

THERE'S NO NEED TO FEAR...

This afternoon after attending Easter services and eating our huge dinner, the kids gathered around the big television to watch what any red-blooded American child would... *Underdog* (ok... so perhaps not that many). I was pleasantly surprised by the live-action version of the cartoon I remember watching as a child. It remained fairly faithful to the cartoon rekindling enough memories for the old and being fun for the young ones who probably do not remember the television series.

A bomb-sniffing beagle is released from the police force after he mistakenly sniffs out a ham instead of a bomb. While roaming the streets, the dog is captured by the evil scientist Dr. Simon Barsinister and is injected with a serum which gives him amazing superpowers. The dog escapes and becomes the pet of a security guard (played by Jim not John Belushi) and his teenage son, Jack and is given the name Shoeshine.

After discovering Shoeshine's powers, Jack decides to keep the secret to himself and convinces the reluctant pooch to use his powers to help those in distress. However as *Underdog* begins his exploits of daring-do, Simon and his henchman Cad continue to hunt for the beagle to use in their own sinister plot.

Ok... while it may not be the most ambitious movie ever made, *Underdog* did keep 7 children occupied for 90 minutes. It also had many tie-ins to the cartoon (Shoeshine, Sweet Polly Purebred voiced by *Enchanted*'s Amy Adams, Simon Barsinister and his sidekick Cad, and Riff-Raff who was voiced by Brad Garrett). It was far better than what I expected. It also had a nice nod to another Disney animated film. *Underdog* and Sweet Polly's first date was reminiscent of *Lady and the Tramp*'s spaghetti dinner (down to the single meatball).

Can You Feel The Love This Morning?

Last night's excursion to Too-lee-doo was full of thrills, chills and did I mention I saw The Lion King? Getting there and enjoying the breathtaking splendor of live theatre was great, getting back was another story entirely. I will concentrate on the show and leave the adventure getting home for another time.

As I noted in a previous blog, the stage production of Lion King includes several songs which were not in the movie. Some of these include: Morning Report, Endless Night, and Shadowland. My favorite new song has always been Endless Night. It is sung by Simba in Act II. It is a beautiful soliloquy in which the lion struggles to decide whether or not to return to the Pride Lands and fight for the throne which is rightfully his or stay and remain hidden in his new life of Hakuna Matata.

Aside from the new songs, everything about seeing the masterpiece on stage is brilliant. The puppetry used to personify several characters (towering giraffes, leopards, antelope, and countless other animals) must have taken hours to design and be implemented. The choreography is stunning. Perhaps even more spectacular is the use of African-style chant to enhance the atmosphere. My companions and I were curious as to the English translation for the lyrics. Also of interest was the number of African natives who made up members of the cast. Surely some degree of pride must be felt among them as they sing words native to their homeland.

I would HIGHLY recommend taking the entire family to see this

excellent production. One or two of the scenes may be a bit intense for the very young; however, if they have ever seen the movie , it is no more intense than what is seen in it. There were several children in the audience (perhaps no younger than 5) with looks of utter awe and wonder. It is a great way to introduce the whole family to the spectacular world of live theatre..

I May Be Smarter Than But I Am Not A Better Gamer Than A 5th Grader

Tonight I had the privilege(?) of watching my brother's three children (ages 3, 9, & 12). Pretty wild until about 8 o'clock when I stated that it would be silent while we watched "Smallville" after playing the Wii. I did pretty well but got my brains beat in by a 5th grader playing Super Smash Brothers Brawl. This is DEFINATELY NOT my Super Mario Brothers game. Speaking of getting beaten by a 5th grader., I allowed the two oldest tykes to stay up and watch "Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?" This is a very fun show with America's redneck, Jeff Foxworthy, serving as host. Tonight's first contestant was a very pregnant female who seemed to draw inspiration by rubbing her belly. I hate true or false questions: "Africa is the only continent where elephants exist naturally in the wild."

Katherine eventually answered enough questions with the help of 3 of the five 5th grade students to win \$50,000. The second contestant did not fare as well. The orange grower needed help on his first three questions. If not for the assistance of two 11 year olds, Vince would have been one of the poor, unfortunate souls who left the show with zip, zero, nada.

“How many times does the letter z appear in the word (lizard)?” Vince’s answer: 2. Two other equally challenging questions followed. The orange man did however manage to go home with \$25,000. All in all a comparatively calm night to some I have had with the three little darlings. Since spring break begins tomorrow, I do not think big brother would mind the kids staying up one hour past their bedtime. Who knows when he will return from his poker game?

More Great Movie Titles

To keep up with both blogs, allow me to post some more wonderfully hideous titles and synopses. OR... lets make it even more fun. I will give a list of titles and synopses. See if you can guess which one contains the actual description.

1. Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me. The story of a young child who falls into a well and finds herself in another world populated by giant red ants.

2. Fat Guy Goes Nutzoid. A large man with a Mohawk haircut escapes from a mental hospital and becomes the friend of two rich kids.

3. Night of the Day of the Dawn of the Son of the Bride of the Return of the Terror of the Attack of the Evil, Mutant, Hellbound, Flesh-Eating Subhumanoid Zombified Living Dead, Part 3. A horror movie aficionado takes her fascination too far when she unearths the remains of Dr. Frankenstein, Count Dracula, The Mummy, and The Creature from the Black Lagoon.

You Can't Make This Up

There are so many movies out there that no one has ever heard of least of all seen. I am sure that there are entire sites dedicated to the B-movie genre. Just cruising the net I came up with a few dandies which may be worth a peek on 3AM television or in the 50 cent rack at your local video rental shop.

How about "Attack of the Killer Refrigerator?" The refrigerator of fitness guru Richard Simmons is fed up with the Sweatin' to the Oldies and the lack of good old fashioned junk food. The appliance develops a complex and seeks revenge by tracking down the thousands of people helped by the exercise video series and turns them into zombies.

Another fine title: "The Brain that Wouldn't Die" is one that I have actually heard of. This masterpiece concerns a doctor whose girlfriend loses her head. The good physician preserves the head and still functioning brain in order to reattach it to a suitable body.

My personal favorite title: "Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living And Became Mixed Up Zombies." This is the epic story of a pig who is jilted by his porcine princess. The porker turns into a zombie and vows revenge.

If you are a fan of cult movies, Mystery Science Theatre 3000, or just plain bad movies that no one in their right mind would ever watch, then I urge you to track them down. Or, they may just pop in in a great game of Balderdash.

It Is Finished

Well, once again I was part of a great experience which started off a bit shaky but came off brilliantly. Sometimes I think that is the basis for many wonderful productions. You start off bumpy, have many highs and lows, but in the end (even moments before showtime) it all comes out fine.

Sunday night was to be our final rehearsal for the Requiem concert. However, the conductor was beside himself because there was no organist. The woman who pretty well organized the entire event was in the hospital and not expected to be released for two weeks. In the end, rehearsal was scratched with everyone hoping that our two hour rehearsal prior to concert time would be enough to polish the piece. Not to mention that the small orchestra accompanying the chorus would not be added until this evening.

Yet, everything came together relatively smoothly. The entire chorus was present (Lora must have signed herself out of the hospital as she said she would... but she looked fine). The soprano and baritone soloists were both splendid. The soprano (who is a freshman in high school) sounded positively angelic. No applause between each of the 6 sections of the piece (one small child made a sound in a silent moment). A well deserved standing ovation was received in the end.

Outside the performance space, several people commented that they could pick my voice out several times. Hoping that this was a good thing, I thanked each one. It is not usually a good thing to be heard above everyone else in a chorus. On the contrary, it is preferable for the voices to blend with each other. But who am I to turn down a compliment? Someone must appreciate my voice. Or have heard it enough to recognize it

(good or bad? Guess it depends who is singing... me or the visitor from Liswathistan).

Return To Shaffer Value

All riiighty then. Tonight, I started a new old job. It seems I was in the right place at the right time last week when I went into my local grocery store to fax my resume to a few possible job locations. It seems that the store was in need of some part time help as most of the school age kids were going to be involved in sports this spring. So, I said until something more lucrative came up, why not.

Old job you ask. Yes, because the grocery earned the nickname "Shaffer Value" after my two older brothers, my mother, my younger sister, and myself worked there at some point. I will not say how long I worked there initially (at least 4 years). The funny thing was, the minute I walked in today, they had already received a phone call for a reference for me. Unfortunately, none of the employees I worked with previously were there to take the call. They gave me a glowing review from personality alone since the person calling did not understand that it has been many years since I graced the store with my services.

Some things had changed while many others seemed to have remained basically the same. The minute I walked into the stockroom, I was totally shocked. Gone were the piles and piles of overstock which had previously been there to be worked and reworked until they could not be worked anymore. There were two small stacks which contained items for all four aisles (yes, a four-aisle grocery). I could have only imagined having such a nice backroom in my day.

The cash register was also much more advanced (from my previous days, anyway). Before, the store only accepted cash, checks, or paper food stamps. Now we take credit (debit, too), food stamps are now done electronically, and WIC is accepted, as well. Plus, they have scanners which we did not have. The store has finally gotten out of the stone age.

One thing did draw me into reality. The stock boy working there who is a senior in high school is someone whom I remember being brought in by his mother when he was a baby. Of course, the lady running the register when I arrived today used to change my diapers so I guess it is all relative. So... until something better comes along... Few may remember the days when it was known as Shaffer Value, but it will do. I know there are people who remember the space being the local movie theatre.

Skating On Very Thin Ice

I was debating on which blog to write this post. I, personally, have had enough of filmmakers making the same movie over and over again and attempting to make it a sequel. There has been Cruel [Intentions I and II](#) (based on the film [Dangerous Liaisons](#)). It even had the same characters but played by different actors. Last night, [The Cutting Edge 3](#) premiered. I did not tune in as I have seen the [first movie](#) at least once (and that is enough, thank you). The first movie starred D.B. Sweeney (a B-movie actor if there ever was one) as a hockey player who either is passed his prime or is injured. Somehow, he becomes the partner of an Olympic-medal hopeful figure skater (Moirra Kelley). What follows is as predictable as any [Dirty Dancing](#)-esque movie could be. The two meet, argue, attempt to work together, fall apart, get back together, and

finally perfect their routine enough to compete. Did I mention that they also fall in love... how predictable?

OH... forgive me please. [The Cutting Edge 2](#) features the daughter of the characters of the original. It seems she has the same dream as her mother and meets and falls for her headstrong, stubborn skating partner. I'm sure that it is as brilliant as the first movie... only the character names have been changed (or most) to protect the integrity of the first movie.

Unfortunately, I could find no synopsis for The Cutting Edge 3 to compare the plots of the trilogy. However, I can provide the following as a possible scenario:

A former hockey pro reluctantly agrees to become the partner of a stubborn, self-centered Olympic figure skating hopeful. Sexual tension begins to rise as they struggle to go for the gold.

Strange, but they seem like a case of been there, seen that, and seeing that was not so great. So enough of Hollywood rehashes posing as sequels even if they are direct to video or made-for-television. At the very least, [Grease 2](#) attempted to be a completely different story... but that is another turkey.

If Music Be The Food Of Love, Play On

This afternoon two communities who are usually big rivals came together to honor someone who has touched the lives of quite possibly every person who either lived in either town or attended school in Edgerton, Ohio. Emily Curtis grew up in

Edon but has taught music in Edgerton for 27 years at all levels (junior high, high school, and, most recently, elementary). Last year, she was stricken with leukemia and is in Columbus at the medical facilities on the OSU campus undergoing treatment. Through it all, she has been the same tough, strong, stubborn woman she has been for at least 20 years. She has given so much to everyone not only in this area but worldwide. Since 09/11/01, she has spear-headed a Troop Care package program sending supplies to the armed forces in Iraq and all over the world. The program has sent tons of necessities and has received numerous plaques, letters, and medals for its generosity.

At the benefit, there were thousands of dollars worth of donated items in a silent auction. Ohio State and Michigan memorabilia, beautiful artwork, Edgerton apparel, too much stuff to even begin to describe. School children danced and sang. Mrs. Balser, who started her teaching career at Edgerton 40 years ago, has generously taken Mrs. Curtis position for the year. A second grader sang "Rainbow Connection" and sounded like he should have provided the voice of Kermit the Frog in the "[Muppet Movie](#)."

There are just so many personal levels on which I could write about my experiences with Emily. She is one tough cookie and will push you until you have reached your potential. During my four years in high school, she arranged for the band to travel to Chicago to see [Phantom of the Opera](#). We attended a performance of Annie in Toledo as we were just beginning to stage our own production. Speaking of our production of [Annie](#), I originally auditioned for the role of Daddy Warbucks. The day after tryouts, I was called over the PA to report to the band room. "OH, LORD... what have I done now?" I was asked to read for the role of Rooster. Read a bit of dialogue, sing "Easy Street," and CROW. Emily and the drama director told me then and there that I had nailed the role of Warbucks, but they thought I would do even better as the villain.

In November 2006, I played the part of Vinnie in [The Odd Couple](#). This was the first time I had been in a non-musical play since 1991. Two people were instrumental in my decision to try out (aside from myself that is). I called Emily the night before auditions and asked her what she thought. She has told me for years that I need to let my light shine bright (among other things) and that she knew I would do well. And following the Sunday matinee, she told me "Who is it that has been telling you for years to stop limiting yourself?" Thanks Ma

Winning Isn't Everything

While having a few minutes free today, I flipped through the endless array of nothingness which is television (especially on a late Saturday afternoon). I happened across the game show "Greed." One of the multiple choice questions was: "Which four of the following has won a Best Actor Oscar." The six possible answers were:

Al Pacino
Robert Redford
Paul Newman
Michael Douglas
Tom Cruise
Nicolas Cage

The question got my head spinning about controversies in the category. George C. Scott refused the award for his portrayal of [Patton](#) because he did not like the way in which the character was presented. Marlon Brando refused the award for his role in one of the most acclaimed films in motion picture history, [The Godfather](#), in order to protest the mistreatment of Native Americans in motion pictures. Those are two of the

most notable controversies in the 80 year history of the Best Actor award. Are there any others?

As for the question itself, I had to check the veracity of one of the correct responses. I was absolutely sure of one of the actors until it came up wrong. I was even certain of the role for which I was sure he had won. See if you can guess the correct four.