

# I've Always Been Crazy, But It's Kept Me From Going Insane

I had to borrow the title of this blog post from one of my favorite Waylon Jennings tunes because I talk to animals, and some people would say that makes me crazy. Crazier yet is when the animals talk back to me...

As it is always tremendous fun for me, yesterday's visit to the zoo did not disappoint. And while we made our way to the exit near closing time, I was turning over in my head the questions I ask myself and my co-visitors after every zoo trip: what was your favorite animal that you saw today and why? I was having a hard time deciding; everything was great, but nothing stood out as being extraordinary... until my chat with the cheetah. He was looking directly at me, and I said, "Hi Cheetah!" and he said, "Mew." I couldn't believe it, so I said it again, to which he gave me another, "Mew." Now I didn't realize that cheetahs meow and sound just like your average housecat, but upon much research when I got home, this is one thing I learned about an animal that never fascinated me as much as others until it talked to me. From now on, I will always stop by the cheetahs to say "hi" because I think we are now buddies. I also found a cute little video of cheetahs meowing, much like my new friend at the Toledo Zoo!

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# Snow, driving, drifts and ditches.

Game night 1 of this weekend is finished. Played a couple of fun games, had some fun food (brownies are always good), and fun/good friends. We played/talked well into the early morning.

It was snowing and blowing in the area so I expected a treacherous drive on the way home. The roads were turning nasty on the way there, I only expected them to get worse. But since we didn't have more than 2 or 3 more inches of snow, I thought I would be able to navigate all the roads roads I travel.

Not more than 1/2 mile outside of town, heading west, there was a car in the ditch being pulled out by a wrecker. I had to wait there for a while, since there was nowhere to back up and take a different route. Looks like I had to be a bit more cautious.

I finally headed off the main road and on to the back county road system. Drifts were piling up on the first North/South road I traveled on. Since it looked like they were straight across the road, I didn't think I would have any trouble on the East/West roads. I was wrong, a bigger drift was on that road... Then an even bigger drift on the next North/South road. Obviously the wind was blowing in every direction.

Made it home in one piece. Happy I have the new tires on the truck. Happy I have good friends to talk to. Life while not perfect, for today it is good.

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# Sanctuary From Pains

It came as a great shock to me to learn that one of the supporting actors of one of my favorite shows growing up had gone missing. Today, after a week long search, his body was found. [Joshua Andrew Koenig](#) played Richard “Boner” Stabone the best friend of Mike Seever (played by Kirk Cameron) on *Growing Pains*.

I’m not sure if I did not know the actor’s name or just did not make the connection, but I just learned Monday that Andrew was the son of Walter Koenig who played Ensign Pavel Chekov on the original *Star Trek* television series. Andrew also has another tie to Trekdom. He played the role of Tumak on the *Deep Space Nine* “[Sanctuary](#).”

May He watch over the family of this young man in their time of remorse.

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## It’s been a long time...

This weekend should be a fun one. Friday night game night and Saturday night game night. Two game nights in a row. What more could you ask for?

A few good friends will be gathered at taylhis and old-admin’s (ok, now he needs a new tangent’s name – He doesn’t post enough to be known as “Whatever”.) house and play a variety of games. We never really know what will be played, but it is usually fun. (Note to self, I do not like PIT ... ☐ )

Saturday is the night I'm really looking forward to. After almost 20 years of non game running (1 night teaching the game was in there, that is why it is almost), I'm going to be running a Dungeons and Dragons game. I'm really looking forward to it. The prep work is done. The back story ready. The Zombies and the other 'Undead' are ready for feasting.

When I started playing D&D back in my college years, the game was almost in its infancy. It and other role-playing games have come a long way from the 'early' days. For the first year, I just played. I always let someone else run the game. But our gamemaster was tired of running and just wanted to play. He asked me to run a campaign or two. I really enjoyed doing it. After a while, the group I played with left college and started going our own ways. Some of us still in the area kept playing. 2 or 3 of us shared the game running duties/experience. During this time I liked running the game the best.

We slowly drifted apart as jobs and or family called us here and there. I ran the game for my girls a few times, only the oldest seemed interested. I flitted in and out of other gaming groups for the next 15 or so years. The game changed and new additions/versions were added. With my family, I never kept up with buying the new material. I played the game and let others run it.

Not all that long ago (just over a year ago if memory serves), I started role-playing again with my oldest daughter and her friends. So this Saturday, I'm going to be running the game for the group. I hope my old skill set is still there. Maybe with the 10+ years of acting experience, that skill set has improved. On top of that, there is a little improv. Should be a good weekend...

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# How To Get To Carnegie Hall

While at work today, the boss informed me of a spectacular trip her brother and nephew (a seventh grade theatre buff) were recently part of. Her brother is the principal of a high school whose choir just took a trip to the Big Apple. Not only did the group perform at Carnegie Hall (that in itself would be a dream come true) but they saw no less than **3 Broadway Musicals!** (*Phantom of the Opera*, *The Lion King*, and the current smash revival of *West Side Story*). When I was in the BGSU Men's Chorus, the biennial Spring Break tour to New York City afforded us the chance to see one... and MAYBE two shows while living out of the Lakefront Tour buses. I must admit to being a wee bit jealous. Not only do I find it hard to imagine that they were able to see that many shows in 1-2 days, but how did they perform and still have time to sleep? Not that many of them got much sleep. I know from experience. I asked if I could go back to his school next year. I could age myself about 20 years less, right?! That must have been a lot of cheese and sausage sold to take a trip of that magnitude!

The boss remarked that it only took me an hour to come up with *West Side* because she could not and it was my mission to come up with the title of a popular, CURRENT show. So I started rattling off the current musicals on the boards: *Wicked*, *Shrek*, *Mary Poppins*, *Rock of Ages*, *Billy Elliot*, *Hairspray*, *Mamma Mia!*> When none of these worked, I thought... she said CURRENT, but...

*Jamiah: West Side Story?!*

*Di: THAT'S IT!*

*J: But you said current. West Side Story is indeed on revival but it is hardly current.*

*Di: Go back to work!*

That's gratitude! Next time, I'll let her sweat it out a little more. **HA!**

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## **The Great Zoo Debate**

This is a sad post for me to write – a veteran trainer, Dawn Brancheau, was killed yesterday by an Orca whale at Sea World in Orlando, Florida. Reports of the incident have been conflicting, but it seems that the trainer was pulled into the tank when the giant sea mammal grabbed her ponytail. She subsequently drowned. Unmistakably, this is a tragedy – pure and simple.

But it also re-awakens the great zoo debate – should humans be able to keep wild animals in zoos? As they say, you can take an animal out of the wild, but you can't take the wild out of the animal, and tragedies such as yesterday's incident at Sea World prove this. It is also apparent that no matter how many precautions are taken to avoid tragedy, an accident can always occur. However, I love zoos, and I strongly and truly believe that the conservation education and money raised by zoos has been and will continue to be detrimental in helping certain species survive and bounce back from the brink of extinction. Many other people disagree, and tragedies such as this and the fatal Siberian tiger mauling at the San Francisco Zoo in 2007 always add fervor to the great zoo debate, which is depicted in this video from Good Morning America and features zoo advocate Jack Hanna debating with the Vice President of an

anti-zoo organization, Born Free:

In my opinion, they did not let Mr. Hanna have an equal part in the debate. He has some good points, and it's very difficult to say where the status of certain endangered species would be right now if it were not for the conservation efforts of zoos and wildlife parks – no one knows what **could** or **would** have been either way, so how can that be a part of the debate? As Mr. Roberts points out, the number of tigers has greatly dwindled over the past century. But one can also point out that no one knows for sure if it would have been worse had zoos not been educating the public about tigers or if they had not been learning how to breed them in captivity to continue the species.

The bottom line is, in my opinion, (and this is MY blog, so I get the bottom line) zoos and aquariums have taken great strides forward for the preservation of many animal species. I believe their work and conservation efforts are **invaluable** to conservation (not to mention how many thousands of jobs zoos, aquariums, wildlife parks, and conservation programs bring to societies in hundreds of countries); in fact, AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums have funded more than 3,700 conservation projects in more than 100 countries and spend nearly \$70 million on conservation initiatives annually. Remember my post about the [Kihansi Spray Toad](#)? This is just **one** example of a creature that would be completely extinct (it is believed to be extinct in the wild but still exists in just two zoos in the world) if it weren't for the efforts of zoos trying to save it.

Obviously what happened in Orlando is a tragedy of great proportion. And I'm not trying to undermine it, but Dawn's friends, family, and colleagues are all stating that she was aware of the inherent risks of her job and that she would want nothing but for her work to go on despite what happened. Perhaps changes need to be made; maybe certain species of animal require bigger and better habitats and different types of interaction and stimulation – the modern zoo world is

relatively new, and experts are still learning. But I think their hard work is invaluable to the world, and I hope that someday, all of this is just as obvious to the nay-sayers as it is to us zoo-lovers.



Kind of puts this into perspective now... I wonder if Marineland in Niagara Falls Canada still allows this after recent tragedies involving the killer whale?

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## Second Wind

Being sick for three days threw off my already crummy sleep schedule. I was up way too late last night, and I got tired way too early this evening (5:30ish). I ate some dinner and got a second wind. I sure hope it lasts until a decent hour to go to bed, but not too late that I will need a second wind to get through tomorrow. Does that even make sense? Or are these the ramblings of an exhausted individual?

Someday I would love to get on a semi-normal sleep pattern. This stay up late, get up early, get to sleep earlier, get up even earlier pattern is not very good. Any hints that don't

involve some sort of medication would be appreciated.

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## Wow

A week ago (sadly, my most recent blog post) I blogged about a school district monitoring their students by remotely turning on the webcams of their school-issued laptops. This story has really ballooned. On one site I have been following a thread about it and many links have been posted. Here are a few—click the titles for the full articles:

### [Lower Pervian School District vs. Mike and Ikes](#)

*...AP reports the FBI is investigating the school district's webcam program, and district spokesman Doug Young suggests without claiming that Harriton High School student Blake J. Robbins' webcam was activated only because the laptop had been reported stolen – in accordance with an established policy. The boy was charged with an undisclosed infraction based on an image the school picked up from his webcam. District superintendent Christopher W. McGinley, in an orotund statement, defends the program while canceling it. And just to make clear that we're still in high school, Master Robbins appears to have gotten in trouble when he was photographed eating Mike and Ikes...*

## Federal judge orders Pa. schools to stop laptop spying

*...Yesterday, U.S. District Court Judge Jan DuBois issued a consent order that prevents Lower Merion School District of Ardmore, Pa., from “remotely activating any and all web cams embedded in lap top [sic] computers issued to students ... or from remotely taking screenshots of such computers.”*

*Lower Merion spokesman Doug Young said today that the district would fully cooperate with the court order...*

## The Spy at Harriton High (and more)

*...The truly amazing part of this story is what’s coming out from comments from the students themselves. Some of the interesting points:*

- *Possession of a monitored Macbook was required for classes*
- *Possession of an unmonitored personal computer was forbidden and would be confiscated*
- *Disabling the camera was impossible*
- *Jailbreaking a school laptop in order to secure it or monitor it against intrusion was an offense which merited expulsion*

*When I spoke at MIT about the wealth of electronic evidence I came across regarding Chinese gymnasts, I used the phrase “compulsory transparency”. I never thought I would be using the phrase to describe America, especially so soon, but that appears to be exactly the case...*

## Software maker blasts 'vigilantism' in Pa. school spying case

*The company selling the software used by a Pennsylvania school district to allegedly spy on its students blasted what it called laptop theft-recovery "vigilantism" today.*

*Absolute Software said it dissuades users of theft-recovery software from acting on their own. "We discourage any customer from taking theft recovery into their own hands," said Stephen Midgley, the company's head of marketing, in an interview Monday. "That's best left in the hands of professionals."...*

There is now a [Wikipedia page](#) about the ongoing investigation of this lawsuit, though the blogs and articles (full of even more links for your perusal by the way) are more interesting IMHO.

Next up, something about my own unexciting life. Hopefully. ☐

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## **Give Me What I Want And I'll Go Away**

If memory serves, Stephen King's [Storm of the Century](#) was a mini-series in the late 90s. It definitely was not a theatrical release since I watched the 2hr15min first part tonight. I have seen many of King's other movies and this one definitely ranks VERY high. Maybe it's because Mr. King actually had a hand in the production or perhaps it's because

everything about the movie is so compelling. For a televised production, I thought the editing was very well done. It is usually much easier to pick out where commercials would be inserted but it just flowed.

I caught the blink or you miss cameo by the writer and a reference to at least one of his other works. I caught the Superman homage and chuckled when Tim Daly uttered it. For those of you who don't know, Daly was the voice of the animated Man of Steel from 1996-2000. But Colm Feore who plays the creepy, enigmatic, brilliant baddie, Andre Linoge made me think of another equally brilliant villain: Dr. Hannibal Lecter. But tell me, what was it he was whispering throughout especially when the sound of the storm was raging? I don't think it was "I'm a Little Teapot."

I can't wait to watch part 2 to find out just what exactly Linoge is. Signs are given throughout that he might be a leftover from *'Salem's Lot* but I think he maybe something even more sinister.

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# Random thoughts for today

I was strolling around the internet (I don't surf, that just goes too fast), and I found a few interesting things.

[On this site](#), I found two t-shirts I liked. The first was with Bela Lugosi as Dracula holding the head of a more recent movie vampire (yes, just the head). The saying was "Dracula never sparkled." Struck my sense of humor today. The other shirt on the same site was "Meat is Murder. Quick eat the evidence." So today, I guess my humor is heading toward the violent stage. "Here's Johnny." ☐

Ok, I knew somebody had the list of what emoticons actually works here. [Ok, I found them, thanks again Derek!!](#) Why can't all of the various chat area, blog sites, bulletin boards, social networks, ect. use the same symbols. Why do they work sometimes and not others. Even being a technical person by trade, I get sick of technology... ☐

[Are we headed for a new form of the WWW?](#) Kind of discussed this last night with a friend or few. Mostly about if Facebook would start charging for use. Currently that is just a malicious rumor floating around, but as was said in the conversation, Facebook and other sites like that need some cash to exist. Now this article is more about premium content, but I wonder what premium content is. I already pay for my web access, about as much as I would pay for Cable/Satellite TV, Cell Phone usage ect., so I wonder how much more this would eventually cost. Like most people in the middle class, my budget is strained from all angles. I don't have pay TV for a number of reason, but one is I really don't want to pay for TV.

If it ever comes to the point that I have to pay for TV, I'll stop watching. I've said before there isn't much I want to watch, so it doesn't make any difference to me. I have internet access to keep up with friends, family, work and news of the day. I pay for that access to offset other areas I no longer use or pay for. If the outlets I use start charging me, on top of my access charge, I may stop using them. Unless I become independently wealthy. I can always go to the library to pick up newspapers and magazines. My taxes go to keep those organizations functioning, so I will use them. I can use other means to contact friends and family. But then as I said earlier, sometimes the technology bugs me...

[In what may be a good use for Ebooks, I found this article.](#)

Textbooks that can be modified or commented on by the professors/teachers. Cool stuff. I remember in school carting around a lot of books. And then in college pay tons of money for lots of books. Of course the teachers would always comment or add to the material present in the book. This forced the student to carry even more. I like the idea of getting this all on an E-book level and allow the students to carry around less material. Save trees and backaches. Now if they would only come up with a way to make that stupid textbook cheaper.

One final note. I went to the oriental restaurant on Sunday with my daughter. My taste buds were so messed up, I left the fortune cookies in the truck. Since my taste returned today I ate the cookies. The first fortune I had was "Everything will now come your way." The lucky numbers on this fortune just happened to be the birthdays (day of the month) of my four daughters, myself and my late wife. That is six numbers. The estimated jackpot for the Mega Millions jackpot is now 83 million for tonight's drawing. I met my late wife in 1983... Is that a sign? I'm not sure I believe in stuff like that, but I bought the ticket anyway. I used my late wife's birthday as the powerball and put the rest of the days in the regular numbers. One final little note: that combination of numbers

never won the jackpot...