

Proud Of Your Boy

This marking the day before the 2nd anniversary of Ma2's passing, I have made a promise to myself to annually honor her memory around this time. To paraphrase one of my favorite quotes: She's really not gone as long as we remember her. May sound sappy to some but Emily really was like a second mother to me. A strong, courageous woman... in fact the strongest and most courageous I have ever known. I can still remember our last conversation over the phone. We were to meet the next day to discuss my new found friends and my then anticipation of going to the big city. Unfortunately, she had just found out that she was going to be returning to Columbus for another extended stay at the James. Little did I know that this would be the last conversation we would have. She was so determined to beat the leukemia. I believe her words were: "I'm going to kick this thing in the ()" I knew that if anyone could, it was her. She also told me how proud she was in how far I had come in my theatrical ventures and pleaded with me to not give up. That I had finally allowed myself to let my candle be uncovered by that bushel basket. "He knows what he is talking about."

Proud of Your Boy. I believe that I have posted about the "lost song" from Disney's *Aladdin* that was shall I say a prayer sung by the title character to his mother. I believe that the mother was written out in order to better portray the hero as being a "worthless street rat" with only his companion Abu by his side. I think it is much more than a simple prayer. I believe that deep down inside us all there is that little bit of ourselves that feels a need to prove to someone (be it a parent, other relative, close friend, mentor, whatever... perhaps even ourselves) that we are more than the sum of our parts. That we will get over these "lousin up, messin up, screwin up times."

I am so glad that with the release of the Platinum Edition

DVD, the song was pulled from the archives. It really is a gem as sung by Clay Aiken. That tells you how long it has been since its release... he hasn't really been in the spotlight for a few years. I was lucky enough to be able to work on the piece while Emily was still (physically) guiding me.

I LOVE the orchestral accompaniment and the screen playing scenes in the background. HMMM...

Love you, Ma

Quite A Beard You Have There, Young Man

This facial hair is now starting to get to me. Maybe if it was not the first time I have grown a beard in 8 years, I would be more accustomed to it. Perhaps it is because I seem to need to grow it in the summer. (I always knew I was a bit odd, but...) But it has been the source of many comments... both complimentary and otherwise. Those who like it never cease to amaze me. "It makes you look very distinguished and dignified." (Not too distinguished, I hope. I would not want to spoil my sterling reputation ;)) "It really becomes you." (Ok) "Keep it. Dye it white and you would be an instant Santa." (There's a thought! At least it would be in season and would really be a conversation piece.)

The flip side has also been interesting. "You look like an old drunk!" (I'll remember that the next time someone is casting a bearded drunk). "I can't wait until you shave that thing!" (Which makes me only consider keeping it after October 18th). "Hey, Grizzly Adams!" All in good fun. Good for laughs.

However, last night, I got the ultimate compliment. Who remembers the tv series [Family Affair](#)? A lady I have known for ages told me that I resemble Sebastian Cabot who played the domestic Mr. French (was not aware that there were two) to Uncle Bill, Cissy, Buffy (who was played by one of the

earliest child actor tragedies I remember... could be earlier ones), Jodie, and (of course) Mrs. Beasley. Mr. Cabot also played St. Nick in one of the remakes of *Miracle on 34th Street*. Never short on flattering me, my customer also gushed about having found my “niche in community theatre.” Who am I to argue?

Perhaps I shall take a snapshot of the before and after shaving and post them. Provided of course the naysayers do not continue voicing their disgust.

So Much For Verisimilitude

One of the most difficult tasks in filming *Superman: The Movie* was the casting of the Man of Steel, himself. The list of possible candidates was a veritable who's who of 1970s top box office draws. Everyone from Burt Reynolds to Paul Newman to Dustin Hoffman... even Muhammad Ali? That one is even stranger than the candidate I was going to blog about. Can you possibly imagine “The Greatest” in the role.

Another contender for the dual role of Superman/Clark Kent was an actor who had (and still has) close ties to Warner Brothers Pictures. Clint Eastwood had already established himself as a different kind of action-hero. Can you imagine Dirty Harry rescuing a fluffy white kitten from a tree. He would be more likely to growl at the little girl and send her running in tears to her mother. Instead, we got an excited little tyke exclaiming to her mother that a man swooped out of the sky and rescued Frisky. Her reward... a slap for telling more lies.

As for Mr. Eastwood's take on the offer made nearly 35 years ago: “it's not for me. It's meant for someone, just not me.” Thank goodness for that. He did agree that Christopher Reeve

nailed the role. Incidentally, Clint was also offered the role of another iconic character back in the day. Read [this](#) to find out which one.



What Could Have Been

Back To Baskerville

Ok... let's go back to the show I have been cast in. Just to remind everyone where I am. I have probably 95% of my lines memorized for *The Hound of the Baskervilles* **BUT (as most who know me well know)** line memorization is no where near enough for me. Acting is much more reaction to what is happening around you. As the caretaker of Baskerville Hall, it is Barrymore's responsibility to ensure that the riff-raff does not overtake the home which he has so lovingly overlooked for generations.

Tonight, we ran Act I two times. I was given a line which may or may not become mine. Poor Eliza has only one line the entire act, so I was asked to read it since it could very well be Barrymore's line as well. We'll see if Mrs. Barrymore would like to retain her line.

After my first moments onstage, [Stapleton](#) complimented me on my facial and physical characterization. "You have the butler role down very well."

I also have a very important bit prior to the finale of Act I. I seriously doubt that the bit I have done since the beginning will be the finished product. (Bloopers reel of the DVD?) It leaves the [director](#) shaking her head every

rehearsal. “You are such a DORK!” I like to think of myself as eccentric. “Dork” is such a demeaning term.

A Birdie In The Clinic In The Moonlight

Today, I took a huge step (IMHO) in my quest for professional theatrical experience. I had my first full-fledged, prepare a monologue audition for a paying gig. [Moonlight Productions](#) is a production company in my neck of the woods owned and operated by a friend of mine whom I met a few years ago through the WCCT. The film he is casting for is a cinematic version of a one act play that was written by a remarkably talented pal of mine in which yours truly had a rather significant part. This fact in no way guarantees me a role in the movie as I have no idea the experience and calibre of the other auditioners. BUT I AM REALLLLY EXCITED!

Quite a process. This is the first time in 8 years that I have needed to prepare a monologue. In my years in community theatre, most of the auditions have been cold readings from the script or singing a song from the musical (if that is the case). I chose to perform a monologue given by Mr. Harry Macafee from *Bye Bye Birdie*. Hey, it worked 8 years ago when I was cast as Motel in *Fiddler on the Roof*! Note to self: time to search out monologue books!

Over the last few weeks while memorizing lines for the staged production of [The Hound of the Baskervilles](#) in which I am playing Barrymore, I have been polishing the dust off the old monologue I first encountered while assisting the director of a high school production of Birdie. Happily enough, it came

back rather smoothly.

The last few days, I have been trying to figure out what to wear. I could have gone with the costume I wore in the stage version of *The Clinic*. It might have worked since the monologue takes place at the breakfast table after Harry has had a rather sleepless night after (among other things) outside his window three harpies shrieked "We Love You Conrad" 4,732 times. However, I decided on a nice dress shirt, slacks, and my Looney Tunes necktie.

I arrived at the audition site my normal 15-20 minutes early and signed in at 9:11 AM. At about 9:25, the producer came into the lounge and told me (I was the first to arrive) that they would soon be ready. The space was really small. After having my mug shot taken, I announced to the video camera my name and monologue I had chosen. For my first time auditioning for a camera, I thought it went exceptionally well. I did notice one teeny-weeney mistake but I plowed right along as if nothing had gone amiss.

When I got home before I had to report to my day job, I had a message on my Facebook page:

First audition was very good, waiting on other actors to arrive! Good luck today everyone!

Thanks Jay! I hope this film makes your company grow and move forward!

And not to worry, [Mare](#)... my involvement (when it is made known) will in no way impede upon my performance in October ☐

Echos From The Earth And Beyond

Another feature of my small town scandal sheet (a steal at \$1.00 for eight pages) is the "Echos from the Earth" column which gives flashbacks from articles from 5 to 20 to 50 years ago. Two of the topics really took me back. Five years ago in the paper dated 8-25-2005, Ma2 was named Ohio American Legion Educator of the Year. An honor I know she cherished very fondly.

The second item that really caught my eye was dated 8-29-1980... **30 years ago, folks!**. It even was from the days when school opened in September. I was going into the first grade. My oldest brother was going into the 6th grade and the other one would be starting the 5th grade. We won't say how old my baby sister was!

Thirty years ago this year, my school system welcomed a new P.E. instructor/basketball coach (whom I remember very well from my elementary days), another teacher I cannot place because he was a high school instructor and was gone before I got there. Also welcomed was a certain teacher who "will assist music department head Bill Quackenbush whose primary responsibility would be to the junior high bands." (That is how the sentence read so the grammar is not my fault). I have been told that Emily was a student teacher at the high school where another [tangenteer](#) was enrolled.

(A tangent from one of my memorable moments with Mr. Q. Not only was he the high school band director back in the day but was also the tennis (?) coach. He was the instructor of the summer tennis program. We were volleying the ball back and forth. All of a sudden, I felt a ball SMACK into my eye! We rush into the school, get an ice pack, and a Mt. Dew. The next day, I woke up with a shiner. ☐)

Emily was also the music instructor at the local Catholic school for a number of years. So she was the teacher of 5 Sh kids and two Sh grandkids. God must have helped there!

Emily also is having a hand in my song list for the evening of fun and music I am planning with some of my best friends and my new coach. We had been working on one of the selections for a great while and is now at the performance stage after a bit of polishing and tweaking.

A week or so ago, I was requested to find a good worship song to begin with. I cannot believe that it took me nearly four hours to come up with one. One of the last pieces Emily and I looked at was one of the most inspirational songs I have ever heard. Definitely will need a prayer to get through but she will be watching and I will be able to lean on her shoulder.

Not really gone as long as we remember.

Courage Under Fire

While waking up early this morning, I tuned into GMA and watched the story of a courageous 16-year old boy who like most children across the country are on the verge of starting a brand new school year full of learning, friends, and new experiences. Michael Brewer started out at a brand new school in which he will have to adjust following a horrific event that nearly turned tragic.

A day after his fifteen birthday in October 2009, Michael was attacked at his home by a group of his "friends" after an argument over a \$40 video game. After being doused with rubbing alcohol and set ablaze, the teen climbed over a fence and jumped into a nearby swimming pool but not before

suffering second and third degree burns over 60% of his body.

Following near death moments and multiple surgeries for skin grafts, Michael is now on the long road to physical and emotional recovery. The GMA interview showed the teenager riding his skateboard nine months following the ordeal.

Doctors have stated that the young man stood a great chance of death from complications incurred by the event. However, Michael's amazing will and fortitude and the prayers and support of family, real friends, and complete strangers have carried him this far.

Like many traumatic events, perhaps the most difficult healing will be the psychological recovery. Michael suffers regular nightmares which he does not remember after they end. However, his mother hears his screams in the dead of night. Showers are agonizingly painful for him to take... in fact, they are the hardest part of his recovery.

Michael's 15 year old attackers are being charged as adults in the travesty in which they each face up to 30 years in prison.

Really... is \$40.00 worth losing 30 years of your life?

Michael's story will be a focus of ABC's NightLine tonight.

[Click Here](#) for a more detailed account of the story and a somewhat graphic photo gallery.



Changing Drawers

You know sometimes in my off-and-on 20 years in retail, I have at times questioned the hiring of certain individuals. I don't think I have ever questioned it more than a current co-

worker who has had three months total retail experience after driving truck for how many years he did that. Two TOTALLY different worlds and it certainly shows.

Within the first week of his employment, he was \$30.00 short on his till. For some reason, unbeknownst to me, the store feels that it is not necessary to have each cashier have his/her own till. Nothing to do with the employee. Our main office worker has worked at the store longer than I have been in retail and she doesn't find that a bit odd? I would like to have my own drawer as well so I do not get blamed for other's tills coming up \$30.00 short.

Tonight, I was really close to losing it. Said employee asked if he could start to sweep and mop the floor. So, I went to the office and got a fresh drawer. He had the audacity to ask me why I would do that. All right, I was confused. Apparently, he wanted to sweep and mop the floor plus watch the register?

Moments later, a customer (my sister-in-law no less) comes to the register. I call the cashier to the register to wait on her. Then, he has the nerve to question why I ask him to wait on her. Apparently, he is now of the mind that if you are working the same shift it is ok to run his register? I didn't understand that at all and he TOLD me I did not. He's right, I did not. I don't understand why you would want the person who is "responsible for your till being \$30.00 short" to run it at all.

Later little did I expect, I was running the register with the 3 month old retail employee standing behind my shoulder making sure that I wasn't making any mistakes. That almost did it.

But I kept my cool and waited on the line of customers. I was not about to come down to his level when we were the only 2 in the store. Small store but at times more help is needed.

A person needing to go outside for a quick break being one of them. Thank goodness, it was time for him to leave. I might

have taken the opportunity to have him leave a few minutes early.

My quick “Lord, Give Me Strength” really helped! Prayer is a powerful thing, isn’t it?

A SUPER Bonfire

After a shortened night’s sleep (I’m sure some of my friends got less sleep than I so can’t complain) following a SUPER Friday night, I had to work the dreaded 12-8 shift on a Saturday... it’s money. Following the grind, the family (including our visiting cousin from Arkansas... one last get together before she boards the Greyhound tomorrow evening) met at my brothers for a bonfire that turned into an indoor affair (80+ degrees seems a bit warm for weinee roasting, marshmallow toasting, s’more creating). So, hot dogs were put in the broiler and s’mores were made over the gas stove. And we were treated to some of Season 3 of *Lois and Clark* courtesy of Jeff’s PS3 streaming of Netflix.

Season 3 finds the intrepid reporters of a great metropolitan newspaper at the beginning of their budding romance. However, as was pointed out, long before the sound of wedding bells were rung. DC Comics made it known that the union would not be made on screen before it was in the pages of the comic books. A virtual reality adventure, a Lane/Kent family Christmas celebration, and voodoo hocus pocus (not one of my favorite episodes) filled the two+ hours.

While watching the adventures on the big screen, my other brother arrived after some car trouble. It seems that he had a his starter replaced for naught. Instead, it was determined that Chad had gotten some bad gas (pun intended). “There was

a quarter tank left” according to the fuel gauge. Plenty of fuel to travel 10 miles. Sounds oddly familiar to me, somehow.

So... never a dull moment. I’ll have to revisit my DVD collection of the four seasons of one of my favorite incarnations of the Man of Steel.

With A Little Help From My Friends

AHHHHHH... after a two week hiatus, I returned to my weekly voice lesson. Fun times! While waiting for K, I was entertained once again by her 5 year old son who now happily reports that he has beaten computer chess on the medium level.

A feat I could only dream of achieving. He is also looking forward to the beginning of the school year but is a bit apprehensive because he does not know who his teacher will be.

Been there... done that! He also presented me with a colorful piece of artwork that he made while mixing a bunch of paints together. And I got the full rundown of the family vacation.

Rehearsals are going even better than I could have imagined.

During the two week break, I scoured my books to find a few more songs to work on. I found “Friend Like Me” from *Aladdin*.

WOW! Once again, deceptive but will be fun to work on. I dug out a few other songs that I hope to look at in the next few weeks: a few more duets, a small group piece, and some solo pieces.

After going through one of the pieces which is now ready for performance, we read some Disney songs which I will be looking at again. I tried my best Italian crooning voice on “Bella Notte” a short little piece that must have had some

instrumental during the spaghetti and meatball scene in *Lady and the Tramp*.

After some more sight singing, we both decided that we definitely want to do a weekend gig at the theatre. The first thing to do is NARROW my song list. I have a very large collection of music to choose from... ones I have worked on and have gotten near perfection, some I have looked at, and others that I want to look at, and some I have been encouraged to look at. I was informed that my voice sounds "really good" on each of the songs I have attempted (even the ones I have never looked at before).

So... with a little help from my friends (those who have inquired about doing a duet with me... you know who you are; those I will ask to do a little group number (or two) with; and someone to provide a bit of filler between some of the numbers) I should be prime for the public shortly after Baskervilles wraps or, at latest, after the first of the year.

Doesn't it just sound lovely?