

Fire... Bon Fire

A new hilarious episode of "The Office" was on tonight. I am now watching reruns on Tuesday nights and decided to see if I could follow the new episodes as well. Happily enough, I enjoyed the new episode tremendously. Tonight's episode featured the absolute worst dinner party you can imagine. Michael even had to stage a revolt to his superiors in order to get Jim and Pam and another couple I am not familiar with to come to his and Jan's place. Apparently, none of Michael's "friends" were too keen on going. Poor Dwight was the only person in the office who wanted to attend and was not invited.

The party featured a tour of Jan and Michael's abode. Bon fire scented candles, anyone? And Michael's mini-plasma screen television hanging near his multiple (?) Dundee trophies... both of which he is exceedingly proud. The party kicked into high gear with a game that resembled charades but the performer was able to speak.

By the end of the party, there was a party crasher and his "date", domestic squabbling, and enough staring to make anyone think that the worst party they have ever been to was 1000% better. That is what make "The Office" one of the funniest shows on television. The writers take a horrible situation and exaggerate it to the point where it becomes hilarious.

Thoughts on family

As a father, I've had many thoughts on my family and my responsibility to them. To me that thought is mind numbing. For the first 20 years of my being a parent, I had help. My girls had, in my opinion, the best mother on the planet. She

gave everything to those girls. The last four years it has been just me. The youngest was 13, and the oldest 23 when their mother died. The oldest had been out of the house since she graduated High School. There was really no more parenting that needed to be done there. She was on her own. The next was a senior in High school and I had a sophomore and a 7th grader. These three still needed their mother, and I could not be her.

I struggle through with their help. Their mother did a good job at raising them, I just had to keep things flowing. Lucky me. The first year I had trouble keeping me flowing. The four of us at home kind of flowed with the stream for a while. Not our best moments by any standards, but we got through.

There were 2 high school graduations, 2 weddings, multiple boy friends in the past 4 years. I probably wasn't the best at handling all that. But again we made it through. I should emphasize that WE made it through.

Video tapes of my daughters in plays were put into a safe place. Birth Certificates were put in a safe place. Those safe places were lost. I found tv remotes in the freezer. Bought more cabbage when I couldn't find the head I just bought. Found the first head months (weeks maybe) later. By then it was a wonderful science experiment. There were a number of those experiments. But as a family WE made it through.

We all got together last January. My daughters, the extended families, grandkids and all went to the Zoo, went shopping, and just hung out. We made it through.

In the future, no matter how far apart we are, I know I can rely on my girls. We will make it through.

I feel stupid...

Well, today I was a floater at a middle school, meaning that I would sub for different teachers throughout the day as they went to meetings. When I arrived they gave me a list. Four classes. Were they serious? I thought I had it fairly easy yesterday with five classes (in middle school six is typical, with a planning period, team meeting- subs not invited, and lunch). In this district one period is homeroom, making a total of ten periods of which a sub usually works seven when homeroom is added in. This meant that I had **three** extra periods off! A half-day of work for a full day's pay! Then again, this is me we're talking about. I didn't feel quite right about this so I asked at the office a few times if I was needed elsewhere during these breaks. They didn't have anything as was typical, so it would seem that I would get all the time off after all. However, in the afternoon the teacher I was subbing for for 7th and 10th periods decided she could use me after all to help out while she tried to get some other work done. I stress *tried* because in fact since she was in the room her students still came up to her and asked questions. By the way, they were doing research in the LMC so I mostly babysat as I couldn't answer a lot of the questions since I didn't know all the expectations of the project. Still not bad- a very easy day.

Now, some may think the title of this post applies to the above paragraph since I asked for extra work instead of just saying nothing and sitting in the lounge all day. Well, it always pays to not get on their bad side- I already don't take TA positions which pay about \$30 less per day- and besides, I would have missed the situation I am about to write on. □ Well, what happened was during one of the periods a couple of students came in who weren't a part of the class. Remember, this was the LMC and not a classroom. That would be very strange if random students just came into a classroom where

they were not a part of the class... Anyway, I wasn't aware of this at first and so questioned them when I saw they were not doing the research with the rest of the class. They told me they were here while their class was on a field trip. Were they being punished? Nope. They were seventh graders in an eighth grade math class, and all the eighth grade was on the field trip. Now I thought I was pretty good at math being in algebra in eighth grade, but here they were, two seventh graders in the eighth grade class. And to make matters worse, this seemed to be the top eighth grade math course, algebra 2. That's right, 2. I didn't take algebra 2 until my sophomore year (they split the two courses with geometry in the middle, which I took as a freshman). These two seventh graders were *two* years ahead of where I was when I was in middle school. They expect to be bused to high school next year for math as they apparently were bused to the middle school when they were in 5th grade... I guess if this keeps up they will be taking calculus in their junior year instead of in college, unless they bring themselves even further ahead in the next three years. Definitely two top engineers in the making.

Awesome Day

It may be cold and rainy outside, but the weather has not affected my emotional state inside! I've had an awesome day! It is our ninth wedding anniversary today, and so far, the day has been just short of perfect. The only thing that could make it better is if we could be together all day, but of course with 3.5 kids to support, it's unrealistic on a weekday to take off work. Besides, we were able to have a fun family day together yesterday in between the dental work and the tantrums of our 3-year-old.

Today, my husband has left love-note post-its all around the house for me to find. He sent me a sweet e-card, and I really love the church sign he put on tangents.org of our wedding day. My almost 18-month-old daughter even let me have a peaceful lunch today – I didn't even have to interrupt my own lunch once to get her anything and usually I have to get up between 5-15 times! Oh, wait, I did have 1 lunch "interruption", but I wouldn't even call it that. The doorbell rang with the delivery of a gorgeous vase of flowers my husband sent me for our anniversary! And lately, the smell of fresh flowers has been completely relaxing for me... it must be the pregnancy. I've always loved flowers, but lately they're almost like a drug when I smell them! So, walking past the eye and nose candy on the dining room table is also keeping my spirits high. We were going to celebrate with a nice dinner and a night out, then come home and watch the first new Office episode in MONTHS, but the other day, we found out tonight is the monthly meeting for the board of a community agency with which we volunteer – wouldn't you know April's meeting had to be tonight! But no matter... we can still go out around the meeting, go to the meeting together, and in the age of VCR's, computers, and all of that, we will find a way to catch the Office later. So thanks to all the well-wishers who've written and called – we've had a wonderful day and we will see you next year at the big 10-year anniversary BASH!

Taylor, Teeth, and Toledo

Our poor little 8-year-old daughter, Taylor, was born on the short side of the genetic crapshoot when it comes to teeth. The poor kid has cavities, teeth that are fused together, and other dental problems. They wanted to do so much dental work

on her that our small town dentist referred us to the big city of Toledo to get it taken care of. So, yesterday saw an all day excursion to Toledo so the poor kid could undergo some major dental work. It actually went quite well; she handled everything like a trooper. I'm sure the laughing gas and novacaine somewhat helped the pain, but when it was all said and done, she did freak out a little about all the blood. After that whole ordeal, we wanted to make the day special for her, so we made a quick stop at the zoo between dental appointments. We only had about an hour, so we didn't get to see our favorite animals, but we did have time to check out the reptile house, which, crazily enough after all of our visits to the Toledo Zoo, we had never been in. It was a typical reptile house, full of snakes, lizards, and frogs (even though they're not reptiles, zoos always put them in the reptile house I've noticed), but what I really enjoyed was the crocodile. I can't tell you the last time I saw one of those, especially indoors. It was huge, and unlike their cousins the alligators, crocodiles are not friendly nor docile. They are very aggressive animals, and you can almost see it on their faces. The Toledo Zoo also has a Chinese alligator, and I was wondering if Chinese alligators are similar to American alligators in temperament. I know the Chinese alligator is smaller and much more rare, but I wonder if that is where the differences end... I'll have to do some research.

After the second dental appointment, we made a stop at Chuck E. Cheese, gauze packed mouth and all. The kids had a blast, although it wasn't very crowded, so Chuck E. didn't venture off the stage for a visit, much to my 3-year-old's disappointment. But I came to a realization that it was our youngest-for-now's first visit to a Chuck E. Cheese, at least her first one where she was old enough to enjoy it. Since we live in the boondocks, we just don't find ourselves at Chuck E. Cheese nearly as often as when we lived in the Chicago suburbs like when our oldest was a toddler. But that's quite alright, the place is expensive, and going infrequently really

teaches the kids to appreciate the times we do make it there. Over the years, not much has changed there... when I was a kid, they called it Show Biz Pizza, and I was able to find pics of the old characters for others my age who like nostalgia.



The main character for the chain, a bear named Billy Bob (top right picture), really scared me as a kid... for some reason, he had long claws, which can be really scary for a kid. In Kindergarten, we got to go on a field trip to Show Biz; they took us behind the scenes and “undressed” one of the robots and took us back into the room where they have all the control panels for everything. Why they wanted to show a bunch of 6-year-olds that the characters were actually robots is still beyond me, but it was a very cool field trip and something I still remember.

Late night

When everyone is asleep, I feel the need to be awake. I really need to get more sleep, I do have to get to work early tomorrow. This has been my method of living for years and years. I tend to stay awake when I should be sleeping.

For the past four years, I've been blaming it on the fact that I am a widower. While I admit, that sleeping alone after 20 years of sleeping with someone takes getting used to, (not sure I'm used to it yet), I've had this problem most of my adult life. In fact, I would read well into the early morning with my dear wife sleeping next to me. I sure am glad she could sleep with my reading light on. Now I just live with this normal insomnia. I imagine I could get some sleep aids from my doctor, but I really don't like taking medication. I've read where not sleeping can cause all sorts of health problems, so maybe I should look into it.

For me the night is the time my mind is in full motion, I need to read, write and just think of things. The silence of the house seems to push my thoughts faster and faster. I may have to use this time to do something other than read fiction, and type out blogs. It would be nice to get more benefit than just getting a few more trivial pieces of information.

Lounge talk

This is going to be short (sandman is calling) but I just wanted to say something about talk in the lounge. Teachers talk about many things of course, like family, current events, the weather, etc. A favorite topic, also of course, is students. How did such and such student behave today? What

students are failing miserably? Oh, let me tell you of the cavity searches I had to do today. Wait- what?!? *Cavity searches??* One of the gym teachers came down to lunch and started talking about this. I have no idea what was being searched for, and didn't get any other details in fact. Fortunately. This was just so off the wall I had to mention it even without complete information. There was also mention of a student who ran out the front door and a teacher who almost ran after her. The secretary told her to let it go and she would call the police. From what I understand she didn't get very far hobbling along in an ankle brace..

Ahh, middle school. And I have another day of it tomorrow, different school fortunately, and it's getting late so goodnight.

Boy saves bus from major accident

No license? Who cares? Usually this would be a bad conversation, such as an underage child taking dad's car for a spin (my brother has done this before, so has my nephew...). This time however this boy was saving everyone on the bus from experiencing the sudden effects of being hit by a truck. He didn't really drive it, just steered it out of the way. The driver had left to answer the call of nature, but somehow this bus came out of gear and started rolling downhill. This 11-year-old, thinking only of his older brother also on board, chose not to jump off like some others, but instead to save both him and his brother by stopping the bus. [Click link to read on...](#)

Boy, 11, steered bus to avoid semi

So you want a telescope

After finding out I have a telescope, and of my interest in Astronomy, I am often asked "What kind of telescope should I get my (self, kid, spouse, father, fill in the blank). My first thought is to say they can buy mine so I can get a bigger, better, different telescope. But in reality, the best answer is usually to get a good astronomy book.

Unless you are exactly like me, you will need to get a foundation of what is in the sky before you drag out a telescope. Going out on clear nights with just a lawn chair and your eyes will give you an indication if you actually want a telescope. There are many uncomfortable aspects of sky watching and astronomy. If you add to this lugging and setting up a telescope, you may find you really don't want to do this.

Spring in Ohio is a good time to start with your quest for a telescope. The clear nights are becoming a bit warmer from the winter deep chills, and the bugs aren't out as much. If you can take the few mosquitoes and the slightly chilly nature of the spring nights, you can then look forward to the summer nights. In most cases the summer nights in Ohio are quite comfortable for watching the night sky. If someone could do something about all the mosquitoes. Yes, you will be a target of these blood thirsty little creatures. Then there are the numerous encounters with other wildlife. Skunks will generally not spray, unless you scare them. Stepping on a skunk tends to

scare it. Raccoons on the other hand don't fear much. Keep the snacks well sealed, and don't leave your car open. In NW Ohio that is all you generally have to worry about. But I did hear talk of a wandering Black Bear in the area!

Other parts of the country will have their own night time problems. Scorpions, cougars, wolves, bears, poisonous snakes, and the strange people who come out at night in our larger metropolitan areas, are all possible things you could run into trying to look at the night sky. Do you really wonder why I don't automatically tell a person which telescope to buy.

Astronomy and star watching is not for everyone. We are a strange breed. We tend to enjoy being out in the dark (the darker the better), communing with the wild, lugging heavy equipment out for maybe 2-4 hours of finding and studying a specific nebulae or feature on the Moon. Then we will pack up and lug that equipment back in. If you can't spend 1/2 hour after lugging your lawn chair out just to look at the sky, well this hobby isn't really for you. A telescope really won't help.

Ok, you got past the looking at the stars for 1/2 hour, and you enjoyed it. What next? Get a good astronomy book. Take the time to learn what is up there. Before you get a telescope you need to know what you're going to be looking at. Astronomy books and star charts are the road maps to the night sky. You should be able to find at least 1 or 2 constellations before you purchase that scope. Checkout [Sky and Telescope](#) or [Astronomy Magazines](#) at your local library or bookstore. They will have a sky map of the current month.

You say you've done all that and still want a telescope? Now we're talking. Get some good binoculars and come back in a month or two. ☐ No really, I wish someone had told me that at the beginning of my astronomy connection. I still don't have a good pair of binoculars, and my desire for them is growing. 7×50, 8×50 and 10×50 are all good binoculars to start with in

astronomy. Oh yes, the first number is the magnification of the binoculars (7 times, 8 times or 10 times) the second number is the size of the front lens in millimeters. The bigger front lens collects more light, and the higher magnification allows you to see more. 2 big notes!! High magnification may seem like a good thing, but too much causes what I call the jitters. It is hard to hold binoculars steady, high magnification makes this much more apparent. And bigger front lenses may also seem like a good idea. Bigger lenses, means the binoculars will weigh more. Heavy binoculars also cause the jitters.

Ok, Ok you got this far? You should get a 7 inch Questar Maksutov. Make sure you get a well built tripod with this since this telescope needs good support. And when you get tired of astronomy let me know, I may have a home for your scope.... That's just a joke folks. When you find out what that telescope costs you may understand. For the real answer, stop back in the future. I work up a list of good beginner scopes.

Crossing the Big Pond

Planning a trip to London? Let me be your guide to the best the West End has to offer in theatre. Already there are the Broadway hits [Wicked](#), [Phantom of the Opera](#) (ok, ok, it was in London first), and the just opened [Jersey Boys](#). However, there are several productions which have not yet made the leap over to the U.S.

There is the Andrew Lloyd Webber produced revival of *The Sound of Music*. Apparently, Lord Lloyd Webber cannot produce anything new on his own that is capable of making money so he

must revive not only his past successes but also breathe new life into other's works as well (whatever happened to his planned sequel to *Phantom?*). There is also a revival of Webber's [Joseph...](#). In a bit of "American Idol" meets musical theatre, the Joseph for this production was chosen on a reality television show. In 2007, the new Broadway cast of [Grease](#) was chosen in this way on a series called "Grease: You're the One that I Want." Not a very original title.

There is also a new musical version of the classic novel and movie [Gone with the Wind](#). The Trevor Nunn directed production stars [Darius Danesh](#) as Rhett Butler. Darius was seen on "Pop Idol" which is the British phenomenon that inspired "American Idol." I wonder if the judges told him that he was "too theatrical" as Simon Cowell has been known to tell American contestants.

Perhaps the strangest if not the most ambitious show of all is the staging of J.R.R. Tolkien's [Lord of the Rings](#) trilogy. It took three films of nearly three hours each to scratch the surface of the novels. I'm sure Rings purists are left wanting after only one 3 hour musical.

So... if you are in West End or are planning a trip over the Atlantic, consider taking in one or more of these stage hits. Of course many times, today's hits of London become tomorrow's Broadway blockbusters and vice versa.