

Half days

These are the bane of my substitute existence, next to holidays. No, I don't mean the days students get off early but rather days where the teacher take off only half a day. It seems I may have three of these this week unless I can find a full day to take their place (I can cancel jobs in two districts via the web) or find a half day job for the other half of the day. The latter almost never happens. As for the first, it can happen but on this side of spring break with the testing going on it is very uncertain. Yet I keep trying.

One of the half days was today, for the afternoon. At least I got to sleep in, but I depend on this income so I really need to work as much as I can. It was for industrial tech, what used to be called "industrial arts" when I was a kid, and "shop" even earlier than that. Naturally with a sub the kids can't do shop, but many times they are allowed to use computers. See, that is the "tech" part, technology. They could be running some sort of modeling or simulation program, or programming a robotic arm. Today one class was working on ifilm projects. All stuff that didn't exist back in the eighties. We had metals, plastics, and wood. That's it. Now these teachers need to be trained on so much more to do this job. As for the other class (only two today! :)) they clearly were working on a project, probably woodwork, so they got to do some paperwork today. Oh well.

In The Beginning....

There seems to be a fascination with franchise re-boots in movies today. If memory serves, one of the first was George

Lucas' idea of deciding to tell the back story of Darth Vader. While the idea of *Star Wars* Episodes 1-3 seemed good in theory, it failed in many respects.

The plot of the trilogy had more to do with political mumbo-jumbo than actual lightsaber and space battles. It took three movies to explain how a Republic failed and became the Empire of the original *Star Wars* trilogy. Anakin Skywalker's transformation into Darth Vader almost seems like a secondary plot. And don't even get me started on the ridiculous concept of "midichlorians."

The acting seems stuffy in Episodes 1-3. Hayden Christensen's acting style is so wooden and forced that the audience really does not care about Anakin Skywalker. The dialogue makes it sound as if the audience is watching a Shakespearean play instead of the fun, swashbuckling atmosphere of episodes 4-6.

However, there are good moments in the second trilogy. [*The Phantom Menace*](#) includes a lightsaber duel between Obi-Wan Kenobi, his mentor Qui-Gon Jinn, and the evil Sith Lord Darth Maul. By the time [*Attack of the Clones*](#) came about, enough technology had been created to allow Yoda to become more than a mere puppet and engage in his own lightsaber fight. Finally, [*Revenge of the Sith*](#) features the climactic battle between Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker.

On a side note, the title *Revenge of the Sith* is a nod to the title which Episode 6 was to be. *Revenge of the Jedi* was to be the title of the final movie. At the last minute after posters, advertisements, and merchandise had already been created, George Lucas decided that a Jedi does not seek revenge. Therefore, the title was changed to [*Return of the Jedi*](#). *Star Wars* collectors must have a field day looking for and selling these rare pieces of memorabilia on [ebay](#) and at conventions.

While both trilogies are among the most popular movies in

history, the redemption of Anakin Skywalker as seen in episodes 4-6 are much more imaginative than the newer films. However, if you are a Star Wars purist and want to know how and why Darth Vader came to be then you should watch the newer films which are the first in the timeline of the series...
WOOLY SHEEP!!! MORAT CONFUSING SELF!!!!!!

Awake... but I should have been asleep

Last night's movie was called [Awake](#), and it starred [Jessica Alba](#) and [Hayden Christensen](#). When I first saw Jessica Alba, I was not looking forward to seeing the movie, and I don't know why. It's not like I've seen anything else with her in it, but for some reason, I was under the impression that I didn't like her as an actress. I think it might be an interview I saw with her on the Tyra Banks show – she came across as self-absorbed and dumb, and then the whole pregnant-out-of-wedlock thing doesn't score her many points either... Anyway, surprisingly, she was not the weak link in the movie. It was the script. The movie had tons of accuracy flaws, and I really don't want to spoil it for you in case you'd like to waste your time on it, but let's just say the movie was kind of pointless. It's about a young man who has a heart condition and must undergo a heart transplant. When they put him under anesthesia, he does not fall asleep but instead overhears the doctors plotting his murder. There actually is more to the plot, at least they pretend there is, and there are some so-called twists and turns that anyone with any movie watching experience can see coming from a mile away. Aside from the unbelievability of the plot – and I'm not talking about staying awake during surgery; according to the movie's

tagline, it's actually more common than you'd like to think – I'm talking about when this guy is getting his surgery, his "spirit" is walking around the hospital experiencing flashbacks. It's just dumb and ridiculous. Anyway, aside from the unbelievability of the plot, I have to share what the dumbest part about the whole movie is. And I'm going to risk spoiling the movie for you, so if you might see this movie, stop reading now. But I just have to say what the dumbest thing about the whole movie is: there is no point to the main character's overhearing his murder plot! His mother, while waiting for his surgery to be completed, overhears everything anyway, the cops are called, yada, yada! I still don't consider watching this movie a waste of time – it's really difficult for me to say that about a movie. It was only 84 minutes long, and one of the rewards of watching the movie was seeing [Christopher McDonald](#) (aka Shooter McGavin from [Happy Gilmore](#)) as an alcoholic doctor who is too oblivious to stop the murder plot. But I would much rather see him for the 100th time as Shooter any day – I would suggest you don't waste your time with *Awake*, and go for something with more substance instead – like *Happy Gilmore*! That sounds like a joke, but this movie was so bad, it's really not that funny – *Happy Gilmore* is a much better movie in my opinion!

Just call in sick...

Well, that is just what half the class did today. Literally. The flu is just knocking everybody down for the count. Okay, the class size was only six students being a special education class so half the class was only three students, but that is still very high statistically speaking. Plus, the teacher I was in for was out due to the flu as well. When all was said

and done, there were practically two adults per students, and apparently from what I was told the three that were out were the most *ahem* *challenging* students. Apparently it wasn't just this class either. In the afternoon they combined our three students with another class's two students for speech, still less than the full six students of the **one** class! Wow.

As one can imagine this turned out to be a very easy day. So easy that a couple of the assistants just decided to disinfect the room in hopes of avoiding more illness. As for me, I helped a little bit with calendar time and yoga (very low-ability students due to their disabilities) and colored. Yes- I colored some pieces of a game that would be cut out, laminated, and added to the file-folder game collection. I'll tell you, there are days where they just don't pay me enough, but today wasn't one of them.

SPLASH! It's Mr. Woodcock in Real Life

We went kinda crazy with the movies this weekend... We watched the 1984 classic [Splash](#) with the kids, and we also took in [Mr. Woodcock](#) and [Dan in Real Life](#) (for the adults). [Splash](#) is a [Tom Hanks](#) and [Daryl Hannah](#) movie about a mermaid who leaves the ocean to come to New York city and fall in love with Tom Hanks. It sounds dumb, but it's actually pretty well done and a movie with substance and heart. The special effects of her fins aren't bad either, considering they're over 20 years old and most likely made without computer assistance. Since I haven't seen the movie since I was a kid, I was wondering this time around about how many takes it took to film the underwater scenes... mainly the one where Daryl Hannah's

character looks on a map in a sunken ship to find where Tom Hanks lives. Also, there's a scene in the movie where they are trying to choose a name for the mermaid, since her name is unpronounceable in English. They're walking down a New York street, and Tom Hanks mutters, "where are we, Madison..." to which Daryl Hannah replies, "Madison, I like Madison." That was a joke in the movie at the time, that the mermaid was named after a street in New York, but nowadays, the name Madison is almost TOO popular. We had about 4 Madisons or Maddies in a play we directed last year out of 21 kids! Anyway, I would recommend this as a good family movie, especially for little girls. There is actually some nudity (female rear end), and I could have done without a few of the kissing scenes, but overall, it is good family entertainment. I wonder if it would have gotten a PG13 rating if it had come out a few years later? I know there is a [Splash Too](#), but judging by the lack of returning actors, I haven't bothered to check it out. After a quick lookup on imdb.com, I found that it got a whopping 3.0 rating with only 170 votes. Also interesting is that Madison the mermaid in [Splash Too](#) is played by [Amy Yasbeck](#), who is nowadays best known for being [John Ritter's](#) widow. She was good in her bit part in [Pretty Woman](#), but still... I wonder if I should bother getting it from the library for the kids? Also in the original [Splash](#) is [Eugene Levy](#), who plays the bad guy trying to expose the mermaid – literally, by throwing water on her in public. This must be one of his first movies; I think he was a relatively unknown actor back then... Also, the late, great [John Candy](#) is hilarious as Tom Hanks' party animal brother, and those two have great chemistry in the movie... but on to the adult movies... ahem, I'm talking about the movies we watched without the kids...

Mr. Woodcock is a comedy starring [Billy Bob Thornton](#), who came no where near to reminding me of his character in [Sling Blade](#) – that's probably why he was nominated for an Oscar for that performance. I wasn't expecting much from this movie, but it

was actually worse than I thought. It wasn't horrible, and I didn't feel like I wasted my time watching it, but it wasn't very funny, and there wasn't much to get from it. For one thing, I thought they would make the Mr. Woodcock character a little more nasty. As it turned out, he was really only nasty to little kids, which is still pretty bad, but I thought we'd catch him being nasty behind his girlfriend's back. Let me back up for a minute and give a plot synopsis – Mr. Woodcock is a horribly nasty gym teacher who terrorized kids so badly that a former student uses his experiences as fodder for an inspiring self-help book he wrote. This former student returns to his hometown in Nebraska to receive the “corn key to the city” only to find that his mom is happily dating Mr. Woodcock – his childhood nemesis! The successful author is played by [Seann William Scott](#), whose acting I wasn't thrilled with. His mother was played by [Susan Sarandon](#), and she was pretty good in the movie, given the character she had to play, who didn't have much depth. Like I said, I didn't feel like I wasted my time on this movie, but I don't know that I'd watch it again either. It definitely wasn't one of my favorite comedies.

Dan in Real Life is a touching comedy (just falls short of a dra-medy, I would say, not quite sad enough, thank goodness) about a columnist widower named Dan (the ever-awesome [Steve Carell](#)) who is raising 3 daughters alone. The girls seem to be about 16, 14, and 9. For starters, let's just say that this movie had me dreading my life in about 10 years – the movie depicted teenage girls as frightening challenges for parents! Anyway, Dan takes his girls to visit their extended family for a few days, and when he first arrives, he really falls for the ‘perfect woman’. He gets to his mom and dad's house, and wouldn't you know it, the ‘perfect woman’ turns out to be his brother's girlfriend. After a few days of torture... well, I'll let you watch the movie, I don't want to spoil anything for you. It's a really cute romantic comedy. If you have sons, you will be amused at Dan's daughters' antics. If

you have daughters, be afraid, be very afraid! On another note, Steve Carell has beaten out Tom Hanks as my favorite actor – he is just amazing and so fun to watch, whether it's in [the Office](#), [Evan Almighty](#), or Dan in Real Life. His characters never remind me of each other, and it's not like they're mentally impaired like Billy Bob Thornton in Sling Blade or Tom Hanks in [Forrest Gump](#) – sometimes those types of characters are actually easier to play since they have a very specific demeanor about them. Steve Carell plays 'regular' guys, yet he gives them such depth and character that it really helps draw you into the movie and / or show. I never watched the tv show [Get Smart](#), but with Steve Carell playing Maxwell Smart in the big screen version of [Get Smart](#) due this summer, you can bet I plan on checking it out! Dan in Real Life is funny and heartwarming, and it makes me look forward to having huge family get-together weekends at our house someday with the kids and their spouses and kids... providing we survive the teenage years of course – that remains to be seen!

Dodged a Bullet

Ohio was on the national news last week, and it wasn't for politics. CNN and the Weather Channel were talking about our state because of the major snow storm that befell Cleveland, not to mention the rest of the state – except us, for once! Here in the Northwest corner of the state, we dodged a bullet this time. Got about 2 inches only, and it didn't affect driving conditions. My husband didn't even have to shovel since the wind blew it all off the sidewalks this time! I hope it will stop snowing for the season soon, but if it doesn't, any more "storms" like this are welcome any time!

Zip-a-dee-doo-dah

It is very hard to imagine but one of the most controversial movies of all time is a Disney film. Released in 1946, *Song of the South* has never been released on video nor DVD in the U.S. It won an Oscar for Best Song and has been re-released in theatres several times (most recently in 1986). However, the powers that be at Disney feel that the movie has a strong racial tone. As recently as 2007, the issue has been raised with the same result: no release. However, the movie has been released on video in foreign markets.

It also seems peculiar that there is an attraction based upon the film at Disney World. Splash Mountain takes riders on a journey through the Briar Patch which is populated by Br'er Rabbit, Br'er Bear, Br'er Fox, and other characters from the stories of Uncle Remus.

As explained in the following [article](#), it seems highly unlikely that *Song of the South* will be released in this country in the near future. However, outlets such as ebay.com may have access to copies.

Reflections

Well, this weekend it was mentioned that the next church anniversary in September is the its 20th. Yes I know that is nothing compared with some churches celebrating centennials and more. The church I grew up going to is a church like that, but the one I go to now is kind of mega-ish. That is, it is

quite large, expands four campuses, and has a couple dozen "plants" following its doctrines and leadership style, but is still nothing compared to the likes of Willow Creek or Crystal Cathedral. Anyway, When I first started going to the church it hadn't yet celebrated its 10th anniversary. I remember that celebration was done in the school it originally met at before they got their own building. It was still on only one campus, its campground was still in the hands of its previous owners, and even the building they were in wasn't yet fully utilized. Inside was a big fenced in area of, well, *nothing* which would soon become the second half of a new improved worship center. Since then much has happened. Besides being on four campuses now (one of which used to be a plant but joined up for a reason I never found out) and having a campground, it has a chapel that didn't used to be there, used mostly for weddings, a second floor in part of the building (the building was always one floor, with a roof high enough for two), a school, and has undergone much remodeling.

As for me, around that 10th anniversary was when I started working in the children's ministry. It started with an ambitious children's drama which took up much of the service time and was scaled back the following year due to the teaching volunteers wanting to, well, teach. I of course knew God wanted me there and so was part of the first cast. This lasted about three years. I even had a short stint at directing in the third year. Well, after the first year I wanted more so I started teaching as well. They put me in fourth grade with another teacher and we took turns week to week teaching the lesson. On the weeks I was also in the drama (there were four casts- one per week of the month with any fifth weekends generally without drama) I would walk the kids down and then go backstage and get into my costume. Believe it or not, I wasn't the only one who did this. About that time a new combined program for 4th and 5th grades was just getting started. The prior year they had it as a Friday night program as a supplement to the weekend services, but now they were

making it the weekend service. They started off with just one service on the weekend, but it wouldn't be long before it expanded to all weekends. Just why they did it this way I am not sure. Anyway, I switched to this service eventually. As I recall they went through a few staff members running it over the years to where it is at now with the current pastor hired about six years ago. I think I am the only one left still volunteering in that ministry from that first year (discounting the Friday night program). Like the church itself, this program has grown and is definitely in a mature state. I reflect on this because there is a high school student who volunteers in one of the services who was one of my first students in fourth grade. He is a senior in high school now. Well, actually from what he says he was a senior because he graduated in January.

I really enjoy working with the kids, and I know God placed me there and has kept me there. In fact, my best spiritual time I think was last summer when I volunteered as a camp counselor for 4th and 5th grade. Also the two summers before. I just wonder if God will ask me to move on soon like the others have, and if so where to? I am still involved with kids ministry drama as well, which after a hiatus of a couple of years came back as a different sort of program. Really, I am deeply immersed in this church and currently have no plans to move on, but eventually God may ask me to. Will I be able to if and when he does? Will I be willing to go where He wants me to? Would I be able to shepherd children myself as a pastor if called to do it somewhere? I can only make sure be ready I suppose in case He does. And how about my own family? Has He been leading me toward this in a way? That is, I am single right now, but is this practice, along with subbing, to lead a family of my own one day, soon I would hope as I am not getting any younger...

State of our times

It is really a bit sad when a school feels it cannot post pictures of kids on the internet due to the possibility of something happening to one of the children in the photo. But what happens when a school feels this way but *really* wants to post the pictures anyway? One U.K. school has a stab at an answer... (click the picture for a link to the full story)



Dinner And A Show

Tonight was Williams County Community Theatre's second performance of *Murder with a Silver Spoon* at Rita's Family Dining in Bryan, Ohio. It was a very different venue than the country club where we presented it last weekend. Rita's had a very cramped banquet room in which the audience enjoyed a three course meal between acts. Although space was extremely limited, it lent itself even more to drawing the audience into the action and allowed for even more audience/cast interaction. Because the space was so small, the number of audience members was extremely limited. However, the event was sold out which was great for our group and the theatre-goers all seemed to enjoy themselves tremendously. For those poor, unfortunates who did not get tickets for whatever reason (trouble finding a sitter :), etc), tentative plans are being made to again perform the show at a venue near you.