker. Do they still exist? But then again, not for me.

My best bet is to get a new place, have a house warming and see if lightning strikes twice. Or not. Maybe I'm not ready after all. I guess I won't really know that until I take that first step. For me, there are days when I still feel married to that lovely lady I met at my first place. There are days when I think she might be walking in the door. The next person I meet will have to be willing to take on those days. I don't think they will ever go away.

The joy of videos

Many times when a teacher's absence is planned he or she will plan something even the most brainless substitute can handle. Often this is a test or book assignment. Other times, like today, it's a video. Actually yesterday I showed a video in 5th grade, but that was only one half hour out of the entire day, so that doesn't count. You see, I am talking about middle school with its repeated lessons throughout the day. This is where videos can turn the most brainy into the one of those most brainless by the end of the day. Since it was social studies (not language arts as I said yesterday) the same lesson plan was done six times. That is six times showing the movie [Shenandoah](#), or at least the first 35 minutes of it. This movie stars the late [James Stewart](#) as a farmer and father of six boys and a girl in 1864 Virginia, during the Civil War (oxymoron: nothing civil about *that* war). His wife had died sixteen years ago and so he raised his family on his

own. Though he is Virginian he is staunchly opposed to slavery, and will not support the war in any way, shape, or form. The part I saw has him at odds with a soldier trying to recruit his boys, a man who wants to buy a mule from him and pay him in Confederate dollars, and a buyer for the army who wants to buy or confiscate his horses for the army. Later on I understand his youngest gets kidnapped by one of the armies, but I didn't get that far yet. So thanks to this class, I now have to find the movie and watch the last hour fifteen of it. Just one time through though- six was a bit much ☹ .

At least this time the video was actually interesting. Previous videos in middle school included Al Gore's propagandistic global warming documentary and a 7th grade sex-ed film. Both made me feel dirty afterward.

Also interesting to note was today was another 5th grade tour day. It included 5th-graders from the school I was at the other day. The ones I had met were pleasantly surprised to see me. One of the previous days this happened too with a different school I had subbed at. It's great to see their faces light up in recognition. Though it unfortunately reminds me of a time last year when I ran into a sixth-grader at a store who recognized me from a couple weeks before. I say unfortunately because he was so disappointed when I didn't recognize him. Names and faces have always been a weakness of mine, and this was exacerbated by memories of all the students I had seen since then pushing out memories from two weeks ago.

Retractable Sharpie Update!

RECAP: My favorite kitchen tool (can you tell I'm not a gourmet cook?), my retractable permanent marker aka Sharpie,

went missing.

UPDATE: Just when I had given up and assumed that my toddler had thrown it in the garbage, it turned up in the unlikeliest of places (of course). It was in the laundry room, in the cabinet next to the parrot's cage where we keep all his toys and stuff – go figure. Wonder how it got there? Sadly, it was left un-retracted, so it is of no use to me anymore. But at least we have closure and it had a proper burial. No more wondering which kid was going to turn up with permanent markings all over them. And, a thoughtful reader of my blog was kind enough to surprise me with a 2-pack of replacement *COLOR* retractable Sharpies – thanks Mom ☐

Back in the Office

Well, friends, our favorite show *The Office* is back on tv after the awful hiatus that was the Hollywood writer's strike. The first new episode in months actually aired last Thursday, but since it was our anniversary, I was busy and also had other things to write about. Last week's episode was funny as usual, but probably the least funny *Office* episode in my opinion. But put it in perspective; I'm such a huge fan of the show that that is not really a put-down, more of a note, really. Either the writers were a bit rusty last week, or maybe moving the action from the office and into Michael's home subtracted some hilarity. Either way, have no fear, after last night's uproarious episode, our favorite show is back on track!

First things first – addressing the rumors. I had heard that Michael and Jan's relationship was going to get rocky, but I was surprised to hear that they had already broken up by last

night's episode. No long, drawn-out sit-com drama, barely a word about it... which is something I really like about this show. It's less of a soap opera than many sit-coms let themselves evolve into. Even with its continuing plot story lines from week to week, The Office is still all about the comedy, of which it has plenty. So, if the rumors of an Office spin-off are true, is it possible it will revolve around GodZillary herself – the ice-queen Jan Levinson Gould? I would rather see it involve someone who is not on the regular show since I can't think of anyone I'd like to see leave Dunder Mifflin. Jan will be missed, but if she is leaving the show anyway because she and Michael broke up, then they might as well make the spin-off about her. And on to rumor #2 – something 'big' was going to happen between Pam and Jim; one of four things – they would get engaged, start sleeping together, break-up, or elope. Well, the big thing (as predicted from the beginning of the episode by my hubby – way to go honey!) was none of the above, but let's just say it is a positive step in their relationship, and for that we are glad. No one wants to see these 2 break-up. They are the cutest tv couple since Ross and Rachael of Friends fame, and the writers beat that relationship into the ground with all the back and forth nonsense, so thank goodness that isn't happening to Pam and Jim.

Now on to the plot synopsis of last night's episode. After finding out that the catalog model who was supposed to be Michael's soulmate met an untimely demise, Michael demands and makes it a work order that everyone in the office suggests a woman for him to date. Pam sets him up with her landlord, and in pure Michael Scott fashion, he is obviously (and hilariously) rude to her on their date. Meanwhile, Kevin and Andy spear-head a meeting with the CEOs of the Scranton Office Park in order to get their parking spots back, which have been stolen by the construction crew. I hope you caught one of the best lines of the show, delivered so quickly by Andy it might have been easy to miss: when asked where Michael was at the

office park meeting, Andy replies, "He had an unforeseen prior commitment." Such is an example of the subtle yet sidesplitting humor that has come to be the backbone of the show.

Last night's episode did not disappoint – the show is back, and I have my Office fix... at least until May when we have to deal with the summer tv hiatus ☐
Until next week...

Wonder of Wonders

While watching one of Tom Hanks' seemingly forgotten movies, I began to think upon the novelty of the one hit wonder (the countless musical groups that have the distinction of having one major song and then disappearing into obscurity). [*That Thing You Do*](#) dramatizes one such group: The Wonders (catchy name, eh?). The film follows the group and its manager Mr. White (played by Hanks who also wrote and directed the movie) formed during the 1960s at the onset of the British invasion. The cast also includes Tom Everett Scott (who bears an uncanny resemblance to Mr. Hanks) as the drummer Guy, Johnathon Schaech as the moody lead singer Jimmy, and Steve Zahn as the "ladies man" guitarist Lenny. Liv Tyler is also featured as Jimmy's girlfriend Faye. The band records one catchy tune (fittingly entitled, "That Thing You Do"), tours it on the county fair circuit, and eventually hits the big time on an Ed Sullivan-esque variety show. However, Mr. White also gets the group a gig "appearing" in a low budget beach movie as Captain Geech and the Shrimp Shack Shooters.

There have been several groups to have one song make a huge splash only to see that group slip into oblivion soon after.

How about “Pac-Man Fever” by Buckner and Garcia? Or “Somebody’s Watchin’ Me” by Michael Jackson wannabe Rockwell (who just happened to be the son of Motown founder Barry Gordy, Jr.). “Mickey” by Toni Basil; Nena’s “99 Red Balloons”. OR more recently, “Who Let the Dogs Out” by the marvelous Baha Men. Or “Tubthumping” by that group of groups Chumbawumba. Wow... the most recent examples I can think of are at least 10 years old. OHOHOHOH... how could I possibly forget “Ice, Ice Baby?” Now THAT is a one-hit wonder (a wonder anyone ever listened to it). Or my personal favorite “Disco Duck” by DJ turned weekly countdown king, Rick Dees. Surely brought a quick death to the Disco craze. And let us not forget the best group ever to lip-sync a note (or not) Milli Vanilli.

Life Nonetheless

I got to do something so cool today – it really made my day. It’s so nice outside, so I was looking for a place to walk with my youngest-for-now, and we decided upon the pet store. Not that we need a specific place to walk, but I always like to have a mission. So anyway, we walked up to the pet store, and they had little baby gerbils. I am talking newborn pinkie gerbils even smaller than a person’s pinkie. I asked the worker how old they were, and she said about a week, I couldn’t believe how small they were. Some were just beginning to get fur but still had their eyes closed. It was amazing to me how the Mommy gerbils in the cage just ran around, business as usual, kicking up the shavings in the cage right onto the pinkies. I noted this to the worker, and she said yes, they aren’t really as fragile as they look. She came over to see them, and she goes, “wait, there are new ones in there that weren’t there last night!” So then she took one of the less than 24-hours-old gerbils out and let me hold it!

It was SO cute – well, cute isn't even the right word because it was so teeny. It flipped over onto its side in my hand and just laid there, too exhausted to try to right itself. I loved holding it, but it was SO teeny and fragile-seeming, that I was afraid it was just going to up and die in my hand so I gave it back. But it was amazing to me that life begins so small. Something so small and still so precious – it is life, nonetheless.

I Passed!!!

Yesterday I did something I've never done before – I passed a 3 hour glucose challenge! I haven't had a gestational diabetes-free pregnancy since my first-born 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ years ago! It feels really good to know that I can eat whatever I want for the next few months without having to worry about pairing proteins with carbs and cutting out desserts; I can hardly believe it. I don't have to go and speak with the endocrinologist or the dietician, and I won't be taking non-stress tests at the hospital. Most importantly, I won't have to inject my body with insulin – something with which my husband and I were not very comfortable anyway. And since gestational diabetes often leads to large babies, I am curious to see what this one will weigh. The previous 2 babies were both 8 lbs. 12 oz, and my first baby (no diabetes) was only 7 lbs. 2 oz. Of course, she was a little bit early and is still pretty small for her age to this day. But, I just wanted to share the news because I'm very excited that I have a few less things to worry about, and I know I had people waiting to hear the results of my test.

Curses... Foiled Again

On Monday in a very small rural community in Ohio (approximately 60 miles west of Toledo), a very intelligent individual attempted to rob a small bank in broad daylight while several people looked on. It seems that the would-be robber got out of his vehicle with a heavy coat, pulled on a ski mask, and got his weapon from the back seat. Some of the employees saw the suspicious gentleman and ran out of the bank. A chase involving townspeople ensued. Apparently, the perpetrator did not know the area very well as he was forced to turn his car around and re-enter the village.

[Residents near Ohio-Ind. line help snag bank robbery suspect](#)

I'm not sure if this is normal behavior for a bank robber. It would look awfully suspicious to me if a man put on a ski-mask, a heavy coat, and produced a gun from the back of his car in the middle of a 60 degree sunny day. Maybe, he was TRYING to make it on a broadcast of "World's Smartest(?) Criminals." At least the man was intelligent enough to attempt the robbery on a Monday. On Friday, the street is generally populated by patrolmen who enjoy lunch at the local steakhouse. OOPS... I hope I did not give any bright ideas.

Bored

One thing about my life is that I don't easily form relational ties, as in friends. This does make it easier to live on a substitute teacher salary since I don't go to social events,

but it does make for a boring life. I have strong ties with my church, particularly children's ministry, but outside of that I don't do much. I occasionally visit with friends I have made, particularly those now in Ohio, but making new friends? Really just acquaintances I only see at church and usually nowhere else. Is it any surprise then that I am still unmarried? Anyway, when I'm not teaching I am usually on the internet or watching TV. Tonight I came home, surfed the net, watched a few episodes of [Everybody Hates Chris](#), a hilarious weekly comedy loosely based on the teenage life of Chris Rock, and am using the internet again to write this. Unfortunately this is how just about every night looks. I have filled nights in the past with more schooling and musical theatre, but it has been awhile since either one so now I am just reflecting. I pray to meet someone I could eventually call my wife, but that requires social work on my part which just doesn't seem to happen. I really should make sure to get out tomorrow night to singles group at my church. It is a prayer and worship night, but it is followed by fellowship. Unfortunately I am in my mid-thirties and still socially-challenged. I often say really stupid things among people I don't know (and sometimes with people I do!). Also, after this month the singles ministry is breaking for a month to revamp the ministry somehow. I do know I filled out a questionnaire on this about a month ago so I guess this shouldn't come as a surprise. Well, enough about this.

Today I had 5th grade again, only this time it was an ELL (English language learner) class. Mostly Hispanic, but other nationalities were represented as well. This was at a school where I have had problems before, so I wasn't expecting it to go as well as in my home district, though I tried to not act as if that were true. Expectations are important. I don't know if this is a true story or not, but in one of my classes in college we learned about a new teacher who was hired to teach a class, and one of the first things she noticed were numbers by their names. These numbers were in the lower to

mid 100's, but all starting somewhat above 100 (120 maybe? I don't remember). She assumed these to be IQs of the students, so knowing that smart kids would easily get bored with a standard curriculum she prepared a challenging and engaging curriculum which over the length of the school year tremendously grew her students. She ended up with a very successful class with top grades. After it was over her principal (I think) asked her how she was so successful and she pointed out to him the IQ numbers for the students which made her try hard to keep them challenged so they would better learn. To this the principal replied that he was very happy with her teaching, but those were their locker numbers not their IQs.

Anyway, the day actually did not go as badly as I had feared. Sure, there were a few incidents involving a desk falling on the floor and a couple of boys getting hurt by slapping and punching each other, and also some strong-willed kids, but they did their work and they learned. In the end it wasn't a case where I just wanted to be done with it like some days.

Tomorrow: 7th grade language arts