

In His Hands

The next few weeks will not be easy ones. This morning, we learned that my "Aunt" Lu's (my Uncle Bob's current wife) mother passed away last night. A very long-lived lady... sweet as anything who lived a very prosperous life (91 years young with 12 kids, I think). She was a huge fan of the WCCT and she would come to shows quite often either with Lu or Father Fred. I remember that following *Grease*, she and Lu came to the basement to say Hi. She was also the Grandmother of one of my best friends.

Yesterday, we learned that Aunt Carol (Bob's first wife) is nearing the end of her long fought battle with cancer. Definitely will be very hard this one. Care givers were at her house with my cousins and the rest of her family to prepare them (as much as can be expected anyway.. can anyone really be prepared?) I'm not really sure how long she has been fighting, but it has been a great while in and out of remission until finally there is no more that can be done except to pray for Carol. So many great memories growing up, spending the night with my cousin until it was deemed inappropriate for Alicia and I to stay over at each others house (I think I was 8). At get togethers, we would always devise a plot whereby we would con the parents into allowing this. Very few people refer to me as "James" but I got so used to it that I expected Carol to address me as such. I remember a Christmas gift she gave me a few years back in a large envelope with "For Your Eyes Only" printed on the front. You will have to use your imagination to determine what was inside and it had nothing to do with the 12th 007 movie ☐

So... could be a rough few days ahead. Not the most opportune time of the year but I don't think there really is an appropriate time. But at least their suffering soon will be ended and will soon be in a much better place.

Elementary Chinese Proverb

So after mass tonight, I took two lovely, entertaining young girls to watch me niece in her elementary school's production (not program as the director informed us before the curtain rose... the distinction is the mere formality of budget) of *Mulan, Jr.* I was really impressed by the entire production, the set design and costuming (for nearly 80 3rd-5th or is it 4th-6th grade... WOW!) was very well conceived especially for an elementary school show. The backdrop was a very impressive painting depicting Chinese mountain scenery. But the costumes were one of the highlights of the show. I'm not sure how many tailors were used but we were informed that they were all handmade.

For such a young cast, I was really impressed by some of the performers. My favorite was the evil leader of the Huns, Shan Yu. A tall, imposing figure dressed in black with his small entourage. His voice was also quite commanding.

I also thought that the young lady portraying Mulan had a very nice voice.

I must have been trying too hard to locate Elizabeth, but I still think the costuming was so well done that it was difficult to spot her. Taylor actually pointed her out to me. Oh, yeah... that's her in the purple robe!

There were also some miscues that were not entirely the cast's fault. A few times the miked performers were not heard because the sound tech failed to have them on. However, one young man must have been delayed in his entrance because I heard someone on stage whisper, "Where's ...?" Ah, the magic of live children's theatre. Overall, I really thought it was

adorable and Taylor and Sammie seemed to enjoy themselves which made it even more worthwhile. Plus, they even brought a gift for our star. The Huber Opera House was filled to capacity (well... the main level) which was something I had not seen since *St. Louis*. I guess it is true what they say about audiences with children on stage, but **80!!!**

I also got a very early Christmas present. A blast from the past, actually. I know someone in my family had the Parker Brothers [Six Million Dollar Man](#) board game. I knew as soon as I saw the box that I had played it years ago. LOVE IT... **THANKS!** Plus we had time to play a quick game or three before the night ended.

SIX IN A ROW!

WOO HOO!!!! Game day party that seemed like a pre-Thanksgiving feast. I certainly ate like it was a feast... well, just call it another holiday! But OSU has now defeated the dreaded "Team from the North" six years in a row with an awesome 21-10 victory including an end zone interception turned TD on the Wolverines first series! Now.. outright Big Ten Champs off to Pasadena on New Years Day!

Joshua, whom I was mildly surprised to see at the house, was anxiously awaiting kickoff time. At half-time, I challenged him to a good ol' game of the ORIGINAL Donkey Kong (not the newfangled Super Mario endless array, but the original quarter munching variety... on the Wii). I surprisingly defeated him. After that, we saw little of the 13 year old (so much for the football game).

Then, I learned that Jeff is planning to take Elizabeth to see the new Twilight movie tomorrow after her play wraps.

Honestly, I don't get the hype... too much, I think. Maybe, one day I will sit and watch it to see what it's all about; it looks like a teenage, vampire meets girl with a werewolf best friend love triangle. I'll pass.

So, now off to church... then to watch my niece on stage with a couple other little ones.

GO BUCKS!!!!

From The Twisted Mind Of A Thirteen Year Old

Tonight, my nephew/godson and his two siblings came into the store before Wednesday night CCD. I thought... uh-oh what is this terrible trio up to. Joshua (in his infinite wisdom) chose to ask me in his own special way if I would consider being his sponsor for Confirmation... "since no one else seems to be able to." I tried really hard not to laugh at the presentation but I could not resist firing back at the way it was presented. What an honor to be asked when so many others turned it down. How many others were asked I do not know. After they left, I decided to think that he failed in his attempt to say that there was no one else he would rather have do it. Hey... this is my blog so if I want to sugar coat some things, it's my prerogative.

I remember when I chose the person I wanted to stand with me as I made the decision to accept my Christian faith that my parents and godparents made for me when I was baptized. It also happened to be my godfather. I also remember hearing stories about the bishop slapping each candidate on the face as they were being confirmed. This practice must have stopped

some time before I received the sacrament.

Ok, I will say that it will be an honor to be a part of Joshua's Confirmation day.

If You Are A Happy Green Grape And You Know It

This morning, after she got out of preschool, my four-year old niece brought home a song to sing called "I Wish I Were A Juicy Green Grape." Sydney ran to me and asked me to sing it.

It is set to the tune of "If You're Happy And You Know It." Really, the exercise in song parody was not an easy one. My dad kept trying and sounded like he was singing The Oscar Meyer weiner song. See if you can make the melody fit the words"

OH, I wish I were a juicy green grape.

OH, I wish I were a juicy green grape.

When squeeze me

I will squirty

Onto everyone's shirty

Oh, I wish I were a juicy green grape.

Of course, this presupposes that you know the tune and words of "If You're Happy and You Know It." In elementary school, I remember having such an exercise in which I came up with a parody of "White Christmas" entitled "(I'm Dreaming of a) Cheese Pizza." How adorable.

Off To The ALCS

for the first time since 2004. While posting about the final performance and wrap party, I was watching the Yanks sweep the Twins to move on to face the Angels on Friday. The [“unbiased” announcing](#) seemed to be leaning a bit to the other side. During the marathon top of the 9th inning, I went downstairs to watch my mother nervously trying to keep her emotions in check as two of the granddaughters were sleeping on the couch (no school tomorrow... not because of C-bus Day but for Parent/Teacher Conferences). There was a bit of a delay in the bottom half as a crazed fan ran on to the field in an apparent attempt to throw of the pitching prowess of Mariano Rivera to no avail. The fan was apprehended and the Yanks win 4-1.

The end of the season for the Minnesota Twins spelled the end of the teams home in the Metrodome as the team will be moving to Target Field in 2010.

A Weight Lifted

The last game night I shared with my dear friends was a very special one especially as the night turned into the wee hours of the morning. 09-12-08. How fitting that Emily's passing would occur 7 years after the country picked itself up a day after what will undoubtedly be seen as one of the worst (if not the worst) tragedies to befall this country. 09-12-01, Emily spearheaded a campaign to send supplies overseas to our men and women. A campaign which is still going on today.

Shortly after midnight on 09-12-09, I mentioned that this was the anniversary of my mentor's passing. I felt a heavy weight upon my shoulders. [Lisa](#) told Megan, [Chris](#), and I to form a circle around the kitchen island and join hands. Chris then said a short word of prayer that lifted the weight right off my shoulders. My three best friends.

Strangely on Tuesday, word had spread that Patrick Swayze had lost his battle with cancer. This fell on the anniversary of Emily's burial. Oddly enough, I was never a huge fan of Mr. Swayze's work. Having a younger sister who enjoyed nothing more than to watch *Dirty Dancing* ad nauseum kind of turned me off of his acting ability. The first time I watched the movie, I actually kind of enjoyed it, but it got old really fast. I did, however, enjoy *Ghost* (Yes, I admit it... I'm a softie). However, anyone who can bravely battle a terminal disease under the limelight and battle constant tabloid bombardment is worthy of some praise.

Thanks again ☐

Maybe I Am The Evil Child After All?

I don't know where it comes from but maybe it is one of my talents that have been hidden within myself for the past 3.5 decades. Within the last few months, I have scared the heck out of two of my favorite people. A few months ago on the way to what can only be termed as a questionable phrase at the moment (a play reading meeting or was it the other kind), I dropped off Beeber's bouncy seat which I had possession of following a visit to [Admin](#) and family's cabin at a nearby

campground. I entered the house and I don't know why I was so quiet but [taylhis](#) saw me and jumped at least a foot off the ground. I can't wait until our gang ventures to other spooktacular haunts as the time draws even nearer.

Earlier today, I was headed to the backroom to get the mop to use on the beauty shop floor. My mother was getting something out of the fridge which blocked my path, so I waited a few seconds. As she turned around, not only did she jump even higher than 12 inches but also let out a blood-curdling shriek that scared me half to death. My heart was pounding perhaps not as hard as hers but pretty fast, nonetheless. After she calmed down a bit and caught her breath, she raced to the bathroom before she really had an accident. Then we had a good laugh about it. I find this incredibly strange because I can come in after 2AM and she hears me attempting to quietly climb the upstairs steps as I am often informed of the next day.

Honestly, I did not know I was so evil or at least stealthy. I tell you... try to do something good can sometimes really backfire.

Thanksgiving K0

Round two started around 5.30 when my mother's brother and sister and their children and children's children arrived. By the end, we probably had 25-30 people in the house. We keep talking about renting out the local hall or church basement (prolly impossible for the church I think our organist has a life time resevation for Thanksgiving). My uncle's wife has a gathering where they had 109 people earlier this afternoon. So, while we were watching Chad enjoy his traditional Dallas Cowboy game (in which the Dallas Drug Cartel disposed of the

Seattle Seahawks 34-9 unlike the Lions who are perennial favorites of other members of the family).

My cousin, his wife, and myself discussed the many flavors of Jones Pure Sugar Cane soda. Carla has had the regular varieties but has never had the opportunity to taste the many holiday flavored delights. Who wants to drink Christmas Tree flavored beverages? More food, lots of desserts (too MUCH dessert) and lots of laughs and planning for the newly arrived holiday season. Who is going shopping during the Black Friday merriment? I have to be at work at 6.45, so I decided to miss the game night that was planned. I hope you all had a great day remembering all the blessings bestowed upon you and yours in the past year and that you indulged heartily. Apparently, I did as many have commented after the digestion process began.

Thanksgiving... Round One

Let's see... I got up around 8.30 for the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade and to bring the long table and chairs down to set up. That is my job, set the table and chairs up... kind of easy... get it done and over with (then again, I have to haul them up later). Parade time: floats, large helium balloons (including the new Smurf balloon), marching bands (including a band made up of senior citizens... kind of neat). But my favorite part as always (big surprise, right)... the casts of Broadway shows performing songs. Featured this year, last year's big Tony winner, In the Heights; the revival of South Pacific (another possible musical I have been considering bringing to the committee's attention); a new stage production of Irving Berlin's immortal White Christmas; The Little Mermaid; and the coming revival of Hair.

Around 10 o'clock the family started gathering. One little one was sick (having 7 children at a gathering, isn't it usual to have one down). At 11.45, the chronically late members of the family showed up. I was surprised because if anything they are usually 15 minutes late. Those members you need to tell that dinner starts a half hour before it actually does. Chad entered and had hair down the front of his pants. I asked where the hair came from. His response led to my response of "That's what SHE said." A case of [inneuendosis](#).

So the feast was delicious as always. Turkey, ham, delicious dressing, mashed potatoes, noodles, pie, pie, pie (apple, cherry, pumpkin and more on the way tonight). The only problem being the dead phone line. It sounds like there is a phone off the hook or the person who called last did not hang up. So I could not call to wish Happy Thanksgiving to friends.