

The Wedding Singer

Yep, that is me. I've probably done five and will be doing my sixth on March 29th. The first was for my cousin about 10 years ago. I sang at my 2 brother's weddings (one of which is divorced) and my sister's (who is separated (wow... scary thought only 1 out of three is still married)). Then I sang for another cousin's ceremony. Last night, the organist and I met to go over what I am expected to sing on the 29th. Most of the songs I have done before... more or less traditional wedding songs (The Rose, Sunrise Sunset, One Hand One Heart, and Theme from Ice Castles (Through the Eyes of Love)). When I saw the list, I asked the organist why we were singing so few. We will need to add at least one to the Pre-ceremony list; there were two and I have been known to have as many as five. We must be going to rush those guests into the church in a hurry. Even with the organist playing between the two songs, it would take no more than 10 minutes to get through it all.

As for the songs themselves, I have sung "The Rose" during at least 3 weddings. I have been in two different productions of [Fiddler on the Roof](#), so "Sunrise Sunset" is familiar (but at a Catholic wedding seems strange). "One Hand One Heart" from [West Side Story](#) is about as traditional as "The Bridal March." The Ice Castles theme is probably the most unfamiliar to me but I have been to enough weddings to have heard the piece more than once. I have always wanted to do "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" but maybe for my own. At least they are all in English.

Gas Gouging in NW Ohio – Alive and Well

My fellow Northwest Ohioans, this is a call to action!

Have you noticed that we are being taken advantage of? Yesterday, the national gas price average was \$3.22 / gallon for unleaded. Yet here in NW Ohio, every station in this town had gas for **\$3.39 / gallon**. The price of gas in the Northern suburbs of Chicago has reached \$3.27. We (especially in our family since we have loved ones in that area who we have to watch pay through the nose for EVERYTHING) have always prided ourselves on having lower prices than they have, MUCH lower actually. We used to have gas prices about \$.25 / gallon lower than Chicagoland. This is no longer the case! Their gas is now \$.12 *cheaper* than ours! What will follow? Will we no longer have cheaper food than they have? Will we soon be paying \$10 for a hamburger, have an average restaurant bill of \$30 for lunch for two, movie theater tickets at \$10 each? Where does it end? I can't help but feel the gas stations have called our bluff. We can't boycott them, because let's face it, we're an island. We get to enjoy our relatively crime and pollution free existences because we are so far from the nearest large cities. However, the local gas stations are starting to take advantage of this, because they know it will cost way too much for us to get out of town to get some gas somewhere else. The average price in Toledo yesterday was \$3.22 / gallon , but to get to Toledo, it would cost about \$5-\$10 in gas, depending on your car! And who has time to run to Toledo for gas, anyway? But why is it that Toledo has cheaper gas prices than we do? Everything was always cheaper here... at least it used to be.

I'm just worried about how they will gouge us next. I looked into filing a complaint with the attorney general of Ohio, and their website said to contact the stores first. So I guess

it's only fair that we first let the gas stations know that we're terribly unhappy. I would write to the newspaper here in town also, but they've never printed my letters. Maybe I complain too much? Actually, one letter was very nice thanking the person who turned in my lost wallet with all the money still in it, but they still didn't print it. Anyway, if someone else wants to write to the paper, that'd be great. The more the merrier on this, I say, what could it hurt? Complain to the local gas stations and ask them questions, write to the newspaper, write to the attorney general, anything and everything anyone can do will help. Remember, driving season hasn't even officially started yet, and when it does, the price gouging at the pump will only worsen! Here is a link to the complaint section of the Ohio attorney general's website – it tells you how to fill out a complaint online, and also gives phone numbers and email addresses:

<https://www.ag.state.oh.us/citizen/consumer/complaints.asp>

Please help me – let's do SOMETHING!

Rollbacks Are Extinct!

Just a short little venting post because I made my weekly stop at Walmart today... and not one, not two, but **THREE** price increases awaited me!

1. drawstring kitchen garbage bags – when I started shopping at Walmart in Ohio only 5 years ago, these were \$1.33 / box of 20. Last time I went to Walmart, they were \$2.88 for the same box, and today, they are \$2.98 for the same box that was \$1.33 not more than 5 years ago! That is more than **DOUBLE** the price in 5 years!
2. bananas – when they opened our brand new SuperWalmart a

few years ago, they pretended like the regular price of bananas was a cheap \$.29 / lb. but the truth is, I haven't seen them at that price since! They have gone up and down constantly, and are now a whopping \$.67 / lb – the most expensive bananas I have ever seen and I refuse to pay it! And let's face it, Walmart has the worst looking produce I've ever seen!

3. dryer sheets – before today were \$.88 / box. Today, they decided we should have to pay \$.96 / box. If they go over \$1, I will no longer be getting my dryer sheets at Walmart.

To complete my complaint session, I actually had to email Walmart the other day to complain about their photo service. I used to get all my digital photos made into prints at Walmart because it was cheap and convenient. I would order between \$1-\$10 at a time. Since I have a lot of kids, they (used to) get lots of business from me. But now they won't let me pay for my orders in the store. I like to order the pictures when I take them; sometimes there are only a few at a time. And I refuse to sit there and make teeny weeny charges on my credit card over the internet every few days – it's a bookkeeping nightmare, not to mention how little trust I have in Walmart after all the other crap they always pull.

About the grocery prices, I understand that there is something called inflation, but this is ridiculous! No wonder Walmart has abandoned their "rollback" campaign – rollbacks are extinct!

10,000 B.C. – When Movies

Cost \$3

Oh wait, that was tonight. Seriously. We saw [10,000 B.C.](#) (a new release, no less!) for **\$3 for 2 people!** It was a 5:00 movie at matinee price, plus bring a guest for free night = \$3! Add in our popcorn and pop, and we spent less than \$10 for a new movie at the theater, with popcorn and a drink! Can't beat that! If we didn't live around the corner from the theater, we would have spent more on the gas to get there – more about gas prices in my next post, ugh.

We had heard that 10,000 B.C. was not a very good movie, but the other choices were [Spiderwick Chronicles](#) (which we really liked but have already seen) or [Fool's Gold](#), which I have no desire to see for some reason. 10,000 B.C. was exactly what the previews showed – an adventure movie set way way back into the past. I don't know how accurate it is, but the computer animation depicting early humans (though you forgot this fact given that many of them spoke perfect English) hunting woolly mammoths was pretty good, actually. In the movie, they also used the mammoths as “work horses” to haul blocks to build pyramids, which I didn't know, if this is indeed fact... interesting theory. Though they aren't clear if these are the Great Pyramids of Egypt, which I think were actually started more likely around 3,000 B.C. or after... but I'm no expert, this movie did get me thinking and wanted to research a bunch of stuff. It was neat to see everything interacting together, the early humans and the dwellings they built, the animals, the environment – a great way to envision the past, but it did have me wondering how much is based on scientific fact, like I said. I won't go into the plot, mostly because I sheepishly admit that I couldn't follow it. I didn't get my nap today, and I fell asleep during what were apparently a few pivotal scenes in the movie. But, for \$3, who cares? And don't think that the movie is boring either. I have 3 kids and I'm pregnant, I get very tired and could probably fall asleep

anywhere without that daily nap I've been so lucky to have most days. And I did get to see [The Dark Knight](#) preview, which was pretty cool. I'm not a big fan of the Batman movies – I've only seen 1 and 3, but this one looks really dark and creepy. I think the whole [Heath Ledger](#) (R.I.P.) incident will sell tickets, but the previews might do a little ticket-selling themselves... I can see why they say that role affected him in such a negative way – he looked really scary.

So, if you like lots of fighting; epic battle movies set in the past, or are just an admirer of CGI animation, check out 10,000 B.C. – especially if you can find it for \$1.50 / person!

Baby You Can Drive My Car

Finally, after 7 seasons on the air, American Idol contestants can sing songs from the Lennon/McCartney songbook. Of course, what better way to celebrate the feat of convincing Michael Jackson to allow it (since he owns the rights to the Beatles works) then to have an all Fab Five show. Let me also point out that (IMHO) after seven seasons, the show has lost some of its luster. It is no longer the “must see show” of the week. It is becoming tedious watching Randy say: “It was just awiight fo' me Dawg.” Or Paula exclaim: “You look beautiful” when what she really means is “That was really bad.” Or even Simon bashing the hopefuls. It has all become a bit formulaic.

Two of the performances stood out to me (one good; the other... welllll). The first was a performance of “Let It Be” (the final single released by the Beatles in 1970). Brooke White chose to perform the song while accompanying herself on the piano. It was a truly heart-felt performance.

However, Kristy Lee Cook decided to change the classic “Eight Days a Week” and give it a country flavor. Not only did the judges totally dismiss the brave choice, she will probably be in the bottom three tomorrow night. I am not what one would call a country music aficionado, but it was just a strange rendition.

So while it is becoming a bit tedious, I still do try to catch American Idol when I can. I can actually say I know where Carrie Underwood came from... and she is a country singer.

Half days

These are the bane of my substitute existence, next to holidays. No, I don't mean the days students get off early but rather days where the teacher take off only half a day. It seems I may have three of these this week unless I can find a full day to take their place (I can cancel jobs in two districts via the web) or find a half day job for the other half of the day. The latter almost never happens. As for the first, it can happen but on this side of spring break with the testing going on it is very uncertain. Yet I keep trying.

One of the half days was today, for the afternoon. At least I got to sleep in, but I depend on this income so I really need to work as much as I can. It was for industrial tech, what used to be called “industrial arts” when I was a kid, and “shop” even earlier than that. Naturally with a sub the kids can't do shop, but many times they are allowed to use computers. See, that is the “tech” part, technology. They could be running some sort of modeling or simulation program, or programming a robotic arm. Today one class was working on ifilm projects. All stuff that didn't exist back in the

eighties. We had metals, plastics, and wood. That's it. Now these teachers need to be trained on so much more to do this job. As for the other class (only two today! :)) they clearly were working on a project, probably woodwork, so they got to do some paperwork today. Oh well.

In The Beginning... .

There seems to be a fascination with franchise re-boots in movies today. If memory serves, one of the first was George Lucas' idea of deciding to tell the back story of Darth Vader. While the idea of *Star Wars* Episodes 1-3 seemed good in theory, it failed in many respects.

The plot of the trilogy had more to do with political mumbo-jumbo than actual lightsaber and space battles. It took three movies to explain how a Republic failed and became the Empire of the original *Star Wars* trilogy. Anakin Skywalker's transformation into Darth Vader almost seems like a secondary plot. And don't even get me started on the ridiculous concept of "midichlorians."

The acting seems stuffy in Episodes 1-3. Hayden Christensen's acting style is so wooden and forced that the audience really does not care about Anakin Skywalker. The dialogue makes it sound as if the audience is watching a Shakespearean play instead of the fun, swashbuckling atmosphere of episodes 4-6.

However, there are good moments in the second trilogy. [*The Phantom Menace*](#) includes a lightsaber duel between Obi-Wan Kenobi, his mentor Qui-Gon Ginn, and the evil Sith Lord Darth Maul. By the time [*Attack of the Clones*](#) came about, enough technology had been created to allow Yoda to become more than a mere puppet and engage in his own lightsaber fight. Finally,

[Revenge of the Sith](#) features the climactic battle between Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker.

On a side note, the title *Revenge of the Sith* is a nod to the title which Episode 6 was to be. *Revenge of the Jedi* was to be the title of the final movie. At the last minute after posters, advertisements, and merchandise had already been created, George Lucas decided that a Jedi does not seek revenge. Therefore, the title was changed to [Return of the Jedi](#). *Star Wars* collectors must have a field day looking for and selling these rare pieces of memorabilia on [ebay](#) and at conventions.

While both trilogies are among the most popular movies in history, the redemption of Anakin Skywalker as seen in episodes 4-6 are much more imaginative than the newer films. However, if you are a *Star Wars* purist and want to know how and why Darth Vader came to be then you should watch the newer films which are the first in the timeline of the series...
WOOLY SHEEP!!! MORAT CONFUSING SELF!!!!!!

Awake... but I should have been asleep

Last night's movie was called [Awake](#), and it starred [Jessica Alba](#) and [Hayden Christensen](#). When I first saw Jessica Alba, I was not looking forward to seeing the movie, and I don't know why. It's not like I've seen anything else with her in it, but for some reason, I was under the impression that I didn't like her as an actress. I think it might be an interview I saw with her on the Tyra Banks show – she came across as self-absorbed and dumb, and then the whole pregnant-out-of-wedlock

thing doesn't score her many points either... Anyway, surprisingly, she was not the weak link in the movie. It was the script. The movie had tons of accuracy flaws, and I really don't want to spoil it for you in case you'd like to waste your time on it, but let's just say the movie was kind of pointless. It's about a young man who has a heart condition and must undergo a heart transplant. When they put him under anesthesia, he does not fall asleep but instead overhears the doctors plotting his murder. There actually is more to the plot, at least they pretend there is, and there are some so-called twists and turns that anyone with any movie watching experience can see coming from a mile away. Aside from the unbelievability of the plot – and I'm not talking about staying awake during surgery; according to the movie's tagline, it's actually more common than you'd like to think – I'm talking about when this guy is getting his surgery, his "spirit" is walking around the hospital experiencing flashbacks. It's just dumb and ridiculous. Anyway, aside from the unbelievability of the plot, I have to share what the dumbest part about the whole movie is. And I'm going to risk spoiling the movie for you, so if you might see this movie, stop reading now. But I just have to say what the dumbest thing about the whole movie is: there is no point to the main character's overhearing his murder plot! His mother, while waiting for his surgery to be completed, overhears everything anyway, the cops are called, yada, yada! I still don't consider watching this movie a waste of time – it's really difficult for me to say that about a movie. It was only 84 minutes long, and one of the rewards of watching the movie was seeing [Christopher McDonald](#) (aka Shooter McGavin from [Happy Gilmore](#)) as an alcoholic doctor who is too oblivious to stop the murder plot. But I would much rather see him for the 100th time as Shooter any day – I would suggest you don't waste your time with Awake, and go for something with more substance instead – like Happy Gilmore! That sounds like a joke, but this movie was so bad, it's really not that funny – Happy Gilmore is a much better movie

in my opinion!

Just call in sick...

Well, that is just what half the class did today. Literally. The flu is just knocking everybody down for the count. Okay, the class size was only six students being a special education class so half the class was only three students, but that is still very high statistically speaking. Plus, the teacher I was in for was out due to the flu as well. When all was said and done, there were practically two adults per students, and apparently from what I was told the three that were out were the most *ahem* *challenging* students. Apparently it wasn't just this class either. In the afternoon they combined our three students with another class's two students for speech, still less than the full six students of the **one** class! Wow.

As one can imagine this turned out to be a very easy day. So easy that a couple of the assistants just decided to disinfect the room in hopes of avoiding more illness. As for me, I helped a little bit with calendar time and yoga (very low-ability students due to their disabilities) and colored. Yes-I colored some pieces of a game that would be cut out, laminated, and added to the file-folder game collection. I'll tell you, there are days where they just don't pay me enough, but today wasn't one of them.

SPLASH! It's Mr. Woodcock in Real Life

We went kinda crazy with the movies this weekend... We watched the 1984 classic [Splash](#) with the kids, and we also took in [Mr. Woodcock](#) and [Dan in Real Life](#) (for the adults). [Splash](#) is a [Tom Hanks](#) and [Daryl Hannah](#) movie about a mermaid who leaves the ocean to come to New York city and fall in love with Tom Hanks. It sounds dumb, but it's actually pretty well done and a movie with substance and heart. The special effects of her fins aren't bad either, considering they're over 20 years old and most likely made without computer assistance. Since I haven't seen the movie since I was a kid, I was wondering this time around about how many takes it took to film the underwater scenes... mainly the one where Daryl Hannah's character looks on a map in a sunken ship to find where Tom Hanks lives. Also, there's a scene in the movie where they are trying to choose a name for the mermaid, since her name is unpronounceable in English. They're walking down a New York street, and Tom Hanks mutters, "where are we, Madison..." to which Daryl Hannah replies, "Madison, I like Madison." That was a joke in the movie at the time, that the mermaid was named after a street in New York, but nowadays, the name Madison is almost TOO popular. We had about 4 Madisons or Maddies in a play we directed last year out of 21 kids! Anyway, I would recommend this as a good family movie, especially for little girls. There is actually some nudity (female rear end), and I could have done without a few of the kissing scenes, but overall, it is good family entertainment. I wonder if it would have gotten a PG13 rating if it had come out a few years later? I know there is a [Splash Too](#), but judging by the lack of returning actors, I haven't bothered to check it out. After a quick lookup on [imdb.com](#), I found that it got a whopping 3.0 rating with only 170 votes. Also interesting is that Madison the mermaid in [Splash Too](#) is

played by [Amy Yasbeck](#), who is nowadays best known for being [John Ritter's](#) widow. She was good in her bit part in [Pretty Woman](#), but still... I wonder if I should bother getting it from the library for the kids? Also in the original Splash is [Eugene Levy](#), who plays the bad guy trying to expose the mermaid – literally, by throwing water on her in public. This must be one of his first movies; I think he was a relatively unknown actor back then... Also, the late, great [John Candy](#) is hilarious as Tom Hanks' party animal brother, and those two have great chemistry in the movie... but on to the adult movies... ahem, I'm talking about the movies we watched without the kids...

Mr. Woodcock is a comedy starring [Billy Bob Thornton](#), who came no where near to reminding me of his character in [Sling Blade](#) – that's probably why he was nominated for an Oscar for that performance. I wasn't expecting much from this movie, but it was actually worse than I thought. It wasn't horrible, and I didn't feel like I wasted my time watching it, but it wasn't very funny, and there wasn't much to get from it. For one thing, I thought they would make the Mr. Woodcock character a little more nasty. As it turned out, he was really only nasty to little kids, which is still pretty bad, but I thought we'd catch him being nasty behind his girlfriend's back. Let me back up for a minute and give a plot synopsis – Mr. Woodcock is a horribly nasty gym teacher who terrorized kids so badly that a former student uses his experiences as fodder for an inspiring self-help book he wrote. This former student returns to his hometown in Nebraska to receive the “corn key to the city” only to find that his mom is happily dating Mr. Woodcock – his childhood nemesis! The successful author is played by [Seann William Scott](#), whose acting I wasn't thrilled with. His mother was played by [Susan Sarandon](#), and she was pretty good in the movie, given the character she had to play, who didn't have much depth. Like I said, I didn't feel like I wasted my time on this movie, but I don't know that I'd watch it again either. It definitely wasn't one of my favorite

comedies.

Dan in Real Life is a touching comedy (just falls short of a dra-medy, I would say, not quite sad enough, thank goodness) about a columnist widower named Dan (the ever-awesome [Steve Carell](#)) who is raising 3 daughters alone. The girls seem to be about 16, 14, and 9. For starters, let's just say that this movie had me dreading my life in about 10 years – the movie depicted teenage girls as frightening challenges for parents! Anyway, Dan takes his girls to visit their extended family for a few days, and when he first arrives, he really falls for the 'perfect woman'. He gets to his mom and dad's house, and wouldn't you know it, the 'perfect woman' turns out to be his brother's girlfriend. After a few days of torture... well, I'll let you watch the movie, I don't want to spoil anything for you. It's a really cute romantic comedy. If you have sons, you will be amused at Dan's daughters' antics. If you have daughters, be afraid, be very afraid! On another note, Steve Carell has beaten out Tom Hanks as my favorite actor – he is just amazing and so fun to watch, whether it's in [the Office](#), [Evan Almighty](#), or Dan in Real Life. His characters never remind me of each other, and it's not like they're mentally impaired like Billy Bob Thornton in Sling Blade or Tom Hanks in [Forrest Gump](#) – sometimes those types of characters are actually easier to play since they have a very specific demeanor about them. Steve Carell plays 'regular' guys, yet he gives them such depth and character that it really helps draw you into the movie and / or show. I never watched the tv show [Get Smart](#), but with Steve Carell playing Maxwell Smart in the big screen version of [Get Smart](#) due this summer, you can bet I plan on checking it out! Dan in Real Life is funny and heartwarming, and it makes me look forward to having huge family get-together weekends at our house someday with the kids and their spouses and kids... providing we survive the teenage years of course – that remains to be seen!