

Staycation

Even if my plans for travel fell through, I was sooooo not at all disappointed in my time off. It began last Sunday when I was invited to attend services at my friends' church. I thought the service was very well done. A timely sermon (even if the pastor attempted to parallel it with an hour in the life of Jack Bauer).

Monday, I visited the zoo with the same friends... minus admin who was stuck working. But [taylhis](#) and company had a great time, as always. I then went to auditions for the dinner theatre that I will be part of Valentine's Day weekend. I hope by now that the cast has been set as the director was lacking a few key roles. As I previously mentioned, the play involves improvisation... just the word alone scares me. But after learning who my character is... I am so ready for my new challenge.

Tuesday night, I introduced my friends to the cinematic adventures of Harry Potter. I am pleased to say that all enjoyed the movie. I agree, that while the movie does take a certain amount of liberties, as a whole the movies are really entertaining.

Friday night, I watched *Mystery, Alaska* for the first time. I really enjoyed the "adult take on *The Mighty Ducks*."

Saturday and Sunday nights were spent with some of my new friends of the Village Players. Megan and I went to Mary's and played Disney Scene-It, Movie Scene-It, more Trivial Pursuit, and Megan and I stayed and played cutthroat Scrabble with Mare and Trav.

And the climax... [Mary](#), Travis, Jen, Megan, and I went to see *Sherlock Holmes* on the huge Rave screen with Digital Sound and Picture. I must say that the ads for the movie do not do the movie justice. THANK GOODNESS it was not all Robert Downey,

Jr. with his shirt off... and very little of it actually was. What we did get was a superb mystery, action thriller in the finest tradition of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's characters. The chemistry between Downey and Jude Law (as Dr. Watson) was great. Irene Adler and Inspector Lestrade (two other Doyle creations) were also instrumental elements of the movie. The way definitely paved the way for a return to late 19th Century London. We definitely left the movie pleased and (myself, at least) am ready for the sequel.

So sometimes, the best vacations are spent right here in the backyard.

My Favorite Amphibian

Recently, a friend and fellow tangents blogger wrote a [blog post regarding her bucket list](#) – for those who haven't seen nor heard about the movie of said title, a bucket list is comprised of things you want to do before you die. Her post got me to thinking about my bucket list, and maybe I'll post it in the future. For now, I know that one of the items on my bucket list – or many items, depending upon how I write it – will involve seeing certain species of animals; many of them endangered and rare. If seeing rare animals is on my bucket list, then I can cross off one item – last week I got to see several specimens of the [Kihansi Spray Toad](#) – an animal that is considered *extinct* in the wild!



Given my intense fear of them, I never thought that a frog or a toad would be on my list of animals to see – but the Kihansi Spray Toad is actually kinda cute! For me, it seems that the more brown and dry the amphibian, the more it creeps me out – not including salamanders, which I don't have a problem with at all. I'm not at all frightened by the beautiful blue Poison Dart frogs or other colorful species, which is strange since those are the ones that tend to be poisonous and harmful to humans. Weird. So anyway, I think the Kihansi Spray Toad is both extremely fascinating and very cute!

The Toledo Zoo is the only place in the entire world where people can view these special little toads who were first recognized as a species as recently as 1996. Not only that, it is estimated that over half of the earth's entire population of the toads live in Toledo. I am so glad I decided to venture over to the Museum of Science in the Toledo Zoo last week to see the spray toad! It was the highlight of my zoo visit; all of the other animals were kinda lethargic. Oh, there is one more thing – my 10-year-old daughter got pooped on by a bird in aviary! She was a really good sport about it, and it just **plucked** right out of her hair – no harm, no **fowl**. My daughter's unfortunate accident:



It was neat to see the local wildlife congregating in the unused Hippo-quarium. It's too cold for the hippos to be outside, but the ducks have a nice place to swim – who would have thought about what a group of ducks look like from under the water?



My 3 daughters fit into one giant egg!



This was taken on a different day, but I had to put in this

cute picture of my 2 youngest. My little guy is learning to say "CHEESE!" for the camera ☐



In Development?

My sister just informed me of some trailers she just saw on youtube. Some fake and others I knew about already. The reboot of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is due this Spring. I had to laugh when she swore that she saw an official preview for *Jaws V*. Even more telling was the fact that she said that Roy Scheider and Richard Dreyfuss were going to reprise their characters from the original. Hilarious, because Sheriff Brody was killed sometime between *Jaws 2* and *Jaws 3-D*. And once again, following the debacle that was *Jaws: The Revenge* (tagline: "This time, it's personal."), I ask: **WHY?!** Especially when it's been a good 25 years since the last one.

Finally, [*Spider-Man 4*](#) is about to get underway. Something very strange: after only 3 films in the last decade, we are getting a re-haul of the franchise. A new director is taking over which will probably mean a new cast. But why reintroduce the series when it has only been a few years since the last film was released. While by far the worst of the trilogy,

Spider-Man 3 still had moments of fun and it did have a lot to live up to following the phenomenal second installment.

What was I thinking?

I'm in another play. Tryouts were just before Christmas. Rehearsals started the week of Christmas (I think). I'm trying to memorize my lines and get the character down.

I shouldn't have tried out. I shouldn't have taken the part. I knew better, but I did it anyway. It was the only show of the season that I even wanted to be a part of.

It wasn't that I just finished one show and rushed into a second. That is no problem at all. I usually like rehearsals and getting the part down. No, it was the timing of the show. It is the time of year and the days that surround it. I'm only doing half the work I need to do to get the character down. I'm actually doing less than that to get the lines memorized. My mind is unable to focus once I get home.

Maybe it will get better in the coming week or two (it better, the show is only 2 weeks away). I really hope so.

I have a handle on the why and the when. I am making a promise to myself to really limit my selection of shows to do in the early part of the year. Too many other things on my mind.

I remember the last thing we watched together. I remember our last meal together. I remember that damn oxygen machine. I remember sitting and holding your hand while you were going in and out of a fitful slumber. I remember walking you down the hall, you holding me for support. I remember the last time I tucked you in. I remember your last words. I remember my last words to you. I remember that first New Years Eve without you. I remember the memorial service and the people there. I

remember that first anniversary without you.

Those are the thoughts that fill my head at this time of year. The inconsequential needs of a play find very little room in my head. Even after six years, the thoughts of you are one with me and I with them. I remember love.

Wish Lists For The Separated

I suppose there had to come a time for this. Stores have registries for bany gifts, bridal gifts, even kiosks for people to make their annual appeal to Santa. A store in Great Britain has come up with the next step: [DIVORCE REGISTRY](#). It's not bad enough that the divorce rate is so high (40% for newlyweds and 60% for repeaters), but this seems to almost help it along. So, apparently, those who end up with the short end of the stick following the distribution of wealth, can now ease their hardship by visiting Debenhams and sharing their list with whatever friends and family they have retained. They can replace that wrought-iron grill that was used in domestic disputes. So much for monogrammed dishtowels. Hollywood couples... take notice.

I wonder how long it will take for Divorce Registry to make its way the USA. Any suggestions for the next great registry idea? How about Unemployed Worker Registry?

I think this qualifies for a News of the Absurd column.

This day in History

On January 20th, 1984 I left the realm of being single and became a married man. That same year, NW Ohio was under a bitter cold spell and the daytime high temps were below 0 Fahrenheit. I was also blissfully happy, as all newlyweds should be.

On January 20th, 1994 I was married for 10 years. Father of 4 beautiful daughters. We were very happy family. I'm not sure if much else happened that day.

January 20th, 2003 this was our 19th and last anniversary together, we just didn't know it then. Still happy.

January 20th, 2004, my first anniversary alone. Not very happy, nothing else happened that day in my life. Should have been 20 years.

On January 20th, 2009 I should have been married 25 years. I am sure that if my wife had lived, I still would have been blissfully happy. On that day the first black American became President of the U.S.A. That seemed inconsequential to me.

Funny how an important day in your life can color the history around it.

Harry Potter – Reading Vs. Watching

Now that I've read the first installment in the Harry Potter series, I decided to watch the movie make the story come to life. I wasn't disappointed, but I much prefer the book – the

movie leaves out a lot of details. It was obvious that was going to happen otherwise the movie would be about 12 hours long, but the excluded details were enough to make me prefer the book to the movie. Here is a run-down of thoughts I had while enjoying the movie last night:

- Did the beginning of the movie portray Professor McGonagall as a cat as she is in the book? I didn't notice it, but I also came into the movie a minute or two late due to an unplanned (though pleasant!) phone conversation. I would have liked to see her as a cat.
- I really liked seeing how the train station came to life, and especially how exactly they found platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$!
- Did the movie explain the resident ghosts of Hogwarts? I noticed lack of explanation for other characters as well – especially Neville! – but as stated before, it's a long movie, so maybe it was out of necessity that they had to cut some descriptions that were present in the book.
- The movie is well cast and directed. Everything is just like I pictured from the book, and that's a good thing. I had considered waiting to watch any of the Potter movies until I was finished reading the series for fear that movie would ruin my vision of Hogwarts, but I'm glad I didn't wait; the movie was very enjoyable. I was pleased to see that creatures like the Gringotts bank goblins, for example, looked just like the sketches in the book which also helped to make my expectations match the movie.
- Visually, the invading troll was cool, although its extreme smelliness was completely downplayed in the movie – one of the things I wish was not.
- This movie would be so cool in 3D!!
- The charcer Hagrid gained about 50 IQ points for the movie. He was likable, but reads dumber than he acted in the

movie. I think I would have liked to see him more like he was in the book.

- The movie is a good representation of the book brought to life, but how is it to watch it on its own if you haven't read the book? I will talk to my husband about this because he did just that. And for me – the movie almost went too fast for me. I saw events happen in minutes that in real time, took me weeks to read about! But then again, there are over 300 pages being shown in under 3 hours.

- The character Severus Snape stood out as being very well cast – I'm not remembering a very vivid depiction of him in the book, and the movie did not disappoint in this regard.

FOLLOWING MIGHT BE SPOILERS – YOU MIGHT NOT WANT TO READ ANY FURTHER IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN OR READ HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE

- Quirrell didn't seem to be stuttering much in the movie, which brings me to a minor complaint that I have about both the book and the movie. I felt that Professor's Quirrell's character was not elaborated upon enough to fully give the audience the big surprise ending. Sometimes I would even get Quirrell mixed up with Filch (while reading the book anyway), but I guess that could also be a side effect of reading while falling asleep!

- Did I miss something, or does neither the book nor the movie elaborate upon why Harry's scar hurts when he see Snape?

Overall, a very enjoyable movie-watching experience! Fun for everyone – the kids weren't scared by it and enjoyed it, and my husband liked it so much that he's been asking me when I'm going to finish the 2nd book because he wants to see the 2nd movie!

Still alive...

...I think. Haven't felt much like blogging lately. Tired, somewhat overworked from my car job. Last week I subbed for the first time in over a month (español), but still did cars four of the five days. Subbed today (7th LA), still hoping for tomorrow. Sorry I haven't been reading all of your blogs lately either- kinda' goes with the no blogging feeling. Some friend, huh? ☐

Less than three days to the winter retreat!

Oh, turned off the ads, something I had been considering for awhile. Didn't earn me anything so I figured why not make a cleaner look for everyone? ☐

[edited to make last paragraph a little less negative]

The First Important Modern American Musical

That seems like an oxymoron since the United States originated the concept of the musical. It seems like we were in competition with our cousins across the big pond in the 1970s & '80s with the Second British Invasion and the shows of Andrew Lloyd Webber and others like *Les Misérables*.

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II began their collaboration in 1943 with the musical *Oklahoma!* While it may seem dull and passe by today's demand for bigger, flashier, even bordering on the cinematic, this show set the standard for which all musicals are judged. This summer, [Fountain City Festival](#) will be presenting this benchmark classic. *Oklahoma!* was innovative for several reasons. Most importantly, it established the "book musical." For the first time, the plot, music, lyrics, and choreography became integrated. No longer would there be a story divided by songs and dances that did nothing to advance the plot.

It did not begin with a big chorus number as had been the practice in operettas. Curly enters singing one of the many songs of the American Song Book: "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin.'"

Something else that was totally unheard of... the title song was not even heard until the end of show.

The invention of the "Dream Ballet" was first used to foreshadow coming events and delve inside the psyche of a main character.

While the simple plot of every day life in turn of the century Oklahoma Territory seems corny 70+ years later, *Oklahoma!* will forever hold a spot in the formation of the modern musical. Better shows may have come along since and seem to overshadow it, but without it the concept of the musical would be far different.

One More Reason To Love The Wrath

Years ago, I came across a cassette tape of the *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* soundtrack. I loved it until I realized that it contained maybe a sampling of the entire score at best. A few weeks ago, I learned that a remastered edition with the entire score with all the musical cues had recently become available. I had to get it and I got it in the mail last Friday. EVERYTHING FROM THE MOVIE IS ON IT! Including the take of the first time that a character other than James Tiberius Kirk delivered the immortal "Space... the final frontier" soliloquy. If you know who it was don't ruin it for those who are not in the know.

Following the disaster that was the overblown, overbudget, snooze fest that is *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, Paramount Pictures demanded a totally new picture that would compete with *Star Wars* and hopefully win over a few of its diehard fans. This even included a desire to scrap the music from the previous film (although many of the themes would later be used in subsequent films and television series including the Main Title and Klingon themes). Ingenue James Horner was eventually chosen to compose *TWOK*.

There is not one bit of music in the score that does not stir.

The Main Theme combines Alexander Courage's fanfare from the television series with a heroic march for Admiral Kirk plus a breathtaking nautical theme for the *Enterprise*, herself.

Captain Spock is given a mystical tune on the panflute that really invokes a sense of wonder into the character. A menacing piece led by the French Horn adds even more villainy to my favorite *Trek* villain. (Where was I in 1982? Ok... so I

was 9. Or better yet, where was I in 1963 when the character of Khan Noonien Singh was created? I was -10 years old.)

"The Battle in the Mutara Nebula" is an 8 minute 7 second masterpiece of space battle excitement.

I have been asked at which point I would introduce novices to the world of *Star Trek*. I always point to my introduction.

Although the plot is a sequel to a then twenty year old episode, my favorite theme of the friendship between two heros is what draws me to it time and again: "You are my commanding officer; you are also my friend. I gave been and forever shall be yours." So says Captain Spock as he relinquishes command of the *U.S.S. Enterprise* once again to Admiral James Tiberius Kirk after a little training cruise runs into a wee bit o' trouble. I could sit and watch this movie once a day, every day. Twice on my days off.