

The Lights of Zetar and Al Gore

A very different and fun game night was had into the wee hours of this morning (check out the post time). Megan and I made our way to visit with some of my many new Village Players friends and play some Star Trek and James Bond Scene It with a little Trivial Pursuit thrown in. I must say that I was impressed very much with Travis' vast knowledge in Trek. I need to brush up on some of the more obscure episodes including The Lights of Zetar. Really... even my knowledge does not stretch that far. But thank goodness for My Play and the IDIC (Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations) category of questions... pop culture surrounding Star Trek that tests knowledge of things not necessarily dealing with the "Wagon Train to the Stars."

I must say that my knowledge was better served in the James Bond version. Just please don't ask me what make and model vehicle he drove in anything but *Goldfinger* (the Aston Martin DB5 with modifications). Who would have guessed the model of car that Jinx arrived in at the ice hotel in *Die Another Day*? But I did clean up in that game.

The Trivial Pursuit game we played was very unique and very fun. You had the six categories to pick from but each category was divided up into six boxes each card had 6 different levels of difficulty. The level was determined by the roll on the die: 1-6. It was very possible to win each piece with a level 1 question... however unlikely. There is also an added feature that allows such things as face offs in order to win a pie piece, and the ability to move an opponents marker to any space on the board making it harder for the player to win a piece. Very fun and pretty much for everyone!

Thanks Mary, Travis, Jen, and Megan. It was a BLAST!

Patience

Our new bird is so cute! Not having parakeets for years has made me forget how pleasant they are to have around. JJ chirps and sings, and even when he's quiet, he's adorable to look at. My husband (who is not known for his patience anyway) mentioned the other day that he's having trouble with his temptations to reach into the cage and grab the bird to play with him. It's partly his impatience, and it's partly because he's used to just reaching out and grabbing his obnoxious parrot. But my husband knows that if he is disruptive to the training process I've chosen for JJ, there will be big trouble!

I'm having trouble being patient too, but I understand how innately nervous parakeets are. Once you build their trust, they can make wonderful interactive pets – but the key is taking it slow and being consistent. As much as I want to cuddle my baby bird, I can respect his need for space right now too. But try telling that to my excited kids. The older ones (ages 10, 5 and 3) are ok about it; for the most part, they're content to just stand there watching JJ and talking to him. But my 18 month old toddler is another story. He is fond of banging on metal cages because that's what makes the most noise, and the rats don't really mind. My poor little baby bird, on the other hand... We usually shut the door to our bedroom since that's where JJ lives, but the other day, we forgot. I figured shutting the gate at the bottom of the stairs would keep the dog away from our bedroom, but kids opened the gate. While the dog was fine (I don't think she even realizes there is another bird in the house), I found little Beeber (that was our then-2-year-old's nickname for her baby brother) next to JJ's cage, and he hasn't been the same

since. He still chirps and acts happy, but he now tries to fly around the cage whenever I come near – he used to let me put my finger right up next to him... He was doing so well with the training, we were bound to take a step backward. I still have confidence that I can train JJ to be a nice family bird, or at the very least, a little buddy bird for me. We just need to have a little patience.

My computer died...

It came quickly, but my laptop screen died. I wasn't sure exactly what happened but there was a quick blackout of the screen.

I now have my laptop attached to an external screen. After doing a quick search, I think what the problem is. Either the backlight or the inverter are going bad. They might be fixable, but it isn't an easy fix for me. I have the knowledge but not the ability. Fixing these problems requires fine motor skills. I'm much better at gross motor skills.

This would require soldering small wires, careful handling of a delicate bulb with mercury on the inside. Replacement of another delicate part. My fumble fingers and weak eyes just aren't up to that. Tomorrow, I will check to see how much it will cost to replace the parts. If too much, I may end up getting a new laptop. This laptop still works, but I will probably use it as another desktop at home. It can replace the older computer my youngest uses at home. Then she will be able to play some of the games that no longer work for her.

Just a bit of bad luck for the New Year.

Missing The Office

Last week I really could have used a Thursday night pick-me-up from my favorite show, The Office, but alas, no new episode. I was sure I couldn't be disappointed two weeks in a row, but this week's ep is also a re-run! Then I started thinking about how it's been in the news lately that NBC is changing around their scheduling, most of it having to do with the Olympics and Jay Leno. Then I realized that if the Olympics are on NBC, the Office probably won't be on for the entire duration of the Winter Games! I did a quick search, and to my relief, I found that a new Office is scheduled to air on January 21 – not this week, but next week thankfully. We might have to wait out the entire airing of the Winter Olympics, but at least they're not going to make us wait until it's over and we'll have at least one new Office episode to enjoy in the meantime. Any other Office fans out there? Does anyone know how many more new episodes we get for the rest of the season, or at least how many we can expect to enjoy before the beginning of the Olympics? How long IS the Olympics, anyway? And fyi, the Jan. 21 episode of the Office is called, "The Banker", and the plot outline is this: When a prospective buyer for Dunder Mifflin visits, everyone looks to impress and Michael gets nostalgic.

Sounds hilarious, as usual! And don't get me wrong, this show is so great that reruns are tons of fun too. We were just watching the "Frame Toby" episode from season 5 last night, and we had to rewind 4 times to listen to Creed's classic line about the quarry – I'm not going to repeat it here because it's mostly the WAY he says it, but it has to be one of the funniest Office moments EVER! Which got me to thinking about a hypothetical situation – what if Creed were a character who

came to our semi-regular game nights? HAHA!

Better Unheard?

Since I was unable to deliver it vocally, I will post it for posterity.

I would like to first thank everyone in the three shows I was in for making me feel so welcome this past year. I want to thank all my directors; Virlyn, Beth, and Travis. I want to thank everyone sitting at my table:

- my parents for putting up with me which is not always easy
 - my brother for recommending me to Virlyn for *St. Louis*
 - Megan and Carol for their unfailing support
 - Lisa for telling me to go “where my talent is appreciated”
 - and my wingman, Chris, who is always there behind me in EVERYTHING and who, if you did not already know, has created a whole new website for the Village Players.
- THANKS PAL!

I also want to thank everyone I have had the pleasure to work with on and off the stage over the past year. Working with such a fantastic group of people has made the past year Wonderful. I want to especially thank Greg, Dawn, Mary, and Travis who have all been there since last January.

OK... so maybe it is a good thing I was not expected to give a speech. I would surely have been given the music cue to wrap it up long before I was ready.

Some Fun To End A Rather Dismal Week

Tonight was the annual banquet/awards for the Village Players.

Someone once thought that the awards were known as the Hickies. Personally, I would change the name right away ("I got a Hickie...where's yours?"). Presently, they are known as the Villies. I must say that I believe my table of family of 8 thoroughly enjoyed the entire event. It was very relaxed, informal, and just plain fun. Kudos to Mary and her helpers.

Poor thing was frantic because of little things, but it came off nicely.

I really wanted a table large enough to sit my group of originally 7. Late last night, while not being able to sleep after the events of the past week, I really wanted my oldest brother there so I sent him a message on his facebook wall..

He was instrumental in my getting the role of Grandpa Prophater in *Meet in in St. Louis* last January. By a happy occurrence, the table was right by the food so we got to go first.

The evening began with a recap of last year's shows... 3 of which I was pleased to be a part of and the fourth show I thought was great. Then came a preview of the upcoming shows:

The Curious Savage, Miracles, The Hound of the Baskervilles, and an, as of yet, undetermined holiday show... but the ones being looked into sound GREAT. Director's Awards were also presented. I am pleased to say that Chris was recognized for his contribution to the theatre's website (and this would not be the end of the table's night).

Later, came the excitement of the award presentations. First

up... Best Cameo by an Actor presented to... **ME!** for his role as Harnell Chesterton in *You Have the Right to Remain Dead*.

Later, the award for Best Supporting Male Actor presented to... **ME!** for his role as Henry F. Potter in *It's a Wonderful Life*. I swear I only voted for myself once. I don't know if it is fortunate or not but I guess we were not expected to give a speech; however, I did come prepared. I should have taken the initiative and gave it anyway (but, I will save them for my next post).

Honestly, I don't know who was prouder of my night: me or my "wingman." Chris was absolutely ecstatic. His motivation, compliments, and just plain being there are just so great.

The rest of the awards from what I can remember are

- Zuzu Bailey (Best Cameo by an Actress, *It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Katie, the maid (Best Supporting Actress, *Meet Me in St. Louis*)
- Esther Smith (Best Lead Actress, *Meet Me in St. Louis*)
- George Bailey (Best Lead Actor, *It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Travis (Best Director, *It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Mary (Best Producer, *It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Best Set (*Meet Me in St. Louis*)
- Best Costumes (*Meet Me in St. Louis*)
- Best Tech (*It's a Wonderful Life*)
- Best Show (*It's a Wonderful Life*)

Ok... next post: my speeches. A fabulous time organized by Mary and her help.



A Swary Family Reunion With A Voice From Beyond

Today was Aunt Carol's memorial service. It was really difficult but a very nice way for friends and family to gather to celebrate fond memories and the long, hard fought battle she waged for a remarkable 7 years (even more remarkable knowing that her original diagnosis was 5).

We arrived at the funeral home around 2. After consoling Alicia and Stacy, Mom decided to sit in the most comfortable seat she could find which happened to be in the back corner. By the time the service began at 4.30, the section we sat in turned into a Swary gathering with some very old friends in the mix. I was getting tired of sitting in the rather uncomfortable chairs and Mom and I both decided that it would be nice if I went up front and sat with Diane (one of Carol's close friends and my boss) since she was all alone as her husband had to work. Good chance to pick on her.

Behind us was a woman who has seemingly completely channeled Emily or knows her just as well as I do... or more likely, both. A few weeks ago, Aunt LuAnn commented on my facebook post wishing everyone a Happy New Year by posting "What Would Mrs. Curtis Say?" (kind of like the old bracelets people would wear asking "What Would Jesus Do?"). Today, I was reminded of an escapade I undertook that ended after I exited the Ohio turnpike and came back home. How those two told me to take three months and see where I ended up. Work at McDonald's or some other job and see what happened. I told her that I am not dead yet. Let's see if this brings out some lurkers and you know who you are ☐ ! It was just scary... I swore I heard Emily talking to me in Lu's body.

Back to the service. Just like Emily, Carol had the entire thing planned. Except for a letter written by Alicia that was

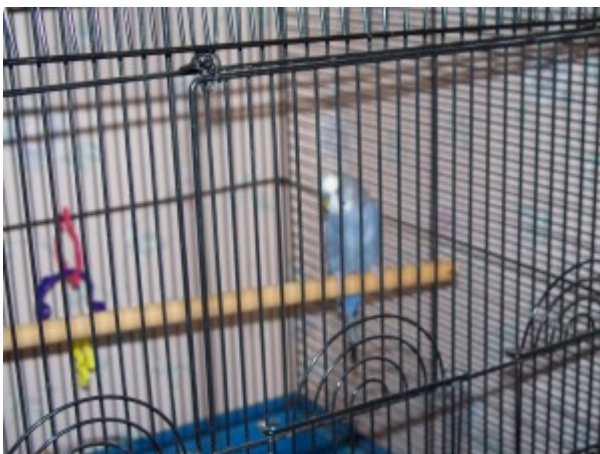
so heartwarming that I lost it. Carol fought tooth and nail until her work on Earth was complete. I think the time really came to her final breath when she said she was ready to “go home.”

After the service, I had to quickly pull it together as I had to song lead at mass. I was really amazed how well I did. More help from above? It was the end of the Christmas season as the Baptism of the Lord was celebrated. Thus, I sang “Joy to the World,” “What Child is This?” and “Go Tell It on the Mountain.” Tomorrow following 10.30AM mass, the decorations will be taken down for another year.

So... something to consider while remembering someone who was loved so greatly. Alicia and Stacy both commented how much they loved my previous post. Maybe I can get a few more comments ☐

Introducing... JJ!

As you might have read in an earlier blog post, I received a pet store gift certificate for Christmas from my husband. Today I spent it – I picked out the newest member of our family – JJ the parakeet!



When you adopt a pet parakeet from a pet store, the workers have to barge into the cage full of parakeets with a towel on their hand to grab your bird, and then they put it in a cardboard box for the ride home. This might sound like a mean thing to do, but in my experience (this is my fifth pet parakeet), the bird recovers very quickly; I wouldn't even use the word recover really; they always seem just fine. And JJ handled his transition like a pro! He actually seemed immediately happy in his cage! I put my finger in there, and he let me almost touch him, just a few hours after he got home! He didn't back away or anything! I am so excited to become friends with this little guy; he is so cute! It's been about 15 years since I've had a pet parakeet, and I've forgotten about how they just exude happiness! Already JJ moves his beak like he's trying to talk and responds to my voice. Hopefully I will make the time to train this little guy to be the little buddy I've always wanted in a bird – I get jealous of my husband's relationship with his parrot. Wait, that doesn't sound quite how I meant to say it...

There's a fine line between training a bird, earning trust, and scaring him off for good. JJ seems very patient and ready to learn, and so am I – but getting to spend time with him while there is a trouble-prone toddler toddling around will be my greatest challenge, I think.

Many people have fun parakeet stories; they really are pleasant little birds. My dad and my uncle had a parakeet when they were kids named Tippy who would walk on their kitchen table. They would hold a hand of playing cards, and Tippy would walk up, choose a card, and then carry it in his beak to the edge of the table, let it go and watch it float down to the floor. I've heard that many (male) parakeets can talk, and of course they will sit on your shoulder and be your best friend. So yeah, I'm excited about this bird, and it's a nice feeling – can't say there's been a lot of that lately. Even if he isn't easily trained (defying all early

indications), I've already tremendously enjoyed just looking at him and absorbing his pleasantness, something I look forward to doing in days to come... feeling a contentment that I haven't felt for awhile...

Just for the heck of it, here is a timeline of my other pet parakeets. I was a kid when I had them, so I don't remember dates or ages – each one lived for around 5-8 years, the usual parakeet lifespan. But it bugs the heck out of me that I can't remember which of my birds liked to ring his toy bell – Tippy, I think? I named him for my dad and uncle's childhood pet... The memories of the bell ringing bird have been replaced in my brain by the obscenely loud parrot we currently own who jangles his bell-shaped toy whenever he starts to get rowdy. Parakeets are actually in the same biological family as parrots and are in fact classified as parrots. So technically, we've gotten ourselves another parrot for our house, just what we needed, right? But Squawky, the scarlet macaw (loud a**hole) parrot belongs to my husband (or my husband belongs to Squawky, depends upon who you ask), and JJ is mine – this is important since birds "mate" for life – I'm so happy to have MY bird!

So here's that rundown of parakeets past:

Spunky – he was blue and fiesty, but we were really surprised when he she began to lay eggs!

Tweety – the only parakeet I had who was of the green / gold variety.

Tippy – named after my dad's childhood bird; he was light blue.

Goat – my sister found him flying loose outside around her work. They took him in, and when no one claimed him, I named him "Goat" in honor of my dream pet at that time. He was pretty tame for a "wild bird"!

J.J. – dark blue, almost a gray to violet hue. And why is he named J.J.? It's short for **Jungle Jack** Hanna, of course ☐

Reading a Book Series

Another tangents' blogger made comments on reading the Harry Potter series. I am currently reading a series by a different author. I'm reading "The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant" again. While I know that some people don't like reading a long series in succession, that is usually my goal. I like to finish the story. I really don't like waiting for the next book in the series.

Anyway I've had these books for years and they are finally wearing out. They are paperbacks, and they have been read repeatedly. The covers are starting to come off and the pages now have some tears. So I looked them up on the web to see how much it would cost to replace my series. Since I like them a lot, I was hoping to find them in hardback. What I found was that the series was continued. I really didn't realize this. I will have to do some research, but it looks like there are two additional books with two more on the way. I'm not sure how I feel about this, but I will have to get the books to see if I want to continue the series.

There is my problem. I like to finish a series if I start it and like it. I don't know how long I will have to wait for the additional books of the series. On one hand I hope the new books are good, on the other hand, I hope I don't have to wait for the additional two books. A puzzlement.

The Abyss

It took two nights, but we finally made it through the sci-fi 80's thriller, [The Abyss](#). What is with me and all the science fiction lately? Not usually my cup of tea; I guess I've just been enjoying a change of scenery. One reason for wanting to watch the Abyss is that I was very impressed by director / writer James Cameron's latest movie, Avatar. I enjoyed the movie in a little theater with old fashioned sound equipment, and I also got to catch it at a larger theater with awesome sound and in 3D – I REALLY enjoyed it! That doesn't mean I'm a James Cameron fan, however, and you couldn't pay me to sit through Titanic, whose concept I always thought sold out the disaster itself. I mean, for characters in the movie, there were over 2200 real Titanic passengers from which to choose – why spend millions of dollars to bring to life fictionalized accounts of such a horrible tragedy?

But back to The Abyss, another James Cameron water movie... Overall, this winner of the 1990 Oscar for visual effects was enjoyable, but I don't even know if I can say this is a watch-again-er for me. Reading the trivia on imdb.com about how the movie was filmed was almost more interesting than the movie itself, which tells the story of a group of oil workers who are hired to go on a dive search for a missing nuclear sub. Enter some Navy SEALs and a mysterious alien species, and you have enough action for a 138 minute movie. All of the diving and talk of the oceanic pressure kinda got to me after awhile; I don't think scuba diving is something I'm ever interested in doing. But I enjoyed the story and especially the visual effects, and without risking spoiling anything, let's just say that in typical 80's fashion, the plot was predictable. If you do happen to check this one out, or if it

happens to be one of your old favorites, I highly recommend reading the trivia section on imdb.com to further your enjoyment.