

Now about them kids...

I guess it's time to return to the topic of kids- subbing and at church. The past week I was back to two days of subbing after my big half-day Thanksgiving week. I was lucky to get even that as only one district I am signed up with had classes at all that week, and only Monday and Tuesday. Monday of course is a photo day for me which left only Tuesday for work. So this past week I did middle school for two days in two different districts. What happened in both cases was the teachers were taking a second sick day in a row, but fortunately this did not spell disaster like in that one BD/ED classroom in near-urban district. The first class was a Spanish class, and half of a husband-wife team. They even had classrooms right next to each other. This is the second time I have ever encountered this, the first being in hometown district where a husband and wife both teach the same grade of science- one on each of the two teams for that grade. Incidentally at that school there is also another married couple, but in their case they teach two different things. So back to Spanish, it was a very easy day- for all classes I showed a video. Now, she teaches both 7th and 8th grades, but everyone still got the same video- the celebration of Christmas in Mexico. What was it? Oh, yes- Piñatas, Posadas, and Pastorelas was the title. I'm sure you're familiar with the first- a seeming staple of Mexican celebrations. The other two mean a party and a Christmas play, respectively.

Wednesday I filled in for an 8th grade resource teacher, though she had one 7th grade reading group. This was a bit more interactive than the Spanish class, at least for some of the periods. As mentioned, I worked with a reading group for one period, led an interesting homeroom activity where the kids picked sides with questions about what is more important to them and then some explained their choices, acted as an assistant in a language arts block, watched over a tutorial

period, and led another block period with reading a story together and then watching over the kids as they defined words from the story. A varied day for sure, unlike typical middle school classes.

Next post: the kids at church this week- I'm already tired of writing...

It's The End Of The World As We Know It... And I Feel Fine

Every few years, it seems that people are worried about an Armageddon date. They chose some sort of date based on something and promptly report it to the media as the date the world will end. Nine years ago now, it was Y2K – do you remember how many people built shelters, stockpiled canned food and emergency supplies? I was due to have my first child as the 'millennium baby', and I was worried something catastrophic would happen; at the very least, the lights would go out in the hospital or something. My daughter arrived a few weeks early though, on December 21, 1999, so we were at home safe and sound to ring in the new year – and surprise, surprise, nothing happened. So it's not a shocker that people have pinpointed a new date for the Apocalypse; this time it's based upon an ancient Mayan calendar – well, some scholars' interpretation of it anyway. What will you be doing in 2012? According to some people, you should live 2011 to its fullest, because that's all we're going to get! The following article is from cnn.com and was written by A. Pawlowski.

Just as "Y2K" and its batch of predictions about the year 2000 have become a distant memory, here comes "Twenty-twelve."

The sun shines through the door of the Seven Dolls Temple, in the Maya ruins of Dzibilchaltun in Mexico.

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Fueled by a crop of books, Web sites with countdown clocks, and claims about ancient timekeepers, interest is growing in what some see as the dawn of a new era, and others as an expiration date for Earth: December 21, 2012.

The date marks the end of a 5,126-year cycle on the Long Count calendar developed by the Maya, the ancient civilization known for its advanced understanding of astronomy and for the great cities it left behind in Mexico and Central America.

(Some scholars believe the cycle ends a bit later – on December 23, 2012.)

Speculation in some circles about whether the Maya chose this particular time because they thought something ominous would happen has sparked a number of doomsday theories.

The hype also has mainstream Maya scholars shaking their heads.

“There’s going to be a whole generation of people who, when they think of the Maya, think of 2012, and to me that’s just criminal,” said David Stuart, director of the Mesoamerica Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

“There is no serious scholar who puts any stock in the idea that the Maya said anything meaningful about 2012.”

But take the fact that December 21, 2012, coincides with the winter solstice, add claims the Maya picked the time period because it also marks an alignment of the sun with the center of the Milky Way galaxy, and you have the makings of an online sensation.

Long Count 101

- *The Long Count calendar was one of several created by the ancient Maya.*
- *It consists of the following units of time:*

kin = one day

uinal = 20 days

tun = 360 days (18 uinal)

katun = 7,200 days (20 tun)

baktun = 144,000 days (20 katun)

- *The calendar shows the number of days elapsed since the beginning date: August 13, 3114 B.C. (some scholars think the date is actually August 11, 3114 B.C.)*

- *The dates are written as numbers separated by periods in the following order:*

(baktun).(katun).(tun).(uinal).(kin)

- *July 20, 1969 – the date of the first moon landing – would be written as: 12.17.15.17.0*

- *December 21, 2012, would be written as 13.0.0.0.0 and the day after that as 0.0.0.0.1*

Source: Howstuffworks.com

Type “2012” into an Internet search engine and you’ll find survival guides, survival schools, predictions and “official stuff” to wear, including T-shirts with slogans such as “2012 The End” and “Doomsday 2012.”

Theories about what might happen range from solar storms triggering volcano eruptions to a polar reversal that will make the Earth spin in the opposite direction.

If you think all of this would make a great sci-fi disaster movie, Hollywood is already one step ahead.

"2012," a special-effects flick starring John Cusack and directed by Roland Emmerich, of "The Day After Tomorrow" fame, is scheduled to be released this fall. The trailer shows a monk running to a bell tower on a mountaintop to sound the alarm as a huge wall of water washes over what appear to be the peaks of the Himalayas.

'Promoting a hoax'

One barometer of the interest in 2012 may be the "Ask an Astrobiologist" section of NASA's Web site, where senior scientist David Morrison answers questions from the public. On a recent visit, more than half of the inquiries on the most popular list were related to 2012.

"The purveyors of doom are promoting a hoax," Morrison wrote earlier this month in response to a question from a person who expressed fear about the date.

A scholar who has studied the Maya for 35 years said there is nothing ominous about 2012, despite the hype surrounding claims to the contrary.

"I think that the popular books... about what the Maya say is going to happen are really fabricated on the basis of very little evidence," said Anthony Aveni, a professor of astronomy, anthropology and Native American studies at Colgate University.

Aveni and Stuart are both writing their own books explaining the Mayan calendar and 2012, but Stuart said he's pessimistic that people will be interested in the real story when so many other books are making sensational claims.

Dozens of titles about 2012 have been published and more are scheduled to go on sale in the coming months. Current offerings include "Apocalypse 2012," in which author Lawrence Joseph outlines "terrible possibilities," such as the potential for natural disaster.

But Joseph admits he doesn't think the world is going to end.

"I do, however, believe that 2012 will prove to be... a very dramatic and probably transformative year," Joseph said.

The author acknowledged he's worried his book's title might scare people, but said he wanted to alert the public about possible dangers ahead.

He added that his publisher controls the book's title, though he had no issue with the final choice.

"If it had been called 'Serious Threats 2012' or 'Profound Considerations for 2012,' it would have never gotten published," Joseph said.

Growing interest

Another author said the doom and gloom approach is a great misunderstanding of 2012.

"The trendy doomsday people... should be treated for what they are: under-informed opportunists and alarmists who will move onto other things in 2013," said John Major Jenkins, whose books include "Galactic Alignment" and who describes himself as a self-taught independent Maya scholar.

Jenkins said that cycle endings were all about transformation and renewal – not catastrophe – for the Maya. He also makes the case that the period they chose coincides with an alignment of the December solstice sun with the center of the Milky Way, as viewed from Earth.

"Two thousand years ago the Maya believed that the world would be going through a great transformation when this alignment happened," Jenkins said.

But Aveni said there is no evidence that the Maya cared about this concept of the Milky Way, adding that the galactic center was not defined until the 1950s.

“What you have here is a modern age influence [and] modern concepts trying to garb the ancient Maya in modern clothing, and it just doesn’t wash for me,” Aveni said.

Meanwhile, he and other scholars are bracing for growing interest as the date approaches.

“The whole year leading up to it is going to be just crazy, I’m sorry to say,” Stuart said.

“I just think it’s sad, it really just frustrates me. People are really misunderstanding this really cool culture by focusing on this 2012 thing. It means more about us than it does about the Maya.”

Rides Jamiahsh Broke

This is the long-awaited post (by some anyway) that details the uncanny coincidences of ride break-downs we encountered while in Orlando, Florida. Here is a list of the following rides that stalled or broke down while fellow blogger jamiahsh was along. Not to blame him, but... ☐

Epcot: Spaceship Earth, the boat ride in Mexico, the boat ride in Norway – not only did the boat stall during the ride, but also, after we exited the boat, the doors at the end of the ride failed to open, trapping us and the 4-5 boat-fulls after us!

Universal Studios – The Mummy – got stuck where the ride gets “hot”, the Simpsons ride, Cat in the Hat ride

Magic Kingdom – Carousel of Progress glitched, Peter Pan’s Flight, Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean (multiple times), Snow White

We've been to Disney World lots of times, and although we've been involved in rides stalling and getting backed up, it's never happened with the frequency of this year when jamiahsh was with us. Therefore, the phenomenon of him "breaking the rides" is a running joke of sorts, and that's why I had to make a post of it. Break-downs aside, a fun trip was had by all, and the uncanny ride luck jamiahsh had is now merely blog fodder – and that's always fun.

From 8th to 8

Going back to elementary was quite a difference from the last several days, in more than one way. First, going from age 12-14 to age 8. There is a world of difference between teens and second-graders. Second, going from the specials to the academics. The last week has been dominated with Industrial Tech and PE, with a short break in ELS (also quite different from second grade even though some of the material is similar...). Finally, working with a single group of kids all day instead of over a hundred.

I didn't actually do much teaching today. They really have a routine down with language arts centers so all I had to do there was introduce what they would be doing and then help here and there when some didn't understand something or other. Math was just an end-of-year assessment (didn't need to be reminded of this- the lean season known as "summer" is nigh upon me). They had a handwriting worksheet I only needed to introduce, again, and computer lab in the afternoon where someone else pretty much ran the show while I helped. I did get to start a book for read aloud, a Mexican Cinderella. They are on a unit apparently about Mexico, including learning some Spanish. Across the room were their attempts at making

the Mexican flag which I had to duck under every time I crossed the room. The teacher I subbed for must be much shorter.

Well, it was fun and I did at least get to work with a class I have worked with once before so there were less surprises- I'll tell you subbing in an elementary classroom requires a lot more work than in a middle school classroom. Breaking routine can be difficult with younger students, whereas older ones just take in stride and adapt. Therefore, studying the routine from the plans takes up some time. Well, enough of this blathering on. On to bed and then a different second-grade class tomorrow.

Mediocrity

Two things I was looking forward to watching today turned out to be disappointing. The first, a new horror movie in theaters called "[The Ruins](#)", I wouldn't classify as a bad movie. It was entertaining, at least... I say that a lot about movies, I know. But if they hold my attention, aren't boring (like [The Night Listener](#)), and don't disgust me too much (like [Doomsday](#)), then I generally don't consider the movie a waste of my time because I really like watching movies, spending time with my husband, and I just overall enjoy the movie theater going experience.

But as far as horror movies go, "The Ruins" is not my idea of a good one. I won't even go into the acting skills; it's so unimportant when talking about this kind of movie. No one stood out as horrible or unwatchable, and that's all that matters in a movie like this. I did lose a side bet with Hubby about whether or not one of the actors was also in the

[Texas Chainsaw](#) remake – he was – but no matter, I really wasn't too sure about it anyway. The premise was interesting; 4 twentysters (people in their early twenties. Hey, I just made that up because as far as I'm concerned, many of them still act like teens, might as well give them a goofy name to go with their attitudes. Maybe it'll catch on...) on vacation in Mexico follow this German guy (actor with a fake accent. Why they couldn't just find a German actor is beyond me, but whatever) they just met on a trek miles into the jungle to see some ancient ruins. When they get there, they end up trapped on top of the pyramid thing by the natives who believe the ruins are cursed. That's basically it. The movie was pretty fast-paced, however, once I realized that the "monster" of this horror movie was plant life, somehow it wasn't very scary... Also, everything creepy was already shown in the previews – I HATE when they do that to movies! None of the characters were very likable, so when some met their demise, it wasn't all that shocking nor disappointing. I don't know why the movie was rated R – I've seen much scarier PG13 movies, they could have cut out the nude scene, and the gore in this movie was all (POTENTIAL SPOILER ALERT – IF YOU CARE) mercy limb cutting. I was thinking the movie could redeem itself with a good resolution, but that was not to be. I can't see any replay value of this movie. Worth seeing once but not again. One good thing though, it didn't have you leaving the theater feeling like crap about humanity, like Domsday or some other movies I've seen – that's always a plus.

On to disappointment #2 – Secret Talents of the Stars. A show about "celebrities" – and some people who call themselves celebrities who I've never heard of – who try their hand at other talents than what they've become famous doing. What was I thinking you ask? What would *this* shameless attempt at yet another celebrity reality show have that made me want to watch it? The answer – hype. It was hyped so much that I actually fell for it. And I really wanted to see [Clint Black](#) (I'll

forgive you this once if you don't know he's a major country music star) attempt stand-up comedy. That was until I actually saw Clint Black attempt stand-up comedy. Not very funny. And the show seems fixed too... ok, what show like this isn't, but still... the "judges" all *loved* Clint Black's comedy... probably because he was the most hyped star of the show, and they wanted to make sure he'd be in the semi-finals. And then there was [George Takei](#), of former [Star Trek](#) fame, now most famous for coming out of the closet, sad to say that has overshadowed his years on Star Trek, but I for one had never heard of him before he came out... So, in between several obvious and Clint Black-ish (meaning not very good) type gay jokes, George sang "On the Road Again", originally by Willie Nelson. And if you don't know who that is, you're on your own, I'm not going to spell it out for you! Needless to say, he butchered it and got kicked out of the show – big surprise. The other 2 contestants tonight – Sasha Cohen and a singer called just Mya, were trying for talents that were somewhat related to their profession anyway – something I did not think was fair. Figure skater Cohen was being an acrobat, while singer/entertainer Mya was tap-dancing! The show is stupid, the format is obvious, the judges lines are scripted... but why will I be watching next week? Another country music star, [Jo dee Mesina](#) will be trying her hand at something other than country music and rehab. Low blow there, and I apologize... it's late, and I seem a wee bit crabby, maybe I should have gone to bed instead of staying up until 11 to watch this dumb show...