

Lions and Tigers and Bears Oh My

I am greatly anticipating our scheduled visit to the Toledo Zoo next week. My daughter needs a specialty dentist in the big city, so we've decided to throw some fun in there as well with a trip to the zoo. It will probably be my last one until after I have the baby, unless they have a wagon available for rental that's big enough for very pregnant me AND the 3 kids. Since it's only March and I'm not due until July, I think I can still handle the large amount of walking it takes to get around the zoo – we'll see anyway. I naively thought that pregnancies would get easier with experience, but it seems that I forgot to factor in my increasing age – I am almost 10 years older than I was the first time I was with child – and I feel it!

Toledo Zoo is very large. It's a very nice zoo, but there is lots of walking. It remains one of my favorite zoos in the country however, and I've visited at least 20. Toledo has lots of animals, but they are pretty spread out. Also, because the zoo straddles a major road, you have to trek up and down a ramp and across a long pedestrian bridge; all of which is not so much fun if pregnant or in the heat of the summer. But overall, it is one of my favorite zoos. Even though the gorilla's indoor exhibit is pretty small, I really enjoy how close you can see them, and they don't seem unhappy being in a small exhibit... unlike a gorilla at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska. He had a really small indoor enclosure, and we witnessed him charge at a little boy – it was very scary and thank goodness that glass was thick! This was years ago, and I think Henry Doorly has since re-built their gorilla exhibit. Another zoo with a lot of walking is the Brookfield Zoo near Chicago, Illinois. Brookfield has lots of walking, but unlike Toledo, the animals are spaced

further apart, so much of the walking is without seeing animals. It's been a few years since I've been there, so maybe they've changed this, but it's not one of my favorite zoos, unless we're talking about sentimental reasons – it was the site of my husband's and my first “unofficial” date. One zoo that sticks out in my memory as one of my favorites is the Folsom Children's Zoo in Lincoln, Nebraska. The name is misleading, they had quite an array of animals there; including red pandas, camels, reindeer, leopards, monkeys, a variety of reptiles, seals, sloths, emus that like to be pet, and there are still many more I haven't named. All in only 19 acres, nestled right in the city. Which sounds large, but once you get in there, it was really the perfect size. Not much walking at all, lots of animals who all had lots of room in their environments, and it was very nicely landscaped with mature trees and such so that you forgot you were in the middle of the city. We used to live close enough to walk there, but the only problem with this great little zoo is that it was only open from April – October. If you are ever in Nebraska, the Folsom Children's Zoo is a must-see. Being a native Chicagoan, it's strange that I've never visited the Lincoln Park Zoo, which is also in the middle of a city, albeit a much larger one than Lincoln. But I've heard good things about it, and maybe one of these days, during one of our bi-yearly visits to the area, we will give Lincoln Park a whirl so I can add it to my zoo resume.

Before our trips to the zoo, I like to visit a really cool website to brush up on my animal facts. It really makes zoo trips more interesting if you know a little more about what you're looking at. Check out this online database that is maintained by the University of Michigan:
<https://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/index.html>

And finally, if you are still reading this, you must be an animal lover like me. If you also like to read, I highly recommend my favorite book written by my favorite celebrity:

Jack Hanna, called "Monkeys on the Interstate". If you ever watch The Late Show with David Letterman, you know that poor Jack often comes across as a bumbling fool when he's on the show. He is an animal expert however, and he is much more entertaining to watch than most animal experts. He and Letterman tease each other mercilessly, and there is almost always some sort of animal mishap that occurs when Jack is involved, always with hilarious results. His book is a narrative of the same sort of episodes, all taken from his life as he was growing up and also from when he went on to become the director of the Columbus Zoo. By the way, being an Ohioan, I've had the opportunity to visit the Columbus Zoo, and I will say that it did not disappoint. If you read Jack's book, you will read about how he brought the zoo from anonymity (he notes in his book that when he first arrived in Ohio, people would always ask him, "there's a zoo in Columbus?!?") to one of the most renowned facilities in the world. There was a lot of trial and error involved in achieving this, and again, many hilarious hijinks, all of which are detailed in the book – it is really entertaining reading. And it's not just a clever title – there really *were* Monkeys on the Interstate, thanks to Jack and one of his hare-brained ideas! Maybe I will take another look at it on the long ride to Toledo next week...

Return To Shaffer Value

All riiighty then. Tonight, I started a new old job. It seems I was in the right place at the right time last week when I went into my local grocery store to fax my resume to a few possible job locations. It seems that the store was in need of some part time help as most of the school age kids were going to be involved in sports this spring. So, I said until

something more lucrative came up, why not.

Old job you ask. Yes, because the grocery earned the nickname "Shaffer Value" after my two older brothers, my mother, my younger sister, and myself worked there at some point. I will not say how long I worked there initially (at least 4 years). The funny thing was, the minute I walked in today, they had already received a phone call for a reference for me. Unfortunately, none of the employees I worked with previously were there to take the call. They gave me a glowing review from personality alone since the person calling did not understand that it has been many years since I graced the store with my services.

Some things had changed while many others seemed to have remained basically the same. The minute I walked into the stockroom, I was totally shocked. Gone were the piles and piles of overstock which had previously been there to be worked and reworked until they could not be worked anymore. There were two small stacks which contained items for all four aisles (yes, a four-aisle grocery). I could have only imagined having such a nice backroom in my day.

The cash register was also much more advanced (from my previous days, anyway). Before, the store only accepted cash, checks, or paper food stamps. Now we take credit (debit, too), food stamps are now done electronically, and WIC is accepted, as well. Plus, they have scanners which we did not have. The store has finally gotten out of the stone age.

One thing did draw me into reality. The stock boy working there who is a senior in high school is someone whom I remember being brought in by his mother when he was a baby. Of course, the lady running the register when I arrived today used to change my diapers so I guess it is all relative. So... until something better comes along... Few may remember the days when it was known as Shaffer Value, but it will do. I know there are people who remember the space being the local movie

theatre.

I know you...

A date with the familiar happens all the time, déjà vu and all that. I think we can all think of more than a few times that has happened. Today I was in 6th grade science, a field which has sort of been a goal of mine for teaching. As part of the lesson plan, another teacher would come in for two of the classes and pretty much take over. This being a good thing of course as I don't have much experience with the applications they were using on a computer project (iMovie, iPhoto, Photo Booth), nor did I even know anything about the project. Anyway, I looked at her name and thought to myself, "isn't she...?" When it came time for the first of the two periods we got to talking and sure enough, she was the sub-caller for another district I once worked in. Apparently she got downsized last year when the district went to a computer system (*hmm. looks like I can sign up in that district again if I have to keep working as a sub...*) and so she got a job in the district I was in today.

But this wouldn't make for a good blog entry if she was the only one. During one of the classes I was handing out new textbooks and I came across a familiar last name, so I asked the student if his dad worked at another school I sub in. Yep. I told him I subbed for his dad a couple of times. Well, then a *third* coincidence happened. Well, possible coincidence. I was afraid to ask this time and push the odds. She had the last name of someone I went to school with when I was in 6th grade. Now this has happened to me before, one at a time anyway, in other schools- which is only natural given the fact that I grew up in this same area. I have met

my share students whose moms or dads I went to school with or whose parent I've seen elsewhere, like a professor at a local college.

Slightly related to this I just remembered I had one student with the last name of Fogerty one time. I joked about her being related to [John Fogerty](#), of [Creedence Clearwater Revival](#) fame if you don't know him, and she said he was her uncle. She was serious too; either that or a good actress. Anyway, I wonder who I will meet tomorrow?

Skating On Very Thin Ice

I was debating on which blog to write this post. I, personally, have had enough of filmmakers making the same movie over and over again and attempting to make it a sequel. There has been Cruel [Intentions I and II](#) (based on the film [Dangerous Liaisons](#)). It even had the same characters but played by different actors. Last night, [The Cutting Edge 3](#) premiered. I did not tune in as I have seen the [first movie](#) at least once (and that is enough, thank you). The first movie starred D.B. Sweeney (a B-movie actor if there ever was one) as a hockey player who either is passed his prime or is injured. Somehow, he becomes the partner of an Olympic-medal hopeful figure skater (Moirra Kelley). What follows is as predictable as any [Dirty Dancing](#)-esque movie could be. The two meet, argue, attempt to work together, fall apart, get back together, and finally perfect their routine enough to compete. Did I mention that they also fall in love... how predictable?

OH... forgive me please. [The Cutting Edge 2](#) features the daughter of the characters of the original. It seems she has the same dream as her mother and meets and falls for her

headstrong, stubborn skating partner. I'm sure that it is as brilliant as the first movie... only the character names have been changed (or most) to protect the integrity of the first movie.

Unfortunately, I could find no synopsis for The Cutting Edge 3 to compare the plots of the trilogy. However, I can provide the following as a possible scenario:

A former hockey pro reluctantly agrees to become the partner of a stubborn, self-centered Olympic figure skating hopeful. Sexual tension begins to rise as they struggle to go for the gold.

Strange, but they seem like a case of been there, seen that, and seeing that was not so great. So enough of Hollywood rehashes posing as sequels even if they are direct to video or made-for-television. At the very least, [Grease 2](#) attempted to be a completely different story... but that is another turkey.

When Forwards Are Addicting...

I'm talking about email forwards. And just about everyone knows someone or is someone (even if they won't admit it) who just can't seem to resist forwarding EVERY forward they get to EVERYONE in their address book. I've mentioned before that my mom's neighbor from about 5 years ago *still* forwards me stuff... and it's not like I knew them all that well to begin with. They just got my email address from a forward list one time (I think), and just forward every forward to everyone they know – and some people they don't know, apparently. I get about 3-5 forwards in my email per day from various people. I don't read them all – who has time for that? Some of them I pass along, and others I don't. I always feel a

little guilty when I do pass them on though because there is a slight chance they could contain viruses or just be incredibly annoying to those poor people I do send them to... So, with my apologies ahead of time to those who don't like it, here is a link that I got as a forward the other day. It links to this really fun and addicting mini golf game that my husband and I have had lots of fun with. So far, my top score – well it's golf, so my low score is a 42... holes #14 and #18 kill me every time. See what you think: <https://www.ibogleif.dk/spil/flashspil/minigolf/minigolf.swf>

[swf]https://www.ibogleif.dk/spil/flashspil/minigolf/minigolf.swf[/swf]

Oh, yeah, and DO NOT open this at work – I do not want to be responsible for getting anyone into trouble on the job! I know I can't put the game down... enough of this posting, the baby needs a diaper change... I'll change her after one more game, just gotta play while holding my nose...

If Music Be The Food Of Love, Play On

This afternoon two communities who are usually big rivals came together to honor someone who has touched the lives of quite possibly every person who either lived in either town or attended school in Edgerton, Ohio. Emily Curtis grew up in Edon but has taught music in Edgerton for 27 years at all levels (junior high, high school, and, most recently, elementary). Last year, she was stricken with leukemia and is in Columbus at the medical facilities on the OSU campus

undergoing treatment. Through it all, she has been the same tough, strong, stubborn woman she has been for at least 20 years. She has given so much to everyone not only in this area but worldwide. Since 09/11/01, she has spear-headed a Troop Care package program sending supplies to the armed forces in Iraq and all over the world. The program has sent tons of necessities and has received numerous plaques, letters, and medals for its generosity.

At the benefit, there were thousands of dollars worth of donated items in a silent auction. Ohio State and Michigan memorabilia, beautiful artwork, Edgerton apparel, too much stuff to even begin to describe. School children danced and sang. Mrs. Balser, who started her teaching career at Edgerton 40 years ago, has generously taken Mrs. Curtis position for the year. A second grader sang "Rainbow Connection" and sounded like he should have provided the voice of Kermit the Frog in the "[Muppet Movie](#)."

There are just so many personal levels on which I could write about my experiences with Emily. She is one tough cookie and will push you until you have reached your potential. During my four years in high school, she arranged for the band to travel to Chicago to see [Phantom of the Opera](#). We attended a performance of Annie in Toledo as we were just beginning to stage our own production. Speaking of our production of [Annie](#), I originally auditioned for the role of Daddy Warbucks. The day after tryouts, I was called over the PA to report to the band room. "OH, LORD... what have I done now?" I was asked to read for the role of Rooster. Read a bit of dialogue, sing "Easy Street," and CROW. Emily and the drama director told me then and there that I had nailed the role of Warbucks, but they thought I would do even better as the villain.

In November 2006, I played the part of Vinnie in [The Odd Couple](#). This was the first time I had been in a non-musical play since 1991 Two people were instrumental in my decision to try out (aside from myself that is). I called Emily the night

before auditions and asked her what she thought. She has told me for years that I need to let my light shine bright (among other things) and that she knew I would do well. And following the Sunday matinee, she told me “Who is it that has been telling you for years to stop limiting yourself?” Thanks Ma

Horton Hears a ZZZzzzz...

Took the kids to see [Horton Hears a Who](#) today. Ok, so the title of the blog is a bit misleading... it wasn't really boring. I am just so tired that I'm 2 for 2 in the falling asleep in the movie theater tally this week. I actually liked what I saw of the movie. With the exception of my 3-year-old running up and down the aisle, I enjoyed the experience. It wasn't totally her fault though; we went to an Easter egg hunt this morning, so she had LOTS of sugar coursing through her veins, which is why she was extra-hyper and running around the movie theater. Once we flushed the sugar with plenty of non-sugary fluids, I was able to relax and enjoy the show – after a trip to the bathroom, of course. It should actually be called a candy clean-up since they pick candy up off the floor; it has nothing to do with Easter eggs or hunting. Still fun though, I'm just saying.

Before the movie started, I found myself wishing I had read the book, just to see how close the movie is to the book because now I have no idea. But as far as Dr. Suess movies go, this is the best one I've seen. Then again, I HATED [The Cat in the Hat](#), and never saw the live-action version of [How the Grinch Stole Christmas](#), so there's not much to compare it to in that respect.

The movie is about an elephant named Horton who lives in a

jungle in what must be a fictional place because to my knowledge, there aren't any jungles that have both kangaroos and elephants as indigenous species. I know, it's just a Dr. Seuss movie and I'm probably reading too far into it, but I can't help but think of that sort of thing. And judging by Horton's ears, he is an African elephant, not an Asian elephant... ok, I'll stop. So anyway, Horton hears a Who. A Who is actually a type of teeny-tiny person that lives in Whoville, all of which is located on a speck on a clover. The rest of the story is about how Horton tries to save Whoville from a conniving kangaroo (played by the brilliant [Carol Burnett](#)) intent on destroying it. I don't usually like when I know the big-name actors voicing roles in an animated movie – it kind of distracts me, which is what happened when I heard [Jim Carrey](#) as the voice of Horton. His voice also made the Horton character seem less cute to me, but I did like Carol Burnett as that scheming kangaroo. And, hearing [Steve Carell](#) as the mayor of Whoville was not distracting at all – he is even good at voice-over acting – is there ever a role he'll butcher? Watching the opening credits, I noticed a plethora of recognizable actors lending voicework for this movie; among them: Jim Carrey, Steve Carell, Carol Burnett, [Will Arnett](#) (from Arrested Development), [Seth Rogan](#), [Isla Fisher](#) (from Wedding Crashers – she was surprisingly good as a cartoon voice), [Jonah Hill](#), and [Amy Poehler](#).

It's a cute movie that's perfect for the whole family, even though my 3-year-old asked about where the princesses were until the last 10 minutes of the movie. When it was over, she did say she liked it, sans princesses and all. There are some jokes for the parents that will go over the kids' heads, and that's always enjoyable in a kids' movie – although I could have done without the kangaroo saying, "This is the jungle; we can't behave like wild animals." – just WAY too cheesy, think I've even heard that joke before somewhere else! I loved how the Mayor of Whoville has 96 daughters and 1 son – someday I might know what that is like! Is that in the book I wonder?

It seems almost too clever to be an add-in for the movie... Either way, I will have to go borrow the book from the library to see how close the movie followed it, but I have heard that the book is pretty closely followed. I've always liked Dr. Suess, and it's a shame he's not still around to gift us with any more of his work or to see his creations come to life on the big screen.

Winning Isn't Everything

While having a few minutes free today, I flipped through the endless array of nothingness which is television (especially on a late Saturday afternoon). I happened across the game show "Greed." One of the multiple choice questions was: "Which four of the following has won a Best Actor Oscar." The six possible answers were:

Al Pacino
Robert Redford
Paul Newman
Michael Douglas
Tom Cruise
Nicolas Cage

The question got my head spinning about controversies in the category. George C. Scott refused the award for his portrayal of [Patton](#) because he did not like the way in which the character was presented. Marlon Brando refused the award for his role in one of the most acclaimed films in motion picture history, [The Godfather](#), in order to protest the mistreatment of Native Americans in motion pictures. Those are two of the most notable controversies in the 80 year history of the Best Actor award. Are there any others?

As for the question itself, I had to check the veracity of one of the correct responses. I was absolutely sure of one of the actors until it came up wrong. I was even certain of the role for which I was sure he had won. See if you can guess the correct four.

Come On, Get Happy

The last job I would ever even consider having is a school bus driver. Not only do you have to put up with crabby, rowdy children for up to two hours a day while trying to get them safely to and from school, you have to put up with their guardians. My mother drives a school bus. She is up at 6am ever morning. She drives a morning route, a kindergarten route, and the afternoon route. Last Tuesday NIGHT, the grandmother of one of these tykes visited our humble abode. It seems that her car was totally ruined and completely undrivable after my mother backed into it with a bus that morning. The woman stated that she was outside in the yard at the time of the incident. Yet she did not attempt to stop the bus or call the school or police after she watched the bus damage her vehicle. Not only that, but who would wait until 9 o' clock that night to do anything about it. Plus, if the car was damaged as badly as it was claimed to be would the bus driver or kids not have noticed hitting it?

The next day the sheriff's department came to the house to investigate. Apparently, the victim's automobile was not nearly as damaged as everyone was lead to believe. To make matters seem funnier or more ironic, the woman is the mother of the rather plump boy who broke my sister's arm in phys ed nearly 20 years ago when he sat on it while playing scooterboard hockey. It does not take a genius to realize that

you should report an accident immediately after it happens and not 14 hours later.

What's in a name?

I had accepted a grade 1/2 assignment for today due to the trouble I had earlier in the week getting jobs. It's slightly below my comfort zone because of the 1st grade students. However, had I not taken it I wouldn't have this to write about! Well, it's not much of a topic, but it is a little different. Not much really goes into naming kids these days in Western culture. We choose a name usually because we had a relative with that name, there was a role model with that name (such as in the Bible) or we just like the sound of it. Once upon a time, and still in some cultures names carry meaning. But that's not what this post is about. It's also not about people who try to change names for [special recognition](#).

What it's about is why some parents choose to give their kids names that, well, just don't fit... I once read a story about new guardians who would go to court to get kids' names changed because their parents cursed them with ridiculous names, like the drug-shot parents who named their daughter Cocaina (guess which was their drug of choice?) or the parents who [tried to name their child Friday](#). The name itself may not be ridiculous, but rather given to the wrong gender. I mean, do such parents regret having the "wrong sex" and give them the name they picked out anyway- like the parents who really wanted a boy so when they had a girl they dressed her up like a boy until she was to start school (and were mystified when she refused to put on a dress for her first day of school)? Of course there are some names that go both ways, at least the shortened version like Chris, Alex, Terry, etc. And I am still

getting used to **Leslie** and **Cameron** being both male and female names. However, some just don't work. Can you imagine a girl named Matt or Mike? Or a boy named Elizabeth or Jessica? Well, you may have to have some Hispanic blood to understand this one, but a boy in the class I was in today was named [Guadalupe](#). That's right. Named after Mary in the Bible as **Our Lady of Guadalupe** (well, an [apparition of Mary](#), but I won't split hairs). Apparently a very popular name for girls (click the name for more information). Why?? This is just setting up this boy for future problems with schoolmates. I predict that by the time he is in Junior High he will be going by his middle name, whatever it is, assuming that it too isn't a girl's name. I really hope it isn't for his sake.

Not enough links for you in the above post? Try out [these unusual names on Wikipedia](#). I had forgotten that Nicholas Cage had named his son Kal-El (you know, Superman)!