

Feelin' Groovy And Yet Not So Groovy

I recently posted on my friend from high school who went to her first movie audition a few weeks ago. Today, she came into the store looking rather depressed. As I was waiting on her, I asked what was wrong. Thier family dog had just passed away. I still remember being really upset for a long time after losing MY dog so I knew how she felt.

However, she did have some good news. Monday was the day she was to get any callbacks for the movie. She got a call from the director and SHE GOT THE PART! She was absolutely floored. The director said that her casting was totally unanimous. Excellent for a first-time auditioner! I have only been told that my casting in any role was unanimous one time and it was not the first time I ever auditioned. I was not able to ask for details and Peg did not look like she was in the mood to discuss it. But from what little I know, she is cast in the role of the mother in a horror film (ironic that she is the wife of a church pastor... wouldn't you say?). Apparently, the shoot starts in June in Coldwater. Peg also told me that she has definitely decided to minor in film at UT after one of the faculty advised her to. Doesn't it just give you a great feeling to know that you helped someone achieve something special in some small way? Congrats, Peg.

Bird Meet Hamster

In earlier days, my family had quite a menagerie of pets (just not more than two at a time. When we moved to town when I was

the tender age of 6 months, we got MY dog, Buffy from the wonderful friends who sold us the house. I loved my poodle a lot. The summer after I completed the 4th grade, Buffy had to be put to sleep. She was really ill. Arthritis had set in so badly, that she could not walk upon or down the porch steps. The poor girl would not eat and shivered all the time. So one day, my parents took her to the vet, unbeknownst to me.

In addition to Buffy, we had a total of three cats (not all at once, but one in particular that I know I have posted about). The poodle would go crazy when approached by the felines. I don't think it was the stereotypical dog vs. cat scenario but more like playful chasing around the house.

The Christmas after Buffy was put down, we received a blue parakeet from our "grandparents". We named her Corky after "Grandma" Margaret. One summer while on break from college, my brother brought home Skippy the hamster whom he "saved." The parakeet must have become jealous because he would imitate the hamster by walking around on the floor and following it. I remember going so far as to put the bird inside the hamster's ball and seeing her attempt to roll it.

Ann Vows To...

Ok... I think I'm safe. Last weekend was extremely fun and wonderful. I had been telling my friends that if they needed any help with their anniversary celebration to let me know. Friday, I was pleased to get the call to action. I was asked to undertake the daunting task of printing the vows which would be read for the renewal. Not really daunting, but I had to be careful to find the right place to tear the paper. It would not sound quite right to have them read part of the

other's vows. I did not want to read the words on the paper so it would not spoil the moment. After making contact with my lovely escort for the evening and deciding to meet each other at the theatre, I set out to help.

When I arrived, there was a note on the door indicating that the couple was at the local China Garden. So, I drove over there instead of waiting for them to come to me. When I got to the restaurant, I saw no sign of the burgundy vehicle I have become so accustomed to. So, thinking that I must have missed them, I drove back to the house. As I was making the short walk from the theatre's parking lot to the house, what should appear but the vehicle I had been hunting.

After the groom and I checked out the reception area, I headed to Wal-Mart to pick up the cake and pick out some flowers for a bouquet as well as pick up some ointment for the little guy. I did not hear any complaints about my choice so I will say I done good.

I have never been to a vow renewal ceremony. But I will say that I don't think that any couple deserved to celebrate their ten years of marriage more. The more I am around these two the more I see how much genuine love, respect, and admiration there is between them. Their vows were very beautifully written. The entire ceremony was magic.

The reception was a blast. I once again was able to demonstrate my phenomenal dancing ability. I do a mean Hokey Pokey. And dancing beside a nine year old in the Macarena was priceless to say the least.

So... Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of your 10 Year Celebration. May you both live to see your children's children's children and may your love continue to grow even more abundantly every minute, every hour, every day.

Who Advises The Advisor?

Recently, I received an email from a high school friend asking for advice on auditioning for a movie role. She has never acted before but knew of my passion for theatre and decided to come to me for whatever reason. I have never tested for film, but gathered that my stage experiences would help. Here was my reply:

That sounds cool. I have never auditioned for film before, but I can't imagine it being any different from stage. Being a first timer, there will be anxiety which is good to have... it gives you energy. I still get it... anyone who says they never get nervous at an audition because they have done it so often is lying through their teeth but the more experience you get in auditioning the easier it becomes to use the nerves to your advantage. Not sure what to expect... do you have a script or is it a cold reading? Do you have to have anything prepared ahead (monologue?) . The best advice I can give is to go in, do what the director asks and have fun (the most important thing). The minute you walk into the site you ARE at the audition. Most of the auditions I go to start out by introducing yourself. This is as important as reading from the script or anything else they ask you to do. The first impression is the most important... be yourself (Sounds cliché and corny, but is very true). And don't let your inexperience get you down... everyone has to start somewhere. With your personality, I am really surprised that you did not try out for anything in school, but... never too late. Break a leg! Let me know if there is anything else you need and let me know how you do.

Apparently, she felt really good about the audition, because

she sent me an email Saturday after the audition and told me that she used my advice. She was nervous but went in and presented herself as best she could and even talked to one of the writers and the casting director. Her husband, another EHS alumnus was in the store tonight and related how excited she was and how grateful she was for the advice. Unfortunately, she has to wait until April 6th to hear about call backs, etc. I would be driven insane waiting that long. She is even anticipating minoring in theatre at the University of Toledo where she started taking classes last fall. "Theatre is fun" she said. I even told her that she needs to take advantage of the theatre around her.

This is not the first time I have shared advice and my love of my favorite thing. It seems that I am quick to pick out members of any cast who are inexperienced and offer words of encouragement and take them "under my wing" as it were.

My problem is this: If I find it so easy to encourage others (friends, new acquaintances who more often than not turn into friends), why can't **I** find the encouragement to go further? I have conquered (or at least been on) 6 stages in my little corner of the world. I love everyone of them. I have made the best friends I have EVER had in two of these venues because the bond many of us share is so strong. I get encouraged by many of them and yet... here I sit. Have I become so "comfortable" here that I will never try (again) to go above and beyond? I know I am just rambling and many of you may not understand how strong this thing is (I'm not even sure I do at times) but to me if someone finds himself trying out for every show in his community theatre (even when he is not cast... just picks himself up and tries again and again) and even ventures to other groups from time to time, well... **AND I know** that **I** solely am the one who has to come to terms with it. Maybe one day soon I can decide to take another friends advice to heart and believe that:

"There are no limitations in what you can do except the

limitations in your own mind as to what you can not do."

Sour Grapes

Yesterday was quite an interesting day. I worked from 2pm-9pm (my Friday to close up shop. Around 8, my oldest brother and a surprise visitor (Mr. John Truitt) came in. They informed me that my 3 year-old niece had been choking on a grape. 9-1-1 was called and I was assured that all was well. I had no second thoughts about going to a loooong overdue game night. Unfortunately, it seemed that I knew how to clear a room as everyone except some of my best friends departed ☹ Later, Megan and Carol arrived. Megan and I were the last two remaining. Does this seem to happen a lot?

This morning, I learned that Sydney's grape mishap was more serious than Jeff led me to believe. Mom was totally shaken even then. Apparently, the little dear was sitting on grandma's lap. All of a sudden she started choking and gasping for air and eventually had her air supply totally cut off. Grasping at her throat. Somehow, Mom was able to calm down enough to get the grape out before the ambulance arrived. My cousin's husband was on call and it seems that he had to look after Mom more than little Sydney.

After hearing the entire story this morning, I began to consider whether I should have not gone to game night. But I was assured that everything was fine and there was nothing else to be done. Praise God, Sydney was back to her normal 3 year-old self earlier this morning... even if grandma and the rest of us were a bit shaken.

There And Back Again

After leaving the NJ/NYC area, we decided to break the drive home in half and spend another few hours of fun at the Pittsburgh Zoo. After arriving at our hotel at 2.30AM (or was it 3.30? "Jill" the obviously feminine GPS was an hour slow), I got a few hours of sleep. The trek to the zoo AGAIN was met with detours and misdirection. We stopped at a police station and parked in a towing spot. Thank goodness Chris & Lisa returned to the van before we were given notice. Once again, Chris seemed to ignore Jill's directions to get us to the zoo. We stopped at a road side dairy treat where they had the largest and HOTTEST fish sandwich ever. It was so hot that I had to let it cool a few minutes, but it was good.

The Pittsburgh Zoo was in my opinion the best of the three. The exhibits were all extraordinary and entertaining. The African elephants were a special treat especially seeing the babies. A keeper was in the area with the 4 or five elephants and looked right at home.

The aquarium featured more jellyfish (I think Akron's jelly exhibit was better), HUGE (relative) pot-bellied seahorses, and penguins. My favorite exhibit was the sea lions on display. The trainers made them perform for their food and it was amazing to see the animals wave, leap out of the water, bark, and perform other eye-catching feats.

There was also a mole-rat tunnel area for the little ones to play in. Taylor and Sammie made a new friend inside the maze of tunnels. Little Disney was more apprehensive about starting off but once she did, it took some time to get her out. The park was closed by the time we got her out. But we had to stop by the sea lions one last time.

Then, it was back on the road for the final leg of the journey. We stopped in Elyria for dinner and stopped at Wal-Mart (**there is no escaping it!!!!**). Funny thing, this Wal-Mart was still a regular store. I had thought that all the old stores were becoming Super Centers... bigger and better, right? Well...

We returned from our trip around 12:00 Tuesday morning. Once again, I had an absolutely fabulous time in my role of Manny. Thank you Chris and Lisa for having me. Thank you Taylor, Sammie, Disney, and little Beeber. I was so proud of the four of you. There were a few moments when most kids would have been pulling their hair out, but you were all wonderful. The end of this fantastic voyage. Much too quick but memories to last a lifetime. Be sure to check out [taylhis](#)' blog for her own journal of the trip. I found that I had to make one adjustment to my own. HEHE

A Day In New York

Glad I could two events of the past month together. Our final hours in the Big Apple were some of the most thought provoking and emotional. It began after we decided to have breakfast delivered instead of doing the hotel restaurant again. We made our way back across the river for another bus tour. This time on a jump on and off trek. Our hostess was a barrel of laughs and energy. At one stop, a vendor jumped on offering refreshments. The guide quipped that "this is not a movie theatre" in a decidedly Oriental accent. After 9 stops, we arrived at our destination.

Ground zero itself created a very heavy feeling within me. Seeing the empty skyline was nothing compared to actually

being up close to the site surrounded by a fence behind which the memorial is being constructed complete with the 1776 foot tall Freedom Tower. The 9/11 exhibit was also an emotional journey. Artifacts on display recovered from the wreckage of the hi-jacked planes, the buildings, even a stuffed lamb that was buried and somehow survived intact (symbolism, anyone?). Video tributes of the tragedies and heroes. Downstairs, letters written by children of different cultures were on display. Many of these were so heartfelt that it was hard to keep a dry eye.

Following the tour of the exhibit, we had to once again make our way to the pier to get back to the hotel. We thought we were in luck when we were directed to the front of the Commerce Building where there was to be a dock where a ferry came and went. Not so luckily, the dock is closed on Sunday. SOOOO WE HAD TO FIND YET ANOTHER WATERWAY BUS to take us to the pier we were accustomed to. That is a story best left for another time... I may just let Taylor relate that adventure.

Finally, we got back to the Jersey shore and went to dinner before departing. On our way out of Jersey, we stopped for gas. Chris got out, started pumping gas, and was immediately confronted by an attendant who began shouting at him. Apparently, we had inadvertently come across one of the few remaining full service pumps in existence. But outbursts like "Papi" were heard. I thought he was a fan of David Ortiz (wrong area to be one of those... YUCK). By the time the gas was pumped, Chris was promoted (?) to "Boss." On the way out, it was discovered that we were unsure if the rattled attendant attached the fuel cap... sure enough after travelling a few blocks, we found out that it was not.

A Bus, A Bus, My Kingdom For A Bus

After our adventures on our own tour of Times Square, the time was near to get on the bus for our twilight tour. I had never gone on a guided tour of the area so I thought it would be kind of neat to sit back, ride around, and learn about the area. We got on top of the two-level bus in the back. There was a canopy that covered half of the bus that some of us had to be wary of or we could end up with a lump on the head. The vehicle took us from So-Ho to No-Ho (hehe), across the Brooklyn Bridge, to Greenwich Village, and pretty much all over. Some of the landmarks we were able to see included the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, the Washington Arch (which was constructed to commemorate the centennial of President Washington's inauguration). the Flatiron Building (which served as the facade for the Daily Bugle in the Spider-Man movies). The tour itself was awesome by starlight with the lights and atmosphere... even if it was below 40 degrees. I bundled up the little guy as best I could.

While the tour was enjoyable, the guide was not so enjoyable at times. Quite frequently, he would get carried away with his commentary and we would be at a new location when he was still lecturing about the previous one. He even quipped that the info would be beneficial if any of the passengers were ever going to be on Jeopardy!

Following the tour, we departed the bus. Then the real fun began! We had to find a Waterway bus to get us back to the Ferry to take us back across the Hudson to our Jersey hotel.

This turned into a comedy of errors. To quote Admiral Kirk, "We looked like a cadet review." Apparently, finding one of the buses required a bit of timely luck. We first had to find a location where we thought one would eventually arrive. So we asked police officers, hotel personnel, and

other people who looked like they would know. The most we got was some pointing and mumbling neither of which were extremely helpful. I thought about asking the Dark Knight himself who we saw earlier. Now if Spidey had been patrolling the area, I'm sure that he would have been more than happy to help us. He is from Queens after all.

We eventually got to the location for a bus arrival (I won't say that we were at one time a corner away from it). And we waited, and we waited, and we waited. Chris approached a horse-drawn carriage driver to see if he would take us to the pier (for not less than \$75). A taxi would have been just as bad. Finally, C decided that he would jump out in front of the first Waterway bus that came along. Finally, our hero came along. I think it was two hours after we began looking for one. So, another late night for all. Still no major meltdowns. I was really proud of the kids. However, this would not be the last encounter we would have with Waterway buses.

A Kangaroo And His Joey On The Sidewalks Of New York

I don't know if anyone has a picture of this or not, but it would be one for the ages. A grown man putting a baby carrier around another grown man (check you tube). I wish I could describe it but it was funny to just be part of. Holding my hands up in the air as we eventually got Beeber into the pouch. Sounds like the makings for a good B sci-fi movie. I was expecting to be weighed down considerably and be tired by night's end, but I barely noticed the extra baggage as we walked the sidewalks of Manhattan.

We signed up to take a night tour of part of the isle of Manhattan. Before the tour began, we took a tour of Times Square and the vicinity near the starting point of the tour. While walking, we ran into a real life celebrity. Morgan Freeman was standing in front of [Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum](#). Chris decided to get up close and personal for a photo op. After the picture, he admitted that the actor had a somewhat stiff personality. One would almost say... candle-like?

Close by was [Ripley's](#) house where a man swallowed a long air-filled balloon whole. He then began to attempt the old nail in the forehead trick. However, before he completed it, the performer informed us that the authorities were clearing the sidewalk so the show had to move inside but discount tickets would be waiting... moving on.

Anyone who knows anything about the sidewalks of New York knows about the street vendors, pan handlers, artists, musicians, and such out there trying to make a quick buck. We stopped at a caricature artist who drew a likeness of Goose. Next door, was a gentleman selling banners on which he would decoratively print names. Chris decided to get a Disney banner with (irony of ironies) Disney's name printed on it. The artist printed the name and said for a few dollars more, he would put it in a frame. Chris said "No frame." I think the man must have been a relative of the Soup Nazi but something was definitely lost in the translation because by the time he was finished, the banner was indeed inside a paper frame. The swindler's accent made me think of the Nazi also. "You said a no frame?" "Yes, I said no frame." Congratulations my friend! Woolly Sheep! He a sound like a long lost cousin of Morat. Sit Morat, sit! Good Morat.

Back In Room 911

So after a few hours of sleep (WHO SLEEPS ON A VACATION?), the troops went to breakfast in the hotel. Interesting experience... not because of something we did. After breakfast, we went to the pool before Big C had to go to work. The water was wonderful... the moment I stepped into the three feet section, it was heavenly warm. Usually, there is a need to get used to the temperature. C encouraged me to do a gold medal dive into an at most five foot pool...ok, sure. While I was doing a good job of keeping the three girls occupied, C&L took Beeber to meet the clients. It was quite fun... chasing Sammers as she made a lap of the entire pool while holding onto the edge. She still amazes me with her adventurous (if a bit mischievous) nature and very inquisitive mind.

After Sammie finally decided to come back to the dull shallow end, we played a game of Shark Attack (and guess who was the shark). We also became acquainted with a few young boys and their Canadian grandmother who have ties to our corner of the world. It seems that she had accompanied her son's family on a business trip to help take care of the children. Her son lives and works at a factory in the village of Hicksville where I just completed a run in *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Small world, indeed.

About this time, Dis noticed that Mom and Dad were nowhere to be found. So, it was time to make a dash back to the room to avoid a major melt down. By good fortune, Lis was in the room with Beeber so we went down to the riverfront to walk around and feed the seagulls and enjoy the Manhattan skyline. Being my first time to NYC since 9/11, it was a chilling experience to personally take in the empty space where once stood the World Trade Center towers. Yes, my room number was 911.