

Selling Chili

My youngest is in the High School's Show Choir, and they had a Chili sale during the Homecoming game to raise money for the group. I 'volunteered' to help sell some of the chili. My first official chore was to help set up the tables needed to put the many crock pots of chili on. The next was to taste all of the different chili to make be able to tell all the customers/donation specialists if a specific chili was too spicy or something like that.

I can say that all of the chili was very good, but there wasn't a lot of spice in any of them. On my grading scale of chili they all would have been a zero. On the normal people scale, (those who don't tolerate the spice as well as I do) I guess there would have been a 1 in the group. There were not a 5 alarm chili in the group.

The number of different chili recipes is astounding. I was amazed that each chili had a specific flavor. It would appear that each cook had their own secret ingredient. I didn't have the time to be able to cook a chili for this event, so I just brought the shredded cheese and crackers. Not sure on the money raised, but the chili was gone before half-time. And there was a lot of chili.

Now for a quick and easy (and not bad tasting) chili recipe.

1 1/2 lbs ground beef browned with 2 cloves of garlic (drained)

4 – 16 oz cans of Brooks Chili Beans (I like the 16 oz cans for this so I can use different 'heats' if desired – I like the HOT)

1 can of Campbell's Tomato Soup (Progresso is good too)

2 tbls chili powder.

Hot sauce to taste at table.

Combine browned meat, soup and beans and chili powder. Heat

through. Done that's it. Told you it was quick and easy.

The best bean chili I've had starts with tomatoes and dried beans. I'm surprised the recipe didn't call for you to butcher your own cow. I think I supplied a version of a beanless chili to the WCCT cookbook. I can't remember...

Good for me???

Well, I joined the local YMCA recently (they made me an offer I couldn't refuse...), and I'm really wondering if it will be good for me. Extra exercise is appreciated, but have you ever really looked at some of the exercise equipment they have now.

My guess is that if you put that stuff in a dungeon in the middle ages, the people would look at it as they would any other 'equipment' they had. They have things that contort your body into weird shapes just to exercise certain muscle groups. (or so they say) Done another way, these devices could really hurt someone.

I am glad that they are willing to give all members a summary of all the weight equipment. I hadn't worked on anything like that since college. They machines have changed a bit since the early 80's. They still do the same things, but it looks like they've isolated the muscle groups more than they did before. I'm sure that they are safer than the ones I worked on too.

I'll write more on my experience with the weight machines when I use them for more than 5 minutes. I don't see myself getting overly fond of any of them...

I was going to put a link in for torture devices, but I found them to be too disturbing. I guess the exercise equipment

doesn't look that bad now.... So here is a link to one of the pieces of equipment I used...

[Leg Press](#)

What most people don't know

It is amazing how we go through life not knowing. I know somethings about my friends, family and associates, but I don't know others. I know somethings about mathematics and sciences, but there is a lot I don't know. I know a bit of trivia, but again there is a whole lot I don't know. I know a little bit about my corner of the computer world, and there are whole other worlds out there. Even people who know a lot, don't know a whole lot more.

Then there are things that I really knew less about. I wish I knew less about death. I wish I knew less about heart disease and cancer. I wish I knew less about all the hospitals in the area. I wish I knew less about being a widower and an only parent.

There are things I wish I knew more about too. The list is growing everyday. I am sure I will learn more about things I don't want to know about, but I will also learn more about the things I do want to learn about. It seems like a cycle in life. I hope to learn as long as there is life in this body. That may or may not happen, but it is my hope.

I also wish I knew what the winning numbers would be on the next lottery draw, but that hasn't happened yet either.

Another haunting...

Yes three of us ventured into a haunted maze again. Again we ventured in 3 times. Why do we do this? I'm not really sure. I will admit I did have a bit of fun.

As [jamiahsh](#) also wrote a blog about this, you can check his site for the links. I'll just make a few observations from the evening.

It was great walking through actual mazes. Especially since you could get turned around and head back the way you came. With angry clowns and some creepy creatures who will chase you through the mazes, this make for an entertaining evening. At least for me. In these attractions, I will say that I don't often get "scared". I do get startled, and I do occasionally get grossed out. Some of the stuff just looks nasty. Once I get into the haunting, I really want to join the team that is doing the haunting. I'm always looking for where they can hide and where the best places to scare are. I think I would have added a couple to this attraction. There was a fairly long stretch of corn row walking that didn't seem to have too many ghouls. Maybe this was a 'breather' area, or they just didn't have enough actors to cover it. Not sure, but I thought it would be a good spot for some spooky noises, or just someone rustling the corn.

The one area that really gets to me on a very physical level is a walk through tube. My friends were very loud through this. Me, I almost shut myself in. To me, it is that unnerving. I imagine if I opened my mouth too often in that area, a visceral scream would emerge. I'm not sure exactly what about that gets to me, but it hits a very primal cord. On every trip through I arranged to be in the back of our little group. I lagged behind a bit, and actually walked through this section a bit slower than the rest. Even though this area was clawing at my core, I went as slow as possible. Each trip was

a release of some tension. The relief felt when exiting was a soothing balm. I imagine the only thing that would get me more is if I had to crawl through the thing... That does remind me of one place where I did crawl through something very similar, only without the pressure from all sides. This place had multiple textures in a pitch black crawl through... That also got to me.

Now onto the room that disoriented everyone but me. I'm not sure why I could manage my way through. The visual clues, messed up by the strobes were interesting to me. Finding the proper path and keeping balance were like solving a puzzle. Once the solution was arrived at, I had no problems navigating the room. And it did not cause any disorientation. Finding the hiding spot or spots of the resident ghoul was also part of the problem. Avoiding him, and my companions was the bigger challenge. □ I did find another challenge to crafting one of these haunted attractions, the multitude of hidden doors needed by the actors to move in and out of the rooms at will. As an community theater volunteer, I can tell you the hanging of that many doors can be quite a feat.

I've been thinking about this a lot recently, and I've been wondering why I don't get frightened at these haunted houses. I know there was a time when I did get a little more frightened, as an adult, but that has been a few years. I think real life frightened me more than I can ever be frightened by an actor in a haunted house. I've worked late night shifts at a gas station, and worried about the guy robbing stations in the area. That was scary. I worried when my wife had a miscarriage, and didn't come out for a very long time. Or when one of my daughters was in a car accident, or when my youngest was born 7-8 weeks early. These things are scary. Seeing death first hand is scary. A part of life, but a troubling part. Being the only parent to my daughters is scary. No one to bounce thoughts and ideas off of. No backup. That is scary. Haunted house, that is a walk in the park. Well

except for that one area.

Things I like...

Not quite a list, because my interests are varied, but some of the things I like to do, all G-rated of course. (I have a daughter or two who may read this. Yes, they are all over 16, but they are still my little girls.)

I like insignificant bits of trivial knowledge. The more trivial the better. Knowledge that Diners Club was the first independent credit card (1949) and that is when the middle man started handling our money is interesting. Knowing that it came about because one of the first partners forgot their wallet at dinner is the cake. Knowing that partner was a man named Frank X. McNamara is the icing. Finding out what his middle name was would be, as they say, priceless.

I like reading. Of all sorts, but I tend to read Science Fiction, Fantasy (Swords/Sorcery), Mysteries, and Trivia on the web. Will read almost any well written book. Great rainy day time filler.

Computers... Yep, I can't get enough of them. I work 8 hours a day on them and then I come home and spend free time on them... You would think I would get tired of the little buggers.

Cooking occasionally. There are times when I really want to whip up a special meal, I just don't like doing it everyday. But, you have to eat...

Time spent with friends. I'm glad to say I have a few people in my life, that don't seem to mind having me around. My wife

used to call this "Adult Time". Sometimes, I think we adults act a bit like children, but that is part of the fun.

Softball and Baseball. Baseball is the only sport I ever really followed (I played at one time too). No matter how old I get, if I can still swing a bat and toddle down to first base, I plan on playing softball as often as I can. If I would do it more often, I imagine I wouldn't be as sore the next day...

Theater. In my college years, I never would have thought I would want to get on stage in front of people. Wasn't me at all in my early years. I've had a lot of fun doing my ham-bit on stage.

Science and math. Things that make my logical little brain tick. You've got to keep the gears greased to keep everything running smooth, and that's what the Science and math does for me...

A bit of wood working. I really like destruction the best, but I like using power tools. The smell of cut wood is something too.

And last but certainly not least, I like my family. Every dang one of them. They helped form the person I am today (along with many others I've met along the way) and since I tend to like the person I became, I guess I could thank them once or twice... Nah, it would go to their heads wouldn't it.

The test of Time

The final game at Yankee Stadium had an effect on this true Yankee Hater... For years I've rooted for any team but the

Yankees. If the Tigers weren't playing, my favorite team of the day was whoever was playing the Yankees. That said, Yankee stadium was one of the last great baseball parks. So much history will be lost.

In the American league only Fenway remains as one of the "Old" parks. In the National league, only Wrigley field (home of the cubs) remains as one of the old parks. 1912 and 1914 respectively these two ball fields are the last to stand up to the Test of Time. From the Green Monster to the Ivy covered walls, baseball is just a bit different at these two parks.

These are not the cookie cutter parks from the 60's and 70's with their artificial turf and half circle outfield walls. The old parks do have some home field advantage. These are not the parks from the 80's and 90's that had closer to little league dimensions (ok, I'm stretching it a little), but check out the dimensions of Camden Yards and Jacobs Field (excuse me Progressive Field). The old parks, Yankee Stadium, the old Tiger Stadium, even Cominsky park and Cleveland's Municipal park had character.

They have tried to do that with some of the recent ball fields, but only time will tell if they made good decisions. Ballparks that were new in the early 70's are now gone too.. Why didn't fields in Houston, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh last more than few decades.

I'm not sure of the future of the two oldest ballparks in the major leagues, but I would love to see both last until at least their 100th anniversary. I'm sure there are plans in the works, if not already in development for these cities, but wouldn't it be something if they could hold off until 2012 and 2014. We need more things that can pass the test of time..

Things I think I think?

Before cell phones and text messaging, before the internet and email, before the telephone, before the typewriter, people used to write letters by hand. They knew their language, both the writing part and the reading part.

Today in this fast paced world people don't take the time to write letters anymore. A quick email here, and text message their, an entry in a blog or on MySpace are what communication is today. I'm as guilty as the next person, except that I don't instant message, chat or text. I'm much too wordy for any of those media. It is just too sad that people don't know anything about the complete art of letter writing/reading.

NOTICE!!! I included reading in my assessment of a lost art. Before the advent of all these new ways to communicate, people took the time to read their letters. They were not meant to be a quick read. These were missives that someone took time to write and they deserved time in reading also.

Why am I mentioning this? Good question, I asked it of myself too. It seems that some maybe most people are looking at blog sites, and bulletin boards as direct communication to themselves. They take comments meant for general consumption and think others are talking about them. They have hard feelings when they think something or someone is against them. Now, I will admit that in some cases they may have a valid point, but in others, people weren't talking or writing about them. But they want to take it personally.

Then again, people today don't think before they write. They can write things that could be considered cruel toward an individual or a group. People then get bent out of shape and small wars tarnish the blogs, bulletin boards and myspace accounts. So sad sometimes. Good conversations are ruined by misunderstandings. It happens almost everywhere on the web.

So in this, I asked myself: Why?. I came up with one simple idea. It could be something, it could be nothing at all. We are losing the ability to communicate effectively with the written word, just by not paying attention to what we write and how we read. Is this something we will miss in our lives, or will the older members of society who remember this sort of communication, just talk (write?) about the good ol' days.

Just one word of advice to those who read Blogs, myspace accounts, bulletin boards, emails, text msgs. and the like. If you read something that bothers you, take some time, leave it, come back to it later read it again. Before responding in haste or anger, make sure you understand what is written, and if those word really apply to you. I've used that since the my very first e-mail, and intend to keep using that practice well into my very last e-mail or whatever form of communication the future brings me.

multitude of flashing red lights

Driving to work this morning I saw a large number of flashing red lights in the distance. Due to the number I knew there was an bad accident somewhere along my drive to work. And unfortunately, I was correct. Over 6 emergency vehicles were converging on a spot about 1 1/2 miles from the State Route 34 / State Route 66 intersection. From the looks of a small compact car was hit by an large SUV. Nothing on the crash on any local news yet, so I have no idea if anyone was hurt. Just one more reminder of how many miles I drive in a week. I've seen more than a few accidents on the way to work, and with no small amount of luck can say I've never been in a serious

accident myself. I hope to stay on that trend.

Even back when I was learning how to drive, I had a profound respect for the power of an automobile. I learned to drive on a fairly large car ('66 Impala) and for a time owned an early 70's GM Station Wagon (I don't recall if it was the Chevy or Buick model, but it could fit a full 4 x 8 sheet of plywood in the back when the rear seat was down.) I guess I knew what those hunks of metal could do if they hit something. The wagon's ride was so smooth, and the engine so powerful, it would cruise along at 70 before you felt any speed from the thing (unless you hit a curve, the beast always wanted to go straight). I learned to be careful with my speed too. I didn't like seeing those flashing red lights in my rear view mirror.

It was amazing today at the distance I could see the lights this morning. For those who don't know, NW Ohio is flat, very flat. There was no fog this morning and I could see those flashing lights for miles down the road. This afternoon I guesstimated that I was around 4 to 5 miles away when I first saw them. I've driven in areas where you were lucky to see 2 miles of straight flat roadway. If I had come from the right direction, it could have been much farther. It is amazing how bright those red lights are in the dark.

Now just how did we decide that red lights should be the warning lights. The state of Ohio limits the use of the red lights to Fire and Police, The police may also use blue. I have yet to find any historical references to the use of these lights for emergency use. I will keep looking because my curiosity has been piqued.

The box of eight has been completed...

Green numbers on the clock

I've been pondering the past few months on the choice I made a couple of years ago on my alarm clock. The numbers are BIG!!! For my aging eyes that is a good thing. There is a problem, the clock is very bright. Most nights, I really don't notice it, but when I am having trouble sleeping (tonight!!), the clock just seems to light up the room. While it isn't quite bright enough to read by, I don't have to turn on a light to make my way around anything I may find on the floor (dog?). I've been wondering if I shouldn't have looked for a different alarm clock. Tonight those BIG GREEN numbers are just passing by keeping me awake.

Really, I'm a bit of an insomniac anyway, so on some nights it doesn't take much to keep my eyes open. I also have other complaints about the clock, but it does wake me up on most mornings, so it isn't all bad. Even after staying awake half the night, the alarm/radio is loud enough to wake me.

But I did get my green in didn't I... One more color to go.

Now on to other "Green" things. The \$\$Cost\$\$ of gasoline this last weekend skyrocketed on limited supplies. I've heard of places where they have run out of gas, or even gas going for over \$5.00 per gallon. This is when Oil prices dropped to below \$100 per barrel. Now I realize the recent Gulf Coast Hurricanes disrupted the supply lines, but you would think after all these years of Hurricanes people would think to move as much gas as possible before the storms hit. Maybe not, but I think I would have done that. Shutting everything down is all well and good, especially since it does keep people safe, but some forethought is also needed. Just trying to save some of my green.

The green leaves are starting their fall change already too. Some of the early turners in this area are the Ash, Hickories

and Walnuts. Driving through the country side you can see the few yellow/brown leaves in the small wood lots. Don't blink though, these trees lose their leaves quickly. I remember going to college and the campus had mostly tall Hickories around the buildings. By Mid to late September all the leaves were gone from the trees. Made fall come very quickly. And if I remember correctly, they got their leaves later in the spring than other trees too. Long winters in NW Ohio...

One more color on my small list of eight crayon colors... And then maybe something else.. I never know where my thoughts will lead...

Purple, I like purple...

Since I can't seem to sleep (to be fair I did sleep away most of the day, and now I am bothered by my raw throat again) I thought I would blog a bit. Continuing in my countdown of the original 8 crayon colors I had in my first box of school crayons.

I had crayons before school of course, in fact I had my favorite crayon. I would take it with me where ever I went. Me and my purple crayon. I would use this crayon to write my name. For some reason, I liked to write my name. I'm not sure if this is the first word I learned to spell/read or whatever, but I wrote my name a lot. I wrote my name on bookshelves, pool tables, coffee tables, dining room tables, furniture, in cupboards, and of course on paper. I always wrote with my purple crayon. The funny thing is except for the pool table and paper, I never wrote where others could see. I wrote under tables and shelves, in cabinets and cupboards, on the back of the furniture. I would write my

name in all of my 'places'.

I used the dining room table as a fort, I wrote my name. I would 'camp' under the coffee table, I wrote my name. I would hide in cabinets and cupboards and I would write my name. Kind of like "Kilroy was here" only I wrote my name.

Until we moved, my parents never knew how many places I wrote my name, and since we left the house, I'm sure they didn't find it in the permanent places in our old house. Mom removed all traces of my name from any place she found it. I'm glad she didn't make me do it. I still wonder if my name isn't out there somewhere in purple crayon still hiding after all these years.

And even when the [Crayola company](#) calls the color Violet, the crayon color has always been purple to me...