

Pinata Pilgrimage

I didn't blog all weekend because we made a few-hundred-miles trek to the Chicago suburbs for my nephew's 5th birthday party. We stuffed ourselves silly over there because as much as we love where we live, the restaurant choice can grow kind of boring. So, being in a different area had us stopping for food every chance we got, but by the end of the weekend, we were a wee bit regretful... I think that midnight case of White Castles are what did us in. Since there aren't any White Castles near us, we had to stock up and buy a whole case since they reheat pretty well. We stopped there on the way out of the area, and then we had to smell them all the way home – yuck. They taste good but don't smell so great, especially when it's time for bed... So, as you can see, we did fit in a bit of culture on our trip. For those who aren't familiar with White Castle, it's a fast food chain found in the midwest that specializes in mini-hamburgers, also known as "sliders". They aren't just mini-hamburgers, though, they're steam-grilled, and they have a very unique taste... not to mention an, ahem, interesting side effect when you feed them to pets and small children. I will not elaborate; let's just say that my kids really like them, but the next day our noses were paying for it.

We also found time to stop at an ethnic grocery store for something my husband has been looking for called *Halva*, which is a Middle Eastern dessert. I had never tried it before, and I really like to try ethnic foods, so we picked some up. It is pretty good! The halva we got was actually from Macedonia, and though it tastes nothing like it, I would best describe its texture as that of the 'astronaut' ice cream. You know, the freeze dried ice cream that they sell at space museums?

And to round out our cultural experience, my nephew had a pinata at his birthday party. Pardon my spelling it wrong, I can't find the special n with the tilday over it they use in

the spanish alphabet. So in my blog, it will be known as a pinata. Just in case you are not familiar with what a pinata entails, check out Wikipedia's explanation:

A succession of blindfolded, stick-wielding children try to break the piñata in order to collect the sweets (traditionally fruit, such as sugarcane) and/or toys inside of it. It has been used for hundreds of years to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas and Easter.

Seems that Wikipedia figured out how to do the tilday... but anyway, yes you read that right – **blindfolded, stick-wielding children!** Actually, it's customary to use a baseball bat instead of a stick, yet oddly enough, I don't think I've ever been part of a pinata party where a parent didn't have to step in and break it open themselves – this one being no exception. It went pretty well, though we did almost have a casualty – my nephew took his first whack at the pinata, and his dad had not cleared the area, so CRACK went the bat against the cell phone he was wearing... but I guess all was well, especially since someone had talked them out of their original plan: giving a bunch of 5-year-olds an *aluminum* bat with which to whack at the pinata. Thank goodness for the insight! If you get a chance, you should check out the pinata scene in the movie [Parenthood](#), it's hilarious... the kids at the party lose interest after not being able to get it open, so the scene cuts to [Steve Martin](#) beating the heck out of the thing as it lays on the floor. Nothing like that at my nephew's party, in fact, his pinata opened rather easily. And when it did break open, there wasn't the usual melee either... the kids were actually quite orderly in picking up the pinata "guts". I was a little worried because the last time I was at a birthday party with a pinata, the kids all piled in a heap on top of each other, and the kid at the bottom ended up with a bloody lip.

So, overall, great weekend, even if it lacked sleep – lots of driving and we didn't get home until 3:30 in the morning! And

I have a few weeks to decide whether or not we will be brave enough to attempt a pinata at my daughter's 4th birthday party... maybe that will be enough time for her to forget that her cousin had one...

One thing is for sure, if we have a pinata, we will *not* have an aluminum bat on the premises!

Big Papi's Curse

There have been several rivalries among sports teams over the years ([Ohio State/Michigan](#), [Chicago Bears/Green Bay Packers](#), and [Chicago Cubs/St. Louis Cardinals](#) to name a few). However, one of the most celebrated rivalries in all of sports is the extreme battle between the [New York Yankees](#) and the [Boston Red Sox](#). It dates back to 1920 when the Red Sox sold one of the most famous sluggers of all time, Babe Ruth, to the Yankees. From 1920-2004, the team from Bean Town was unable to win the World Series. Many 'Sox fans jokingly blame the deal; however, there were several more radical followers who faithfully curse the day the Babe put on the pinstripes. In order to curse the new Yankee Stadium, a Red Sox fanatic working as a construction worker, buried a David Ortiz jersey at the site. Although the jersey has since been unearthed and is going to be auctioned off for charity, I say **FIRE THE BUMB!!!!**

[The Big Dig: The Yanks Uncover a Red Sox Jersey](#)

Ironically, the curse seems to have worked **IN REVERSE**. Big Papi has batted an embarrassing .070 hitting just 1-for-29 since April 2. Hopefully, recovering the jersey will not have a positive impact on Ortiz' average.

Who's Got Even More Talent?

So.... yet another reality show has come and gone... this one lasted only one episode and for good reason. "Secret Talents of the Star" **attempted** to pit stars from various outlets against each other in order to show their dreams beyond what they have already accomplished. Haven't enough celebrities attempted to go beyond their day jobs and persue other avenues. Michael Jordan retired from basketball (the first time) to persue a second career as a major league baseball player.

While he was on the television series "[Moonlighting](#)," Bruce Willis recorded a rather forgettable album entitled "The Return of Bruno." Whoever Bruno is and from where he returned is a question better left unanswered. A good thing Mr. Willis stuck with his acting gig and action films such as the [Die Hard](#) quadrilogy.

In the category of should have known better, George Takei tried his hand at country singing on the celebrity reality showcase. The actor who played Mr. Sulu on [Star Trek](#) obviously failed to hear his captain's rendition of "Rocket Man" which may or may not have been one of William Shatner's many attempts at self-parody.

I am sure there must be a few examples of performers who found limited success in more than one outlet. Anyone care to share any or name other attempts? Was it Garth Brooks who tried to go from country superstar to Major League baseball player... even creating a new persona to do so?

Books Are Now Movies

About a month ago, I saw *The Other Boleyn Girl*. I had heard mixed opinions about it. A friend of mine told me that it was not historically accurate and did not follow the book very well at all, but my sister told me that it was really good and that I should go watch it. I love the book. In fact, I own it. The book was written by Philippa Gregory and she has written many historical fiction, like the book I'm reading right now, *The Virgin's Lover*. The movie was as both my friend and my sister said. As long as I could forget about the book, it was a movie that I would watch again. If things from the book popped into my head, it was a terrible movie! Whether I buy this movie or not is debatable still. If the movie is going to not go by the book, it should at least get some things right. They never explained what happened to Mary Boleyn's first husband, he just disappeared and suddenly she was married again! How was that explained in the movie? It wasn't and it drove me crazy! Why must movies be based on books and then not be like the book? *Ella Enchanted* is a movie and a book. I love both, but they are so completely different. If they are going to rewrite the book to make a movie, why base the movie on anything?

Ernie the Klepto Take II

A couple of quick updates I have to post:

1. After just one episode, your favorite new show and mine, "Secret Talents of the Stars" was CANCELLED!!! Just kidding.

At least about the favorite show part – this awful show was actually cancelled after airing just one episode, and we will never find out who wins. Boo-hoo. Probably would have been a bigger disappointment to waste more time watching it than it will be not knowing which celebrity won.

2. I did some research, and didn't find anything about the Starburst commercial (see my Mediocrity post) and whether or not it stars Steve Buscemi – just LOTS of speculation on the internet, no definite answers – but I watched the commercial again, and I no longer think it's him. Unless he's found a way to age in reverse, that is. But the actor in question definitely seems to be imitating him, and should probably look into getting a paid gig as a Buscemi impersonator, if he hasn't already. Sorry for the misinformation.

Another couple

One day in heaven, the Lord decided He would visit the earth and take a stroll. Walking down the road, He encountered a man who was crying. The Lord asked the man, "Why are you crying, my son?" The man said that he was blind and had never seen a sunset. The Lord touched the man who could then see and was happy.

As the Lord walked further, He met another man crying and asked, "Why are you crying, my son?" The man was born a cripple and was never able to walk. The Lord touched him and he could walk and he was happy.

Farther down the road, the Lord met another man who was crying and asked, "Why are you crying, my son?" The man said, "Lord, I work for the school system."

And the Lord sat down and cried with him.

According to a radio report, a middle school in Oregon was faced with a unique problem. A number of girls were beginning to use lipstick and would put it on in the bathroom. That was fine, but after they put on their lipstick they would press their lips to the mirror leaving dozens of little lip prints.

Finally the principal decided that something had to be done. She called all the girls into the bathroom and met them there with the maintenance man. She explained that all these lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian who had to clean the mirrors every night. To demonstrate how difficult it was to clean the mirrors, she asked the maintenance man to clean one of the mirrors. He took out a long-handled squeegee, dipped it into the toilet and then cleaned the mirror.

Since then there have been no lip prints on the mirror. There are teachers and then there are TEACHERS.

More humor

Again, not by me.

EDUCATION HUMOR— WORST ANALOGIES USED IN ESSAYS

These are the winners of the “worst analogies ever written in a high school essay” contest

His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a dryer without Cling Free.

Her hair glistened in the rain like nose hair after a sneeze.

He spoke with the wisdom that can only come from experience, like a guy who went blind because he looked at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it and now goes around the country speaking at high schools about the dangers of looking at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes...

The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn't.

From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you're on vacation in another city and "Jeopardy" comes on at 7 p.m. instead of 7:30.

Her eyes were like two brown circles with big black dots in the center.

Bob was as perplexed as a hacker who means to access T:\flw.quid55328.com\aaakk/ch@ung but gets T:\flw.quidaaakk/ch@ung by mistake.

Her vocabulary was as bad as, like, whatever.

He was as tall as a six-foot-three-inch tree.

Her date was pleasant enough, but she knew that if her life was a movie this guy would be buried in the credits as something like "Second Tall Man."

Long separated by cruel fate, the star-crossed lovers raced across the grassy field toward each other like two freight trains, one having left Cleveland at 6:36 p.m. traveling at 55 mph, the other from Topeka at 4:19 p.m. at a speed of 35 mph.

They lived in a typical suburban neighborhood with picket fences that resembled Nancy Kerrigan's teeth.

John and Mary had never met. They were like two hummingbirds

who had also never met.

The red brick wall was the color of a brick-red Crayola crayon.

Mara's Death

I have loved the character of Mara Jade ever since I first read Timothy Zahn's book Heir to the Empire. In fact, I have all eight of his Star Wars books and they all deal with Mara some way. When she was first introduced, she wanted to kill Luke Skywalker, but later married him! Talk about some major emotional change. Going from wanting to kill someone to marrying them ten years later, is pretty good! Mara is one of the favorite characters in the Expanded Universe, and yet, they killed her off! And by her nephews hand, no less! Jacen Solo turned to the Dark Side and killed his aunt! The way the fight between Mara and Jacen went, Jacen should have died too! He had a ceiling collapse on him and yet he still survived! I understand that this was one of the easier ways to show that Ben, Luke and Mara's son, was important, but so many people were not happy. The author didn't like that Mara died, and she killed her off! Timothy Zahn didn't like how she was killed, but is willing to continue writing books with Mara in them! I just can't wait for another book with Mara to come out! And with Timothy Zahn as the writer, makes me even more impatient! I have no idea if he is working on one right now or not!

Telescopes, an introduction

If you've been reading through the entire blog, you will notice I talk about my family and telescopes. I will try to make the titles very specific, so you will know what you are going to be reading...

Eventually, I will answer the question: "What telescope should I get?" For now I want to talk about various kinds of telescopes. There are really only two types of telescopes. If you're a die-hard astronomer, just wait. This is for beginners. ☐

There are telescopes that use lenses (called refractors) and those that use mirrors (called reflectors). The refractors are the telescopes most people think of. A pirates spyglass, 1/2 of a binocular are examples of refracting telescopes. Reflectors are generally the big boys. Most observatory telescopes are now reflectors of one type or another. The space telescope is a reflector.

Now for some there is a third group of telescopes that combine the mirrors and the lenses. I don't differentiate in that manner. I will admit there are different types of reflectors. Some have corrector lenses somewhere in the light path that correct different deficiencies in the mirrors. More on that in a latter post. Lets just say that all telescope types have there problems, and various ways are used to correct those problems.

Now more on the introduction. The first telescopes were refractors. But the strength of any telescope is how much light it can take in. Refracting telescopes with big front lenses get very big and awkward quickly. And there is also a limit as to how big you can make a piece of glass and only support it on the edge. So some bright people invented reflecting telescopes. Theoretically, there is no limit as to

how big you can cast a mirror because it is supported across the entire back. In practice, once a mirror gets too big, it is very hard to support in something that can move and take in the entire sky. And glass does have a problem with deforming under stress, and big mirrors under gravity are under stress.

The biggest refracting telescope is in the Chicago area at the Yerkes observatory. The main lens is 40 inches across. The largest reflecting telescope in operation is the 11 meter scopes in South Africa. The largest telescope in the United States are the twin 10 meter scopes on Mauna Kea in Hawaii. The largest in the mainland US is the 9.2 meter Hobby-Eberly Telescope in Texas. And finally in Ohio the largest telescope is the the 1 meter (39 inch) at the University of Toledo.

I have a family connection with the telescope in Toledo (and others around the world), my father was a quality control manager at Owens-Illinois and this was one of the mirrors he over saw the production of.

More later

Shout to the Lord

Even popular television can do things right from time to time. Apparently American Idol had their final eight perform [Shout to the Lord](#) not once, but **twice**. The first time they changed "Jesus" to "shepherd" presumably to not "offend" anyone (he is our shepherd though!), but the second time around they changed it back! Praise Jesus! The second, good version is below: