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## [Ayla on Grassy Boots & The Grow Up](#)

*August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Two quick Ayla-isms:

"Mommy, the grow up is not lettin' me be small. I just really, really wanna still wear my blue bathing suit." (spoken 5 minutes ago)

"Daddy I picked lots of grass and put them all in your boots, so that you can't go to work any more!  
(two nights ago, at bedtime)

Posted 30th August 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [dads raising girls](#) [home and family](#)

## [Bay City, The Kingfish Restaurant, and a few Random Michigan Photos](#)

*August 30<sup>th</sup>*

So Mac & I went to Michigan to scout the area for work purposes (new market). But who says you can't have fun? Made some great stops, took some good pics, and met some cool people. Stepped off the beaten path on day 2, to check out some of the State's sights that were local favorites. Here are some photos from day 1, mostly of Bay City and Kingfish Restaurant on the river.



Near the Ohio / Michigan border



Guitar Guy, Lansing, MI



Mt. Pleasant, MI, once a big oilfield town





The Kingfish Restaurant & Tiki Bar, where we spent most of the evening on Day 1

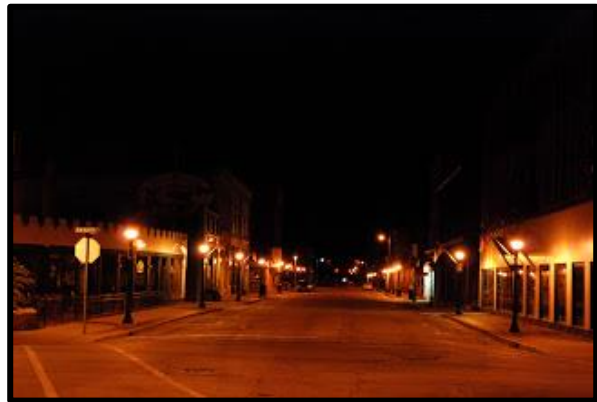




Easy, Killer. Cool food order window on the stairs. Probably not to code. I love structures that aren't built to code. Down with the man.









Posted 30th August 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [Bay City Kingfish Restaurant](#) [Matty michigan photos](#)

## Bay City Model Photo Shoot

August 30<sup>th</sup>

I do not photograph models. Grandpa made a life of it, and some photographers really have a knack for it. I love to capture people, but not posing in their fanciest stances. I love random, spontaneous photography. The guy dripping mustard off his hot dog and onto his shirt at the ball game. The lovers' reunion at the airport. The dirty kid dragging a baseball bat in one hand and holding a ball in the other. Both aspects of photographing people are very good, yet they are entirely different from the artist's perspective.

In this post, I am proud to bring you the juxtaposition of both types of photography. Featured below is the work of Jason Bennett, of [Photography Out Of The Box](#). And while you will not see his work below, you will see him *at work*, in the spontaneous type of photos that I enjoy taking. Jason, his crew, and the model in the photos, were gracious enough to allow me take some random shots. To see *Jason's* photos--very good ones indeed, you'll just have to click on his Facebook link above.













Posted 30th August 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [Bay City michigan model photo shoot photographer photography out of the box saginaw](#)



## Michigan 2: Pictured Rocks or Bust

August 30<sup>th</sup>

So we went off the beaten path on Day 2 in Michigan. We checked out MichiganCAT and a couple airports, then headed North to the Upper Peninsula and to some big famous waterfalls, then onward through no man's land to Michigan's Pictured Rocks. Here are the pics:



Stopped early in the day... for cheese. Didn't know that squeaky cheese came in blocks.



This nice lady told me about this place called Tahquamenon Falls, while she was cutting the cheese. I asked her to point out the rough location on a map. Then we changed the GPS destination.



Only Michigan would have a cool place named "Wolverine"



Mac was telling me about these Mystery Spots. Supposedly, they're like some wierd spots on the globe where the laws of gravity, physics, etc. are "defied." There are 20-some 'spots' around the States that come up quickly on a Google search.



In the tradition of the 'beavcoon' and 'manbearpig,' we discovered a rare & elusive quasi-avian feathered beast... the legless ostrapecker wombat goose.



Mackinaw, Mackinack, or some other kind of Mac. A lot of Macs and awshes and aws and acks in Michigan.





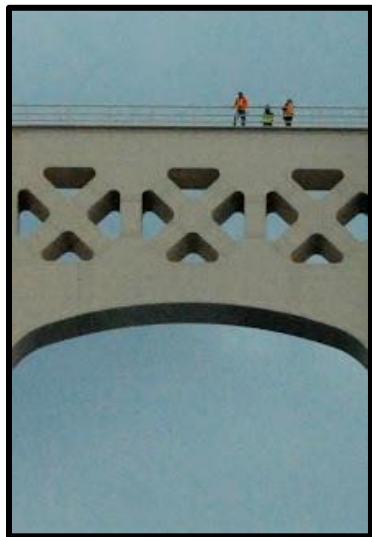
Love this guy.



Mac scopes the Mackinac Bridge from Mackinaw. I think.



Big wooden chief. He's somebody important, I just can't remember who.





More squeaky cheese, less squeak



Castle Rock



Tahquamenon Falls... only half as exciting as...



The Gourd Barn!!! Just in case you ever wondered where it is. Somewhere near St. Ignace in Michigan.

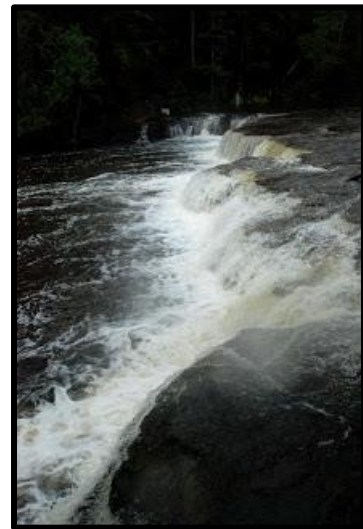


Stumbled upon this festival in progress. Huckleberry Festival.





The lower falls. We ran there. Got a tight schedule to catch flights out of Grand Rapids @ 6AM... it's 2PM now, Grand Rapids is 5 hours away and we've still got plans three hours in the opposite direction. We ran everywhere from here on out. 8 pound boots. Rain. Fat. Ugh.





We bought badger pelts. And mink. And weasels. Here, Mac demonstrates how to inflate a weasel.





Pretty amazing skies.



Water walking



And they all lived happily ever after. The end.

Posted 31st August 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [gourd](#) [ignace](#) [mackinac](#) [mackinaw](#) [michigan](#) [photos](#) [pictures](#) [tahquamenon](#) [up](#) [upper](#) [peninsula](#)

## [The McConnell's Mill Review](#)

To the person who found the book @ McConnell's Mill: post away! One question... any other entries in that book? If so, would you mind sending some photos? I'll post them on here. That book was planted there probably close to a year ago; getting there anyway. We actually drove out there for the first time since--just a week ago--intentionally looking for that book to report the progress (if applicable).

The McConnell's Mill Review was the third of four books that I've planted, just to see the responses.

(1) One was dropped in a Coke machine near Bergholz, Ohio... never heard anything about that one.

(2) Then came the *Montour Trail Review*. It was dragged off and eaten by a wildebeest, presumed because I later found the animal-chewed pen and the chewed up Zip-Lock bag. That one was cool while it lasted though. Near my house, so I used to check the entries every week.

1. [Montour Trail Review 7/25/11 - 8/03/11](#)
2. [Montour Trail Review 8/01/11 - 8/13/11](#)
3. [Montour Trail Review 8/13/11 - 8/25/11](#)

(3) The Montour Trail Review II was a hopeful replacement to the first one. It was short lived.

1. [Montour Trail Review II](#)

(4) Finally, the McConnell's Mill Review... I thought she was a gonner... I'm eager to hear back on that one!

Posted 4th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [book journal](#) [mcconnells mill](#) [mcconnells mill review](#) [montour trail](#) [montour trail review](#) [the montour trail review](#)

## View comments



**Anonymous** [September 4, 2012 at 7:55 AM](#)

There was about twenty five or more posts in it. Sorry i didnt get pic. Didn't even think about it. Its still in the caves there. But there was alot of posts in it. Just wanted to thank you for starting something like that. It was pretty cool my daughter thought it was really cool. I will continue to check back for updates.

[Reply](#)



**mj** [September 6, 2012 at 12:17 AM](#)

Wow! That's cool. I'm going to have to make my way back this weekend to see if I can find it, take pictures and post the entries. This should be like a scavenger hunt... I originally wedged it in some crack high on a wall, just out of the way of rain. Hey thanks a lot for posting on here, I wouldn't have known the book was still alive without you. Glad you and your daughter liked it, I'm eager to see it myself.

--MJ

[Reply](#)



3.

[mjSeptember 15, 2012 at 8:59 AM](#)

I took the family out to McConnell's Mill, to see if we could take pictures of the book and record the entries so I could post them online. I probably checked fifty caves, no luck. Any clues that might help me locate the book?

[Reply](#)

## [Last of the Michigan Photos](#)

*September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

















Posted 15th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [michigan photos](#) [pictured rocks](#) [pictured rocks in michigan](#) [up](#) [upper peninsula](#)

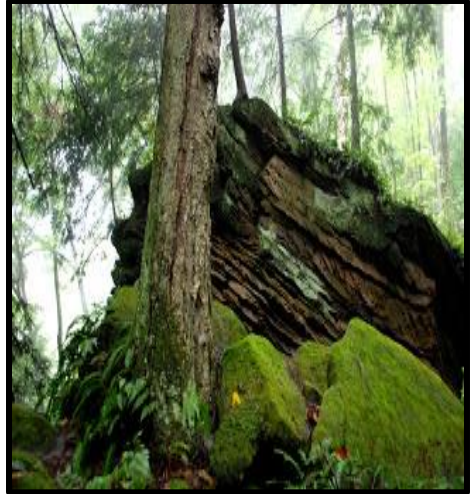
## **No Stone Unturned**

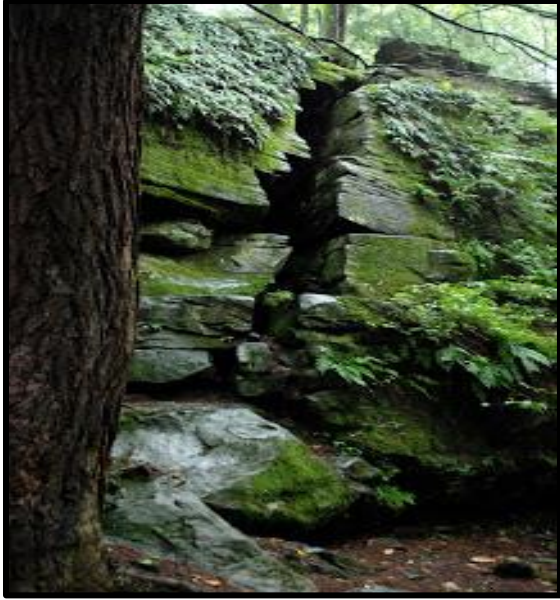
*September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

So Lily accompanied myself to McConnell's Mill State Park last Saturday. Her, momma (Petra), Ayla, and my dad. We collected a bunch of salamanders and newts, which we took home and then later released back into the wild... but the main reason we were there, was to find a book which I left there last year, *The McConnell's Mill Review*, for others to write in. I left it wedged in the cleft of a rock, just beyond reach of the rain. Someone found me through this website a week and a half ago, and told me that there were a bunch of entries in the book, and that the book was located in a cave. So Petra and I searched probably fifty caves... some of them are incredibly deep and

long! No joy. I will attempt to find the book again soon! But until then, its value has increased due to the adventurous lengths required to find it. Some photos from Saturday:







Posted 15th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [book at mcconnells mill](#) [book in cave](#) [mcconnells mill](#) [mcconnells mill review](#) [pennsylvania](#)



## Metamorphosis Before Us

September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012



You remember the flowers I picked for Petra, that came off some type of milkweed, which must've had eggs that turned into monarch caterpillars while we were in Texas? Well, we fed those caterpillars fresh milkweed for about a week, before they each decided to turn into a crysalis... in our living room.

So we watched them... only three of the four caterpillars made it to that stage. After about three weeks, they hatched! Right before my kids' eyes. All three made it to the outside, onto mommas' butterfly bush and beyond!













Posted 16th September  
2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [home and family](#)  
[metamorphosis photos](#)  
[monarch metamorphosis](#)  
[raising monarch](#)  
[butterflies](#)

## Of Men and Turkeys

*September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

When it comes to turkeys, I know just about as much as you do. Turkeys are delicious birds packed full of enough meat to feed a hungry family. The turkey was once favored to become the United States' national bird, but thankfully, someone with a keen eye for good food put the kabash on that before the bird's prestigious title would protect it from being hunted and, well, eaten.

Other than that... I have, to date, known very little about turkeys. I know they sound like helicopters when they're taking off. I know they make great feathers for quill pens and Indian headdresses. As you may know, turkeys have little common sense but are keenly intuitive. For instance, if you raise turkeys, you have to ensure they don't drown in their own drinking bowl. On the other hand, they can see colors, they spook easily, and are therefore very elusive prey in the eyes of a hunter. The 1970's taught us that it isn't hip to be a "jive-ass turkey," and I still don't know exactly what that means. Nevertheless, the assimilation stuck, and today it still isn't popular to be called a turkey.

But let me share something I've learned about turkeys. Something that I've yet to see in other animals. I have seen this on several occasions since we moved to western Pennsylvania, from behind the windshield of my Chevy truck. Turkeys are extremely protective of their gaggle (flock, herd, e.g.). I have swooped around corners on the windy roads between home and work, only to slam on my brakes for a gaggle of young turkeys crossing the road. In almost every case, momma or papa are boldly standing guard against traffic in the middle of the street. The same way you would do for your kids. It's amazing to watch... papa turkey will assume the position of roadguard, while mama leads the kids across the street. Only after the last one crosses, which sometimes will take a minute or two, will papa cross the street to resume his position. In a gaggle of seventeen turkeys, that tells me that either they can count, or communicate well, and that they recognize the danger to their children posed by streets and Chevys (unlike opossums). It also tells me that turkeys trust that we will stop, or that they can hold us back.

I used to watch this same momma turkey cross the street with her six or seven chicks every morning. Within a week or two, I watched that brood of chicks dwindle to three. One day as I crested the hill, I had to immediately hit the brakes, because momma was crossing in a different place than usual. She stood her ground on my truck as I stopped, and I waited for her chicks to cross. There were none, except for the one that she was literally blocking from my truck. As they walked to the right side of the road, she--quite intentionally--kept herself between her chick and my truck.

It is with this admirable trait in mind that I would like to offer a very different challenge than you would usually hear. When it comes to your family, your team, or your people... in this honorable regard, be a turkey.

Posted 16th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [admirable traits of turkeys](#) [leadership development](#) [turkeys in the wild](#)

## **Darin & Tiffany Freeman Wedding Photos, I of II**

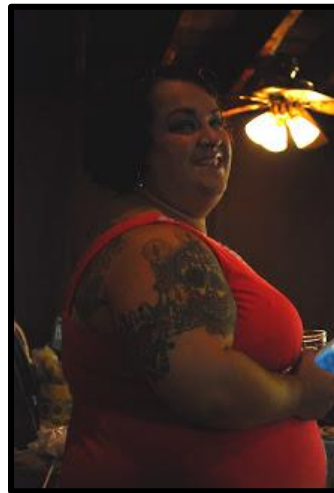
*September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012*







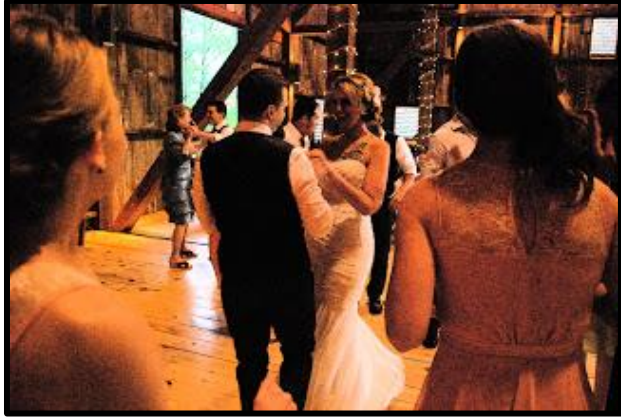
As two  
Families are  
becoming One,  
We ask that you  
Choose a  
Seat, and  
not a side.  
♥ Bride + Groom

















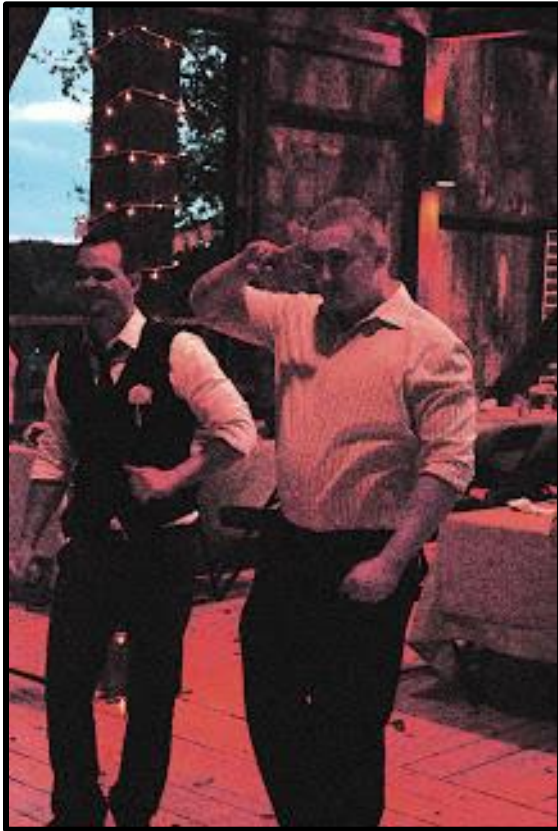


Posted 16th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [darin freeman](#) [freeman wedding](#) [photos](#) [pictures](#) [tiffany freeman](#) [tiffany hendrix](#) [wedding](#)

## Darin & Tiffany Freeman Wedding Photos, II of II

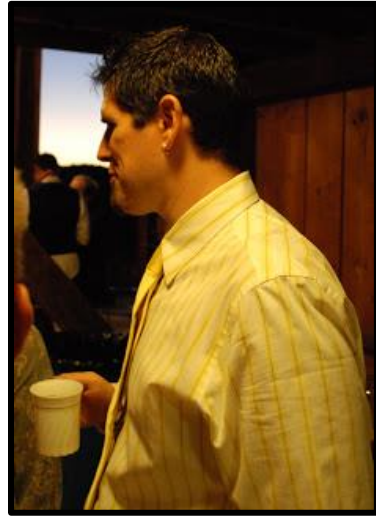
September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012























Posted 16th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [darin](#) [darin freeman](#) [freeman](#) [photos](#) [tiffany](#) [tiffany hendrix](#) [freeman wedding](#) [wedding photos](#)

## [There Was an Odor Throughout the House...](#)

September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

...today as I came home from work. In this part of the world, we are not infested with red ants, scorpions, black widows, or large flying roaches (aka *water bugs*, as you so eloquently call them in the Southern States). Nope, from the fear of those pestilent critters, we're free as a bird. What we have in Pennsylvania, besides great sandwiches and beautiful sunsets, is a whole bunch of home-invasive stinkbugs.

Now, they don't usually stink. Usually you'll see one crawling on your wall, you pick it up, throw it outside... all without the bug emitting that pungent odor. But today that smell was everywhere. It was as if my wife painted the walls with smashed stinkbugs, or pissed off a whole herd of them, or as if we were having stinkbug for dinner.

Then my wife approached me with her classic heart-melting, husband-warming smile. She kissed me and said, "Hey Hun, sorry about the smell... I accidentally sucked up a stinkbug with the vacuum cleaner."

Posted 18th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [a day in the life](#) [pennsylvania](#) [stink bug](#) [stinkbug](#)

## [Countdown to a Virgin Heartbreak](#)

September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

When was your heart first broken? If I had to guess, it happened when you were a kid. Perhaps you don't remember... but let's see if this rings a bell.

"It's a puppy!!!" All of a sudden, every other toy under the tree might as well be chalked up to garden mulch. "Can I keep him? Forever and ever?" Okay, stop (Hammer time). Let's hit the Pause button right there, shall we? The fact is, forever is a long time... and in terms of dogs and cats (birds, lizards, mice, goldfish, beavers), 'forever' ends when the number of heartworms, ear infections, temper tantrums, bladder incidents, and ulcers on your pet exceed the number of dollars you're willing to pay to have the

problems fixed. More oft than not, the *long walk to the Vet*, or that *last bird hunt*, are the simplest way to put your pet out of its misery. One bullet, one needle injection, one more heartbreak and a guilty conscious. What a fine way to repay all those memories you and Sparkles had together.

The fact is, unless it's a desert tortise, or you buy it when you can see Death winking at you, you will outlive your pet. So, most certainly, will your kids. And as sure as they'll remember the name of that pet until they die, they will receive an A-1 heartbreak that is equal in value to the time and love they invested in that pet. So unless your family is just heartless and sick--be mindful of the pets you buy, and think about the consequences if your motives in buying a pet are anything but a long term, to-the-bitter-end investment.

Posted 18th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [considerations when buying a pet](#) [dealing with the death of a pet dogs](#) [and other pets](#) [pets and death](#)

## **Surprise Promotion!**

*September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Big promotion today. Huge surprise, came out of nowhere. Extremely thankful to all who made it happen; I will do my very best. Glory to God.

Bless the Lord, O my soul  
And all that is within me  
Bless His holy name  
For He has done great things  
He has done great things  
He has done great things  
Bless His holy name.

Posted 19th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [a day in the life](#)

## Written with Honor

September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012

You know what's great about the American English language? Like the United States itself, it is young in comparison to its peers. It is constantly growing, changing, and adapting to our exuberant culture. One of the best things about a young, fresh, vibrant language, is that you can bend the rules of usage and it's not necessarily *wrong*, just different; educated folks have been doing it for centuries.

As a student in any English class, your paper will likely be bled if you begin a sentence with the wrong conjunction ("and," & "but" are perfect examples; the word "if" would however be permissible). I will tell you that many world-renowned, popular writers today intentionally break that rule in order to make a point, or to add character to one of the persons in their story. I believe that many rules of composition and syntax were made to be broken; the difference between a skilled writer and a fool being that (1) you must first know the rules, and (2) you must 'abuse' the rules both artistically and sparsely.

The one characteristic of our language that I particularly like and often manipulate, is the capitalization of words. We capitalize names, titles, specific directions, and certain places. We begin our sentences with capital letters and we capitalize our salutations and closing statements. We are taught at a young age that 'uppercase' letters are used to denote respect and honor. Within that statement, we are given a very powerful tool in which to show respect and in which to remove it.

When I write a letter, I often use capital and lowercase letters to add or remove value. The words 'Satan,' 'Hitler,' and 'Manson,' are names and thus require capitalization according to the rules of English composition. I do not capitalize names like this unless I am already defaming these people in content. Conversely, the words 'mother,' 'father,' 'wife,' 'son,' and 'daughter'... I will often capitalize these words if I'm writing about my own family, particularly in letters, and I will capitalize pronouns (him, her, you, yourself) if the person being referred to begets respect.

There are many ways to honor others, and the use of caps is one of them. In your future correspondence, try bending the rules.

Posted 22nd September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [leadership development](#) [respectful correspondence](#) [respectful writing](#) [use of capital letters](#) [writing with honor](#) [writing with respect](#)

## **Professionals are Sallies: At-Risk Behaviors and the Real World**

*September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012*

As many people do, I work in an environment where employees' 'at-risk behaviors' are continuously under evaluation. We are reminded to **be safe** in everything we do, both on and off the job--largely due to the directives and initiatives of [external] regulatory compliance / oversight groups. I'm proud to work for my company, and I recognize that many companies have been moving this direction for decades. But work life and real life are often unequally juxtaposed; because at the end of each work day, reality calls.

At work, grown men--who work in one of the world's traditionally "toughest" jobs--are not allowed to carry pocket knives. They're "dangerous." Ironically, at home, young boys cut themselves with knives and learn a valuable lesson. My wife cut herself pretty badly one time when chopping an onion, but unfortunately, in the real world we need knives to cut things, and she's still got to chop onions and other food items.

At work, leaders tell their people to avoid danger at all costs, both on and off the job. Companies may even keep lists of employees who are considered to be "at risk," for promotion & retention purposes. In the real world, true leaders intentionally face danger EVERY DAY, so that their people don't have to. In the military, I was trained to take on danger. Danger, hazards, risk... these are what **define** leaders. No "Hero" of yours or mine held that title for being safe, nor will any person ever be a hero for those reasons. Medals don't go to safe people. People don't follow safe 'leaders' when the crap hits the fan. Many a person would not be alive today were it not for people who dive

into dangerous situations, and I know that for a fact, firsthand, from many personal experiences.

At work, we utilize '100% tie-off' every time we climb higher than four feet off the ground. It's an industrial standard that stems from OSHA requirements. Ironically, standard bunk beds such as those at work are five feet high. In the real world, I need to fix the roof today, in the rain, on a moderate-pitch three-story roof, because our bedroom is taking on water. There's nothing to tie off to, and most modern roof anchoring systems are not designed for most modern roofs without causing more damage to the roof itself.

The cruel dichotomy is this: the working world and the real world are often in direct conflict with each other. Sometimes we have to fight. Sometimes we have to fight fires because running from the flames is not an option. Sometimes we have to stand up for ourselves, and our mothers and wives and sisters, against unfavorable odds. Damn the consequences. Sometimes we have to face the Boogie Man. So when it comes to work, render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. Then get your butt back home, there's a leak on that third-story roof and it ain't gonna fix itself.

Posted 22nd September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [at-risk behaviors](#) [danger](#) [difference](#) [home](#) [leadership development](#) [man stuff](#) [reality](#) [workplace](#)



## Stories for my Children: Great Grandpa's Trains

September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012

Yesterday, Caleb helped me dig out his Lionel train set. The *Pennsylvania Flyer*, an impressive G-gauge metal train, was the most expensive train set in the collectibles store that year, and I remember that it broke us and set us behind on some other bills. Petra would never have made a decision like that, but I am bull-headed on spending money on what I perceive will be a good intrinsic investment—for example, on a memory-maker.

"He'd crap himself if he knew what was in the big box next to his train set," I told his momma last night. "Which box?" she asked. "The one with like ten different train sets in it, all those buildings and trees and cars and stuff from Germany." "Yeah, let's please keep that one in the box. We don't have any room for it here." No setting up trains, no Red Doberman... once again, I'm reminded of the inevitable fact that we are outgrowing this beautiful house that we rent with the option to purchase.

In July, we attended the annual Buchholz family reunion. First time we've gone since we moved to Pittsburgh, a mere three and a half hours from Dayton and the bulk of the family. That's mom's side of the family... every last one of eleven kids whom I call Aunt & Uncle, along with their husbands, wives, kids, and grandkids. We are a big healthy-lookin' bunch; the ladies love to squeeze the cheeks of our fat babies and say things like "Ooooh, Schnooks" and the men are beer aficionados who enjoy hard pretzels and fat cigars. Very much a hardy, loving clan (not so bad looking either if I may say so myself), and thankfully, both the Patriarch and Matriarch of this fine family are still alive and healthy enough to enjoy the figurative return on their paired life's investment.

During the reunion, I was determined to sit with Grandpa to glean some stories from him. I've already prodded grandma in the past, and it culminated in a story that she wrote and sent out to everybody last Christmas. I thought it was important to capture as many of these stories before something happened to one of them, especially—from a selfish perspective—because my kids barely know a thing about any of their Great Grandparents.



So I finally got Grandpa to sit down. Grandpa, the adventurous naturalist, rockhound, and camping traveler. Grandpa, the lifelong photographer of models and trains and model trains and Lord know what else. Grandpa the loving leader. He shared this story with me:

“The only story I can think of is the one where I was in my studio someplace, and it must’ve been sometime in the fall time of the year... ‘cause I had a fire burning in my stove. You were visiting and I had set this up to record you on film. You walked in the door and I said, ‘Aw Matt come on in, sit on my lap, and I’ll tell you a story.’ And the only story I could think of then & there was one I was doing, it was photography—trains. I told you I had come out of this station and wondered where these trains had gone.”

“East to Springfield and beyond, and West to Indiana, see all these points... Walked from Mile 6, that was pretty close to Lynn, Indiana, to Springfield; took so many pictures of these trains that the crews knew me. The only abandoned train station was in Troy Ohio—a passenger station—there were three passenger stations in the area...”

So I'm taking pictures—raining like hell—camera under my jacket... well, three tracks over, the Conductor recognized me. I'd gotten to know a lot of them, they'd drive the same engines. He called me over. I got near the engine and he handed me an old railroad lock out of the cab. I remember he always wore that cap and he always smoked a Calabash pipe. But as he handed it to me, somehow I reached up with my camera and got a picture of him reaching out and handing me that lock. I later wrote a photo essay about that...

But anyway, that's the story I told ya. And of course you didn't give a sh-- anyway but I got it on video. And if I ever find that video I'll make a CD."

Then I asked grandpa, "What got you into trains?" And he responded, "Well these days, your kids, you talk about a train they're like 'what the hell's that?' ...Well back when I was a kid, that's what it was! It was trains that did all the transport & freight and all that. They had airfields 'n... but that was all new, y'know?"

It was the trucking that took over all the train work. Politicians gave all the freight & transport business to the trucks, built all those highways... Then even back then the environmentalists were screaming about all the steam. "You're polluting the air," they'd say, so then they went to diesel." Grandpa rolled his eyes. "Steam, polluting the air?" I chuckled.

"Well yeah, it was dirty as hell. Boy those steamers, we'd be at a train stop when a steamer'd roll by... the cinders in that smoke come rollin' in the windows. She'd be all gussied up and smellin' nice and then we were back to smelling like smoke."

Thus ended the train conversation, and we moved on to other stories, which I'll post as time allows. Loved this opportunity. Hope to have many more.

Posted 23rd September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [buchholz buchholz family home and family john buchholz reunion train trains](#)

## Stories for my Children: Great Grandpa at Pugh's Quarry

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012

It was during our 2012 family reunion, when I was able to nail down Grandpa Buchholz for a little while, to ask him about some stories. I prodded him to talk about his geological explorations.

"That's funny, I'm still at heart a rockhound," Grandpa began. "The best one, one of my favorite places to go, was Pugh Quarry, Ohio. But in those days, you didn't have this OSHA and all this sh--. It was a slight incline, and then you came to this gravel wall.

This stuff was all over the place... Oh, what was the name. They were mineral crystals--the best ones were dogtooth calcite, which was shaped like a dog's tooth hence the name. And what's that stuff they put in water... Flouride... *Flourite*. When you take that stuff I'd put it under a blacklight and it would glow."

Grandpa looked thoughtful. "I visited with a buddy years later and it wasn't the same."

"Two weeks ago, I told [Uncle] Kenny I ought to go to Pugh's Quarry. He said you should look it up on line, so I did. It's been closed to the public, past the area where the rocks were found. Insurance reasons, you know. The rocks were in layers though, you know... a lot of erosion had occurred and they had the big sections all roped off. There was a mining overburden--it was a calcium carbonate mine--and it eventually got a hole there. Cryin' shame."

Posted 24th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [buchholz](#) [buchholz family](#) [family reunion](#) [grandpa](#) [john buchholz](#) [rita buchholz](#)

## Man Versus Truck

September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012

*Great. That's the only pair of jeans I've got for this meeting... the ones I'm wearing.* I was driving to State College, PA last night for a company meeting, and I stopped by Mickey D's along the way. "Number one, please. Supersize. With a sweet tea." I had set the XL styro cup in a cup holder and as always, I was driving down the road wrestling with my truck over who gets to hold the cup. The truck always wins. Either the top pops off, the cup splits, the cup--no kidding--rips in half, or in the case of last night, the truck releases its tentacle-esque death grip and I end up wearing the tea. In any of the above examples, I end up wearing the drink.

Par for the course of my life--typically by choice--I drive a beater. My work life is no different. I drive the beater of our fleet, because I swapped my shiny new beastly Chevy 3500 to one of my guys so he wouldn't have so many problems. My personal challenge is to take one for the team and 'mile it out,' with about 50,000 miles to go.

When I swapped trucks, I had no clue what I would be getting into. She's fought me tooth and nail, every step of the way. I was having problems starting up one evening, and ended up having to replace the battery. When I removed it, the lights stayed on. The LIGHTS STAYED ON. I stared at the vehicle for two minutes until I was convinced that the lamps were starting to fade.

The driver-side window rolls down manually when it wants to. The dashboard lights work when they want to. The radio? You guessed it!! Works when it wants to. The seats do not recline (they half-cock), which sucks because I often live and sleep in my truck. The center console does not come down. The AC doesn't work. The heater blasts on my feet. The bluetooth doesn't work. My windshield keeps rejecting my GPS suction cup mount.

Well truck, it's on like Donkey Kong. I'm spiteful and I've got nothing but miles to drive and days to spend on the road. Stand by to play games.

Posted 25th September 2012 by [mj](#) Labels: [a day in the life](#) [man versus truck](#)

## [Wolves, Sheep, Sheepdogs, Manatees, and Siamese Cats](#)

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Retired Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, author of *On Killing*, wrote a story called [On Wolves, Sheep, and Sheepdogs](#) that for years has been popular among Law Enforcement and military types (aka sheepdogs). The gist is this: in modern day America (and throughout the world), there are three types of people... those who prey on others (wolves), those who invest in the 'save-now-pay-later' scheme of **denial** in the existence of personally-applicable human evil (sheep), and finally, those who choose to live in preparation for the days of infamy when they can protect the sheep from the wolves (sheepdogs).

For a long time, I labeled people according to this analogy. I strongly consider myself, my family, and much of the company I keep, to be sheepdogs.

But something is missing from this model. Some types of people do not fit into these categories. So, I added a fourth 'label,' the *manatees*. Manatees (also known as sea cows), like sheep, are docile creatures who live a peaceful existence eating plants and simply "being." Apparently, they do not serve some radically important purpose in nature, but God created them and that makes them just as uniquely special as, well, sheep I guess. The difference between sheep and manatees, is that manatees have no natural enemies. Manatee-type people are not in denial of a human evil that potentially applies to them because, frankly, such an evil does not apply to them. They could care less about sheep and wolves, and they neither like nor dislike sheepdogs. These people neither cower, nor stand their ground, nor aggress. And that doesn't make them bad by any means. They simply go through life with blissful apathy. I think llamas are in the same boat. And maybe Canadians. Just kidding. About the llamas. No seriously, just kidding.

Then, there's a fifth label... one that I find particularly disturbing in society: the Siamese cats. Do you remember the Siamese cats in the classic Disney movie *Lady and the Tramp*? Those cartoon characters are the picture-perfect representation of the people I'm talking about. These types of people are the puppetmasters, the manipulators. They watch the drama of the sheep,

wolves, and sheepdogs through the gold-trimmed windows of their lofty perches. Such people may even capitalize upon the exploitation of sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs; they build their kingdoms upon the pawns of humankind and, as natural shape-shifters, may at any time act like sheep, wolves, sheepdogs or manatees with the leitmotif of self-benefaction. Examples of Siamese cats are dirty lawyers, crooked judges, 'masked' *good guys*, some politicians and, from a broader perspective, corrupt governments who may not sneak into bedrooms at night with guns but who defend and support those who do under greased palms, through the development, revision, and interpretation of fallible law.

Now, if you are a sheepdog, you must be extremely wary of the latter. Siamese Cats, while lower than yourself on the moral food chain, are usually found only behind the physically impenetrable high walls, deep moats, and iron gates of aristocratic strongholds. To guard against their coniving tactics and seemingly limitless financial support, you must be incredibly sharp on defense. And while wolves can usually be subdued (or their effects mitigated) by physical means--up to and including the application of lethal force--to offensively unperch Siamese cats, you need to relinquish your grip on physical weapons and train your heart and mind to master the intangible weapons of faith, boldness, and fervent prayer.

Posted 27th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [grossman](#) [leadership development](#) [other types of people](#) [sheep](#) [sheepdogs](#) [wolves](#)

## Why Bad Things Happen to Good People

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Why do bad things happen to good people? That age-old question may never be fully answered, but I do know of **one** reason. Bad things often happen to good people, because *good* people selflessly put themselves into bad situations to protect others. Sometimes, bad things happen to the helpful.

Good people, *truly* good people, do not like to see others get hit by a figurative train.

Sometimes the good people try to climb aboard and stop the train and they speed it up instead by hitting the big FASTER button instead of the STOP button, causing secondary and tertiary problems for others around them. Sometimes bad things happen to good people because they make stupid decisions. Bad things happen when you're stupid. Ignorance is a poor life preserver. As a good person, you need to bring your A-game. There is nothing more dangerous than a helpful, good person who is stupid.

On that note, there is another level of stupid people with good intentions who should be avoided at all costs. We'll call that person "Clown Shoes." Clown Shoes has built a reputation of running up to every potential victim of misfortune and clumsily pushing those victims fast and hard into their respective trains. "Whoopsie!!!"

*Important to note: In every situation where someone is about to be hit by a train, there is a team of analysts who evaluate the play-by-play actions of both the victim and the 'good person' trying to save the victim. Pay no attention to the analysts, because (1) they are too scared or self-inflated to enter the arena themselves, and (2) they will find fault in every attempt a good person makes, labeling them ALL as stupid if they fail, and overtly praising the hero when the outcome is favorable.*

Sometimes good people push the potential victim out of harm's way and get hit by the train themselves. They take on the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, or financial "train," *sans hesitation*, fully aware of the



consequences. And yes, sometimes it kills them (physically, emotionally...). That's **not** stupid. That's called "Love."

Sometimes the "good people" simply get involved because "it's the right thing to do." They help, neither out of situational ignorance nor love, perhaps trying to divert the train by "making a few phone calls." Or maybe they'll throw the potential victim a frail monetary rope. This is not called help, it's called placating. Such 'help' could also be deemed self-edification, if the "good people" in this case only help when others are looking, and turn a blind eye when the situation is privatized.

Finally, there are the good people who attempt to slow or stop the train purely out of selflessness and the desire to help. Perhaps they'll try to slow the train with their gee-whiz McGuyver intellect. Perhaps they'll try to stop the train or save the potential victim in other ways. The outcome of their efforts could fall equally on the side of success or failure, but they truly help how they can, avoiding hurting themselves in the process if at all possible. Their attempts can still lead ultimately lead to one of the aforementioned endings, but then again, they could emerge victorious with the unharmed victim in their arms.

Let's face it, failure occurs only when you try. I'd rather fail a thousand times, than be burdened by the question of whether I could have done better. Done *more*. Made a bigger impact. Helped others. *Saved* others. But always keep in mind that there are different types of people who try to help in different ways, and they don't always have good intentions and they don't always have a successful track record. Bad things happen to good people all the time. Sometimes the people aren't *really* good, sometimes they're good and stupid, and if they're good people who are motivated to act out of love, then the bad things don't matter one way or another. The best rule of thumb when helping people or receiving help, is to use wisdom, know how to identify the types of good people that may help, and to ponder potential outcomes to yourself and others.

Posted 27th September 2012 by [mj](#) Labels: [backfire](#) [burden](#) [helpful](#) [helping](#) [helping people](#) [leadership development](#) [people](#)

## Bill's Pink Sticker

*September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Bill S. is a busy man. At any time of the day or night, on any day of the week, I'll run into him on one of my company's drilling rigs, picking up or delivering equipment. Bill works for Rice Electric, our primary regional electric motor repair company. If you were to approach the driver's side of Bill's truck, you'd notice a proudly displayed sticker which portrays a silhouette of a drilling rig's derrick over the number "316," which is one of our rigs. The sticker, in its entirety, is bright pink.

Oil and gas drilling has traditionally been big, tough, manly work. So why, you may wonder, is the sticker pink? Without a doubt, it's a conversational piece. It has nothing to do with breast cancer; there's no Susan G. Komen "Drill for the Cure" campaign in existence--that I know of, anyway... No, that sticker represents something far more personal for Bill. Something far more meaningful. Bill is the proud father of the only Woman Roughneck in this part of the country. Her name's Autumn.

So what's a Roughneck look like? If your perception was like mine a few years ago, you may imagine some mud- & oil-soaked sweaty ape who drinks and curses like a Sailor, carries a brick of Black Maria chaw in his left breast pocket and a pack of Marlboro Reds rolled up in his shirt sleeve, who talks with his fist, sleeps in his boots and Texas-sized cowboy hat, and leads with a stick. When I was a kid, I thought Marines all looked like Jean Claude Van Damme. I would later learn that Marines came in all shapes, sizes, colors, and genders (except fat). That's right, I was surprised to learn that there were even Women Marines, also known as WM's. Well, my current company is no different. We have gone to great lengths to change the culture and perception of Roughnecks. And like Marines compared to other fighting forces, I believe there is no finer representation of drilling industry professionals than at this company. So what's a Roughneck look like? A trained professional in the oil & gas drilling industry, a Roughneck looks like any sharp character. A Roughneck looks like Autumn.

I've had the pleasure of meeting Autumn. She's not big, muscular, or manly. She's a good ol' American girl, and she's loved by both her crew

and her management. The cool part is that she's not just in for a quick ride to determine whether she likes this line of work. Autumn has been with the company for about a year, and she's recently been promoted to the most technical position on our rigs--Motor Hand.

When Bill talks about his daughter, he beams. Bill is the same kind of proud Papa that I hope others see in myself when I talk about my kids. Few fathers, however, will ever know the pride of displaying a token with such a unique story and honor... as Bill's pink sticker.

Posted 27th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [316](#) [Autumn Shoup](#) [drilling girl](#) [girl roughneck](#) [lady Patterson](#) [roughneck](#) [stories about people](#) [woman](#) [women](#)

## **The Cops are Cooler in Pennsylvania**

*September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Pennsylvania's Chamber of Commerce needs to run with this ad: "The Cops are Cooler in Pennsylvania." If that wouldn't bring more visitors to the Commonwealth, I don't know what would.

It's true. There are fewer flashing blue lights in Pennsylvania, and I can honestly say that I've never seen an officer hiding behind a clump of bushes on the side of any PA highway or byway. In Virginia, cops are horrible at hiding around every corner, like uniformed boogeymen, waiting for you to sneeze the wrong way. City Police, State Troopers, all the same. I used to count the flashing lights along the 30 mile stretch between our place and my work EVERY MORNING, just to call my wife and complain about five, eight, twelve cars pulled over under the uniformed Nazi-like regime of Virginia. Gun and drug checkpoints in Newport News. Seat belt checkpoints in Deep Creek. The dreaded speed trap between the Battlefield & Indian River exits of I-64 in Chesapeake. Suffolk. Hampton. Norfolk. Virginia Beach. Ohio is the same way, along with North Carolina and some parts of Florida. Can't stand it! Take your points and your citations and stick them

where the sun don't shine, Virginia!

These days, I drive across Pennsylvania and see MAYBE one car pulled over a day. I can drive around Pittsburgh for eight hours of any given day or night, and never see a flashing blue light. Trust me, if anyone knows that there's a marked difference in the way Police are utilized, it's me. In every other State, I'm a cop magnet. So I actually dig on the Law Enforcement scene here. If the uniformed protectors of your or my respective regions aren't task-saturated with feeding their greedy municipalities with lucrative traffic tickets, then they can spend more time doing what's important, like protecting.

Posted 28th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [pa](#) [pennsylvania](#) [police](#) [speed traps](#) [state](#) [troop](#) [trooper](#)

## [What Does Your McNugget Sauce Say About You?](#)

*September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

*Warning: Mild sarcasm and gross insensitivity to follow. Please leave your feelings at the door.*

Hmm, decisions, decisions. We Americans have many choices for everything except presidential candidates. Twenty different churches within our reach. Twice as many restaurants. And at McDonalds, you have eight choices of dipping sauces in which to dip your forty-piece McNuggets. Here's what your sauce choice says about you, according to Dr. Pharce at the *McNugget Sauce Research Lab of Southern California*.\*

1. Barbecue -- Everything about this sauce says, "I'm a carnivore." You love it because you love cooking out, and on your grill, anything goes. Huge fatty slabs of pork, thick marbelized beef, whole chickens, all coated in that glorious special recipe barbecue that was passed down by generations of large relatives. If you choose barbecue sauce, it's probably because you're fat.
2. Honey -- Ah, the stuff of nature. Honey is healthy and it tastes

good. These days, it's danged expensive. But doggone, it's a sticky mess and it's the last thing you need getting on your clothes or on the seats in your car. You may order honey because you know it's expensive so you're trying to stick it to McDonalds, but survey says the most likely reason that you'd subject yourself to ruined clothes and car upholstery is because honey is the healthy alternative to sugar. Face it, you like sweets and, well, you're probably fat. And whenever you dunk your nuggets in sugar, people stare at you and whisper to each other and giggle.

3. Hot Mustard -- Why anyone would put this on a chicken is beyond me. Mustard, as we all know, is the healthy alternative to mayonaise on sandwiches, but for crying out loud it doesn't belong on everything. Baby, you know what's coming... you're fat, and there's no hiding it. Might as well just ask for mayonaise; it tastes better.

4. Sweet & Sour -- What sadomasochistic person came up with this sauce? You reward and punish your taste buds all in the same bite. The tip of your tongue is dancing with joy, the sides of your tongue are screaming in agony. You're sick. And the sweet part wasn't made with honey, rather processed sugar. You just can't avoid eating anything with "sweet" in the title, can you, fatso?

5. Spicy Buffalo -- You know, on one hand I want to call this a sensible choice, because it actually tastes pretty good, but when you look at the history of buffalo ranch or buffalo sauce, it began only a handful of years ago after some hot wing lovers touted the significance of their leftover dipping bowl contents. If you love buffalo sauce, you probably love hot wings, right? Do you know how much saturated fat goes into making hot wings? You probably also love pizza, seeing as buffalo sauce transformed the way we eat pizza crust. You, Sir, are a disgusting fatwad.

6. Creamy Ranch -- Howdy, ranch lover. You put ranch on everything. Ranch on your vegetables, ranch on your pizza, ranch on your meat, ranch on your dog and your doorknob. Cupholders in your car? Full of ranch. "The only way we can get little Suzie to eat anything healthy is to put Ranch on it. She loves that stuff, hee hee!" Well, I hope the ranch in this little

packet is extra, extra creamy, so you can pop your friggin' heart and go straight to ranch heaven. If you haven't guessed by now, Ranch cowgirl, you're fat. Nobody's had the mind to tell you.

7. Honey Mustard -- There's a twist. Two 'healthy' alternatives to sweetness and fatness, rolled into one. You must be feeling *extra* guilty. Do yourself a favor... resist the temptation to get on the scale in your friend's bathroom... it may be devastating. See items 2 and 3 above.

8. Sweet Chili -- Again drawn to the "sweet," but also drawn to the chili... hmm. You're an exciting fat person. You let it all hang out on the Salsa dancefloor. A little scary but hey, I'm proud of ya.

The truth is, we're all fat. But that's what's great about this country. We're all fat. It's the one thing we all have in common. It's patriotic. *Uncommon fatness is our common virtue*. So double, triple, and quadruple those 20-piece orders of four dollar, crispy, golden, bleached, beakless chicken parts. And go sauce crazy! We only live once.

\*There is no such research lab.

Posted 28th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [all mcnugget sauces](#) [fat food](#) [mcdonalds](#) [mcnugget sauce review](#) [obesity review](#) [sauce soap box](#)

## **Regional Trend: Where Have all the Stop/Slow Men Gone?**

*September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

It's raining outside. Windshield wipers are set to "hyper." You finally broke free from the sluggish line of interconnected cars on the highway at Exit 41, and in about 11 miles, you'll be home from a long, stressful day of work. Then you come around that familiar corner and hit your brakes in surprise, because three hundred feet ahead is a person wearing a hard hat and reflective safety vest, holding a Stop sign.

Now, this is just a regional observation. It's not a judgment or the manifestation of any feeling, good / bad / indifferent. "Stop/Slow workers," as I call them, are almost always entirely men in Virginia, and I believe the same is true in the other places I have lived, though I never paid much attention until now. I think it's because the guys who hold the signs are the same guys fixing the road, on a rotational 'road guard' duty. Stop/Slow workers in Virginia look just like the rest of the crew, grimy and sweaty and all that.

In Pennsylvania, the Stop/Slow sign holders are all women! Well, not **all** I'm sure, but almost everywhere in the State I've seen women as the primary sign holders. And they're usually clean; I'm guessing that they're hired specifically for that role. Just another thing that Pennsylvania does a little differently... I think it's cool because it adds a level of equality and cleanliness to the traditionally dirty work of civil construction.

Posted 29th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [civil construction](#) [girls](#) [hard work](#) [man stuff](#) [man work](#) [pa](#) [pennsylvania](#) [road](#) [women work](#)

## **Patrick J. Delaney: Hardened Marine, Humble Leader, Silent Professional**

*September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Patrick J. Delaney was a Beirut-bombing era Marine whom I had the pleasure of working under for much of my time as a Recon Marine. This pock-faced, white haired 1st Sergeant was a hard tack leader with a reputation for being a no-excuse, no-bull kind of guy. He very much reminds me of Clint Eastwood in *Heartbreak Ridge*. In one of the hallways of the French Creek Recon Barracks, hung a black & white picture of himself as a young Sergeant patrolling through a cannabis field in South America. Of all the other amazing photos and paintings of enemy troops, Recon guys freefall jumping, scuba diving, fighting, patrolling, or sniping that hung around the CP, that photo of Delaney was my favorite.

I'll never forget when First Sergeant Delaney ran into some guys who he

perceived didn't have the heart to be in Recon. They were some real candy Hollywood types who just went through this new Marine Corps Recon 'pipeline.' Young guys. I could go into great detail about them, but suffice it to say, they were some hard danks who made it through all kinds of great training that was just handed to them (unlike most of us who had to earn every seat we got), but they were arrogant and didn't give a crap about anybody but themselves.

"SPAAAAAETS!!!" I ran to his office. "Yes First Sergeant!" He motioned at these three new guys standing outside his door. I won't mention what they did. "Speights (that's me), I want you to take these three men out for the day, and all night, and all the next day if you have to, and I want you to break them. Use your head, keep them hydrated, but PT them into the dirt. Do not bring them back until somebody quits their job or ends up in the hospital." It was 0730.

One of the biggest differences between Marines and everybody else, is that the leader is going to thrash with his men. I was going to PT myself into the dirt, and it's a tough gamble whether one of these young, fresh-from-school guys will break before me. The only advantage I had, being a Reconnaissance Team Leader, was the psychological advantage. We ran five miles in boots and utilities. Splashed into the New River basin for an hour long boots & ut's swim. Came out on mainside and ran another three miles between pull-up bars and obstacle courses, getting some upper body discipline as each opportunity arose. Then we ran a windy, dusty tank trail back toward the beach, about ten miles or so, until one guy said "F-it, I don't need this crap." Not two minutes after I received confirmation that he did not want to be a part of this unit, one of the three guys passed out on the side of the road, rolling into a ditch. We flagged down the first pickup truck and had them take him and the quitter to the Battalion Aid Station, while I ran the last mile with the final guy, back to the barracks. I told the Duty NCO to make sure this guy self-hydrated for fifteen minutes, then gave him grid coordinates where I wanted him to start digging a platoon-sized hide site.

I went to report in with Delaney. You should have seen the look on his face, when I told him that one guy quit Recon and another was getting double-



bagged with Lactate Ringers at BAS. I told him I would be joining Marine # 3 in digging a pit, once I picked up food for both of us. Delaney thanked me, verified that he had heard correctly... "Miles QUIT. Really?" "Yes, First Sergeant." He grabbed his soft cap quickly. "I'm headed to BAS," he said, heart on his sleeve. "Keep me informed about the third Marine." "Aye, First Sergeant." "And Speights--" "Yes First Sergeant?" "Great job." Coming from this man, it was a compliment in the highest degree.

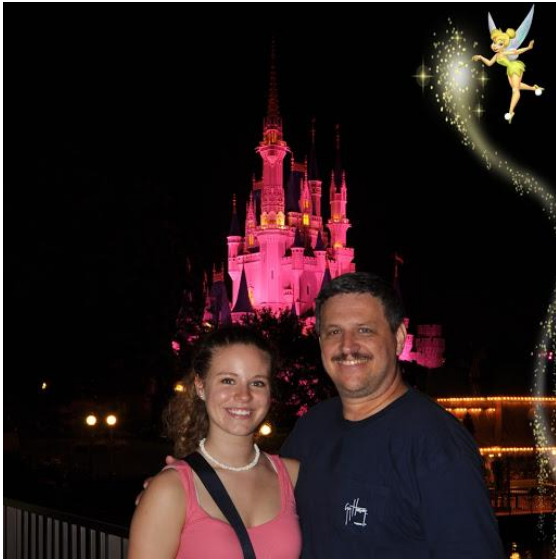
The greatest testament to PJ Delaney's character had nothing to do with any military campaign. It had nothing to do with his hardness, the respect others had for him, or his military bearing. Every morning, he was up before anyone. He was the first in his office in the morning, and the last one to leave. Do you know what he did every morning? He swept. He swept the sidewalk in front of all the Company offices--this was at Lejeune, post *French Creek Recon Barracks* and pre *Courthouse Bay CP Building*. We were borrowing the lower level offices of the AA Battalion barracks while ours were being built. Delaney swept that long catwalk every day, even though he had hundreds of junior Marines at his disposal. He swept when no one would have batted an eye if he had told them to do it. He swept when all of his peers, his superiors, and even his subordinates silently questioned why this was not delegated. He swept even though others felt that they were beyond sweeping by virtue of the rank they attained. Patrick Delaney, leader of men, First Sergeant of Marines, warrior among hardened warriors, lifelong Reconnaissance Man... he grabbed a broom, a foxtail and a dustpan, and swept in front of everyone's door every day.

Whenever I am faced with an opportunity to be humble, or to get in the field with my guys when my "place" may be behind a desk, I think of PJ Delaney. I remember his solid character, I remember his tough reputation, but mostly I remember the quick glimpses into his big heart. I remember his humble, sweeping spirit. I will never forget him.

Posted 29th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [1st delaney first infantry major marine marine corps marines patrick pj delaney recon reconnaissance sergeant stories about people USMC](#)

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1.

[Eddy Gilley](#) November 16, 2012 at 10:41 PM

Did something happen to Pat? Is he still alive?

[Reply](#)



2.

[mj](#) November 19, 2012 at 9:48 PM

Sorry! Didn't mean to scare anybody. Yeah, he's still alive... at least, he should be! Haven't seen him on any lists and he's pretty freakin' resilient. I was just giving him a living tribute here!

## Four Books and Three P's

September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Got the down and dirty on four books that are really good, and three more that I bought that look really good.

1. ***The Circle Maker***, by Mark Batterson -- Our church, LifeStone (Pittsburgh), has been following a series based on this book. I've read many Christian books from Hurnard's *Hind's Feet on High Places* of the 80's to Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* in the 00's, and about twenty others altogether. *The Circle Maker*? Best yet. Very well written, very powerful. All about the way we pray.
2. ***The Way of the Shepherd***, by Dr. Kevin Leman & William Pentak -- I have actually been talking about this one for a while; I picked it up off some guy on a plane ride to Houston back in January. Very good, short book about how to lead and manage productively using the seven tips of a sheep rancher-turned-*Fortune 50* CEO.
3. ***It Worked for Me, In Life and Leadership***, by Colin Powell. I loved this book because first, as many do, I have a lot of respect for this man. Secondly, he has very sound wisdom. Third, he dispenses that wisdom in very small bites; most of the lessons in this book are in segments no larger than a few pages. Excellent read.
4. ***The Decision Book: 50 Models for Strategic Thinking***, by Mikael Krogerus & Roman Tschaeppler. I've been carrying this one around in my pocket for about a week. It is pocket sized, and every two or three pages represents some type of model, matrix, or lesson that may be applied to some facet of life, from both the personal and business perspectives. Models and matrixes range from ancient to contemporary. Another great book.

---

The three P's, or *Possibles*, I have yet to read but will report on them as soon as I have:

1. ***The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership***, by John C. Maxwell

2. ***No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah***, by Bing West

3. ***The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable***, by Patrick Lencioni

Posted 29th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [2012 best best leadership books of 2012](#) [Bing West book books christian](#) [Colin Powell](#) [John C. Maxwell](#) [leaders](#) [leadership](#) [leadership development](#) [Lencioni](#) [list](#)

## **A Day in the Life: Sayings of the Month**

*September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

I always love recording the funny things that come out of our kids' mouths. Here's the latest installment:

Ayla (3) was trying to move past me the other day. My computer bag was leaning against the seat beside me. She tried to step over it, then stepped back and asked, "Daddy, can you please move your purse?"

Just two days ago, I asked Ayla if she was ready to be a big sister. "Are you ready to help momma change the baby's diapers, and help give the baby a bath, feed the baby, and burp the baby?" Her eyes showed her excitement and imagination, as she held a pretend bottle in one hand and a baby in the other. "Uh-huh, and, and... ..and DRINK the baby, too!"

We were headed out to go for a walk last Sunday. I had become engaged in the storyline of a movie which I'd never paid any attention to before, the animated classic *Anastasia*. The graphics and animations, well, they're not Pixar. Then Petra came in, all ready to go, just looking at me. "Are you coming?" Hiding behind my daughters, I state flatly that I'm just watching *Anastasia* with the girls, and that it's almost over. "I hate to admit it," I told

Petra, "This is actually a really good movie!" Ayla gets up and says, "C'mon dad. This movie's cheezy."

*"May Caleb be with You."* Petra and I were sitting on the couch. We're badly in need of a new couch, this one's nice and leather and all that, but even with the big board I put under the cushions, it swallows our butts whole, making it very difficult to get up. Especially true now that I weigh 250 lbs. and Petra's two weeks from popping out a baby. We were both staring at the remote control next to the TV. "Use The Force," I told her, jokingly reaching out my hand and pretending to sweat over it. She replies seriously without skipping a beat, "Oh I use The Force all the time... **CALEB!!!**" She later explained that Caleb (our resident *Star Wars* Jedi since he was in diapers) has been nicknamed *The Force* since her pregnancy began... I just haven't been home enough to notice.

Dads have all kinds of cool traits that make each of them unique. One of mine is the seldom-used NRA Handshake. You walk up to shake someone's hand, and before they can even realize what's going on, you deftly pull their hand up toward your shoulder like it's a shotgun's pistol grip, pulling their arm out straight while simultaneously reaching in and grasping their tricep as if it is the forestock of the weapon, staring down their arm like you're aiming, usually yelling out "NRA HANDSHAKE!!!" It usually stuns the handshake victim for a second, then they end up rolling. Great icebreaker or business deal closer. That Xian Merger? NRA HANDSHAKE!!! Does it every time. Just kidding. But it is fun.

Well, Caleb walked up to somebody the other day; an adult he didn't know-- he executed the above 'novelty' handshake superbly! He was one with the element of surprise and everything... except that the guy was confused by what Caleb yelled out. "MRI HANDSHAKE!!!"

Last month, we went out to Red Lobster for my birthday. That's my birthday tradition, as often as we can make it happen anyway. Red Lobster, followed by a homemade cherry chip cake with cherry icing that Petra does perfectly. Mac was with us (up from Texas) as well as Seb, one of the cool neighbor boys that keeps everybody laughing. We had this wisenheimer

waiter who agreed with everything you said. "Oh yeah, I love that too. **YES!!!** Me too. Oh yeah, isn't that the best?" When we got on the topic of biscuits, he said, "**You** love Red Lobster biscuits, **I'm** a Red Lobster biscuit fiend!!! In fact, I have the biggest picture on the wall in our lobby, for winning RL's annual biscuit eating contest." Our boy Josh goes, "Really?" The waiter says dryly, "No, not really. I'm just kidding." So then we're ordering, and Josh orders his regular two orders of mussels and sn... "Snow crab legs?" Interrupted the waiter, "I'm also a mind reader." Josh instantly says to him, "Oh yeah, where's the picture hanging for that one? Everybody started laughing at the table. Even the waiter was busted, and laughed out loud. Lily asks, "What's everybody laughing for? Why's everybody laughing?" Caleb tells her, "Oh, nothing happened--our waiter just got **Schooled** by Josh."

Life is very good in our household. I love these fleeting 'isms.'

Posted 29th September 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [a day in the life](#) [child](#) [children](#) [funny](#) [funny things kids say](#) [home and family](#) [kid](#) [kids](#) [sayings](#)

## **I've Created an Arsonist**

*October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012*

I've recently become self-aware of the fact that I'm horrible at relating big ticket topics to kids. My most recent topical failure: *Sharing*.

Our girls were fighting over a Rapunzel Barbie. I bark something random and insignificant to get them to stop. Then I sit them down. I tried to guide them to the answers of what things they find most valuable. You know, the "House fire" scenario. *What is the first thing you would think of saving?*

Well they passed the test... yell really loud to get everybody's attention, wake up mommy, grab your sister and run outside. Forget about the stuffed animals, the gerbils, the Rapunzel doll. Not important in the long scheme of things. Lily did tell me I'd better get mommy's purse or she'd be mad at me.

Then came the hailstorm of unanswerable questions. The teary-eyed what if's and the talk of floods and tornadoes and fires and homeless people who have lost everything. Lots of questions about when our house is gonna catch on fire. So to counterbalance the fear, I assured them that none of these things are supposed to happen, but we need to be prepared anyway. In answer to what we would do, I said, well, don't worry about all the stuff, we can buy new stuff. Dolls, couches, beds, a TV, etc. And in answer to where we would live, I instinctively said we'd probably move to grandma & grandpa's monster house.

Wrong answer. The girls can't wait for the fire to happen. All new toys AND we get to move to grandma's house??!!! Woo-HOO!!! They're still making plans for the big fire that I hope and pray never happens. **"LILY! Put those matches down!!!"**

Posted 1st October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [a day in the life](#) [emergency planning](#) [family home and family house](#) [fire planning](#) [living with grandma](#)

## All But the Kiss

October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Caught these two on an opportune drive-by shooting in Pittsburgh's Southside, near Soul II Sole. Captured all but the kiss.







Posted 7th October 2012 by [mj](#)

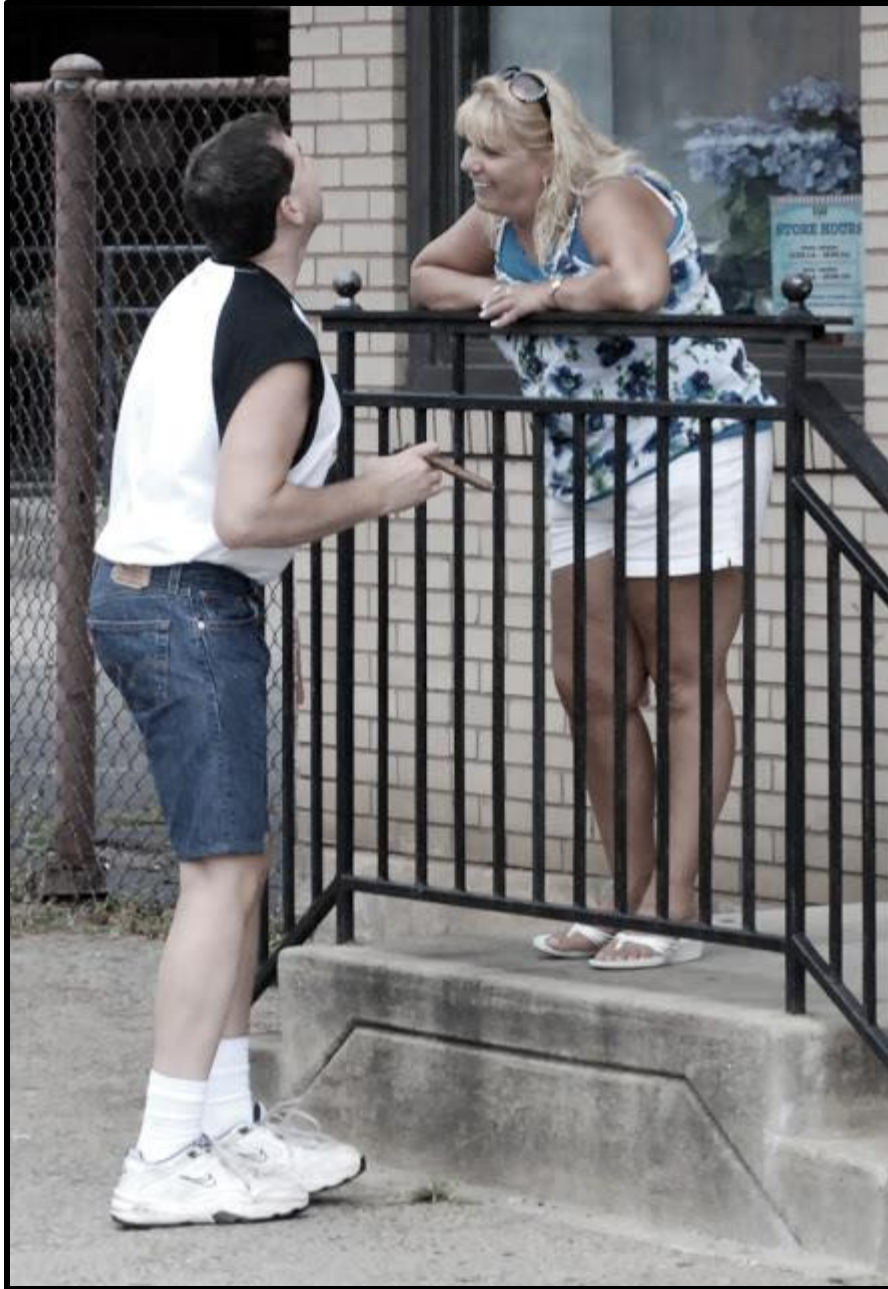
Labels: [amor](#) [amore](#) [amour](#) [couple](#) [couples](#) [kiss](#) [kissing](#) [love](#) [lovers](#) [pair](#) [photo](#) [picture](#) [pittsburgh](#)

## Beauty and the Big Cigar

*October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Here's another photo -- this couple was having fun walking down the road, the Mister swinging a big cigar the whole time. He looked like almost like Tim Allen, or another actor whose name escapes me. They never stopped joking around with each other and laughing.





Posted 7th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [couple in pittsburgh](#) [love pair photo picture pittsburgh](#)

## [La Albina](#)

October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Here's a girl that we've seen a couple places around Pittsburgh; she has a very unique shade of melanin... I believe she's an Albino African American, but not entirely sure. If I get the chance again, I'll ask her.



Posted 7th October 2012 by [mj](#) Labels: [african american](#) [albino](#) [albino](#) [black](#) [black albino](#) [girl](#) [people](#) [person](#) [pittsburgh](#)

## The Birdman of Pitt

October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Pittsburgh has several birdmen. This is the birdman of the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt). A professional in his field, this man seemed to be exceptionally good at feeding birds.





Posted 7th  
October 2012 by  
[mj](#)

Labels: [bird](#) [bird](#)  
[feeder](#) [bird man](#)  
[birdman](#) [feeder](#)  
[feeding](#) [feeding](#)  
[birds](#) [man](#)  
[pigeon](#) [pitt](#)  
[pittsburgh](#)  
[university of](#)  
[pittsburgh](#)

## [Dash Five](#)

*October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Baby number five's due in a few days, but at the rate of pace momma's moving, the magic moment may happen any minute. This will be the first time we didn't find out the gender of the baby... the surprise will make it fun in my book. We've been excitedly looking forward to this time! Momma's been taking a beating from this very active baby ever since the end of her second trimester, so I know she's ready.

If it's a boy, his name will be Gideon Reade. If a girl, Jolina Rayne. We'll be excited on either front.

Well, gonna drop off and get back to work.

--MJ

Posted 12th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [a day in the life](#) [due in october](#) [expecting in october](#) [home and family](#)  
[october babies](#) [october baby](#) [pregnant](#)

## [She's Gonna Blow!!!](#)

*October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Momma's ready to pop. Baby's ready to join this crazy family. Petra's been contracting all day.

Lily taught herself to ride a bike last week. She's been riding circles in our backyard, on the small patch of driveway that wraps around the house. She wants to live with grandma and grandpa when she grows up. "Why?" I ask her. "Because I feel sorry for them, because they don't have any kids."

Ayla clings to daddy and doesn't let go. Every time she sees me, she clutches me because she knows my hours at home are few, and I probably won't see her for several days again. Even if I'm home every night of the week, I'm rarely home before her bedtime, and I'm off to work before she wakes up. At night sometimes, I'll hover over my kids, hug, kiss, and pray for them while they're sleeping. It's better than no contact at all, but I can't wait for that part of my life to change!

Josh acts like he just discovered music for the first time ever. Every chance he gets, he wants to download one song or another to his ipod. He'll spend hours listening to music, and his favorite songs are the songs that were new when I was his age. He's beginning to act more and more like a teenager.

Caleb is making us a salad right now. He's such a servant. Loves taking care of everybody.

I've got such a great family!!!

Posted 14th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [a day in the life](#) [home and family](#)

# Southside Randoms

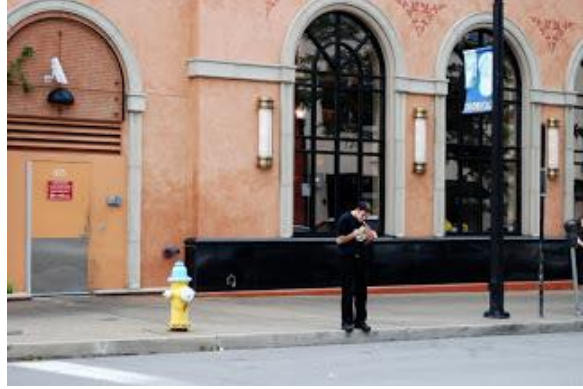
October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012











Posted 14th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [buildings](#) [people](#) [photographer](#) [photos](#) [pictures](#) [pittsburgh](#) [random](#) [south](#) [side](#) [southside](#) [street](#)

## Quality Time

October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Quality time? this guy found it. Caught these two while I was waiting at a stoplight... unmistakably father & son, spending the kind of quality time so many of us wish we did. Look at their facial expressions in each picture-- they're identical.





Posted 14th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [father](#) [father and son](#) [photo](#) [photographer](#) [picture](#) [pittsburgh](#) [quality](#)  
[time](#) [son](#) [southside](#)

# Pittsburgh Area Drive-By

October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012







Posted 14th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [mount lebanon](#) [mount washington](#) [pennsylvania](#) [photographer](#) [photos](#) [pictures](#) [pittsburgh](#)



Riverfront Park, Pittsburgh Southside







Posted 14th October 2012 by [mj](#)

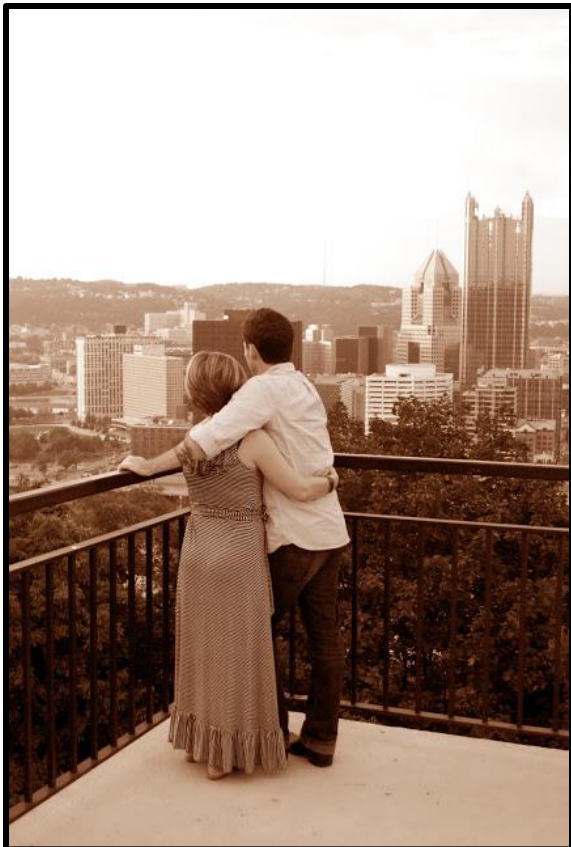
Labels: [pennsylvania](#) [photographer](#) [photos](#) [pictures](#) [pittsburgh](#) [riverfront](#) [park](#) [southside](#)

## [Love on Mount Washington](#)

*October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Saw this couple while we were walking between the Duquesne & Monongahela Inclines. Couldn't resist a couple pictures.



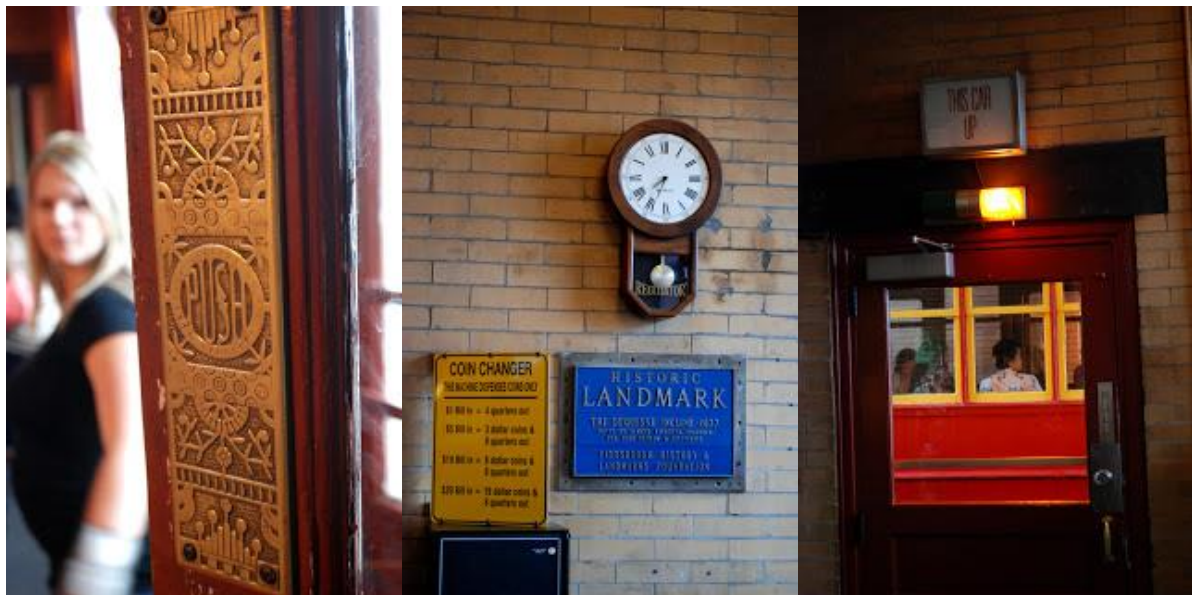


Posted 14th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [couple](#) [couple on mount](#) [washington](#) [love](#) [mount washington](#) [photo](#) [photographer](#) [picture](#) [pittsburgh](#)

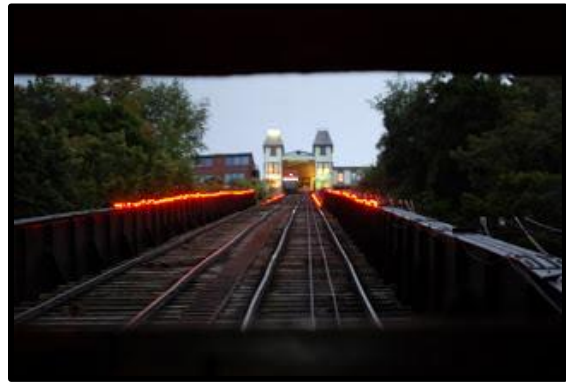
# The Duquesne Incline

October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012













Posted 14th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [duquesne](#) [duquesne](#) [incline](#) [photos](#) [incline](#) [monongahela](#) [mount](#) [pennsylvania](#) [photo](#) [picture](#) [pittsburgh](#) [southside](#) [washington](#)

# A Few Good Pittsburgh Photos

October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012







Posted 14th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [blog](#) [Matty MJ](#) [pa](#) [pennsylvania](#) [photo](#) [picture](#) [professional](#) [freelance](#)

## Welcome Jolina!

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012

IT'S A GIRL!!! Jolina Rayne Speights entered our lives at 5:51AM Eastern on Monday, October 15th, 2012. She weighs 8 pounds 4 ounces, has a great complexion and a healthy set of pipes! She looks beautiful. The kids are staying at Ron & Misty's tonight... can't wait until they get to meet their new sister! We will remain here at *Magee Women's Hospital* in Pittsburgh until sometime tomorrow.



Posted 15th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [dads raising girls](#) [home and family](#) [magee women's hospital](#) [pittsburgh](#)

## Photo Update on Baby Jolina

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012



Magee Womens Hospital, Pittsburgh. We first learned that Petra would be having the baby here in August... around the same week that this hospital made national headlines when a newborn was kidnapped from the maternity ward! We didn't fret, because I figured the hospital--under strain of reputation--would be extra security-conscious by the time we arrived. We have been nothing but extremely pleased with this visit!!!



Baby Jolina's first bath



Proud Momma! One of the nurses had just put some salve on baby's eyes. This baby came pretty easy!



Petra is so pretty! :)





Posted 15th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [2012](#) [hospital](#) [jolina](#) [magee](#) [new](#) [baby](#) [october](#) [photo](#) [picture](#) [women](#)

## [Jolina @ Home](#)

October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012



Monday night, I picked up the kids from Ron & Misty's house (thanks again guys!) and drove them to the hospital to meet their new sister. We stayed until quittin' time (2100, when visiting hours ended). The kids were stoked about seeing Jolina!!! They all wanted to hold her. That's when we got the news that the hospital

wanted to keep momma and baby an additional 48 hours. So I drove home with the kids... we busted out a hardcore house-cleaning and then snuggled up for a movie, Barbie's *Princess and the Pop Star*.



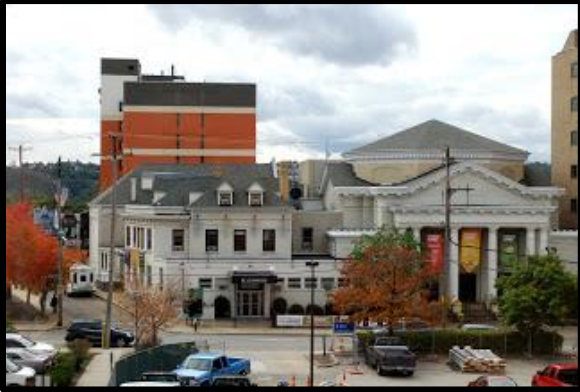
The next morning, on a whim, I decided that the boys would be playing hookey for a second day in a row. We all had breakfast, then I took the kids to the mall to pick out a special teddy bear for their new sister. We finally scored the perfect plush at Hallmark... a soft, floppy angel bear for \$6.50 that was perfect. Eat your heart out, \$\$\$Build-a-Bear!!! We also picked out a card and a crossword book for momma, and some earrings for the girls @ Claire's. We scarfed Taco Bell on the way downtown... Lily's first Crunchwrap Supreme and Caleb's first Baja Chalupa... both were hits!

At the hospital, we stopped at the gift shop to get momma some flowers and chocolate, then headed to adjacent Starbucks and picked up a caffiene-free Pumpkin Spice Latte for momma, and some snackages (chocolate pecan pie--WOW) for all of us.



After a few hours of visiting, I took the kids for a walk. We strolled a couple blocks down into Pitt Panther territory, bought some hair clips for the girls and a new hat for Josh, fumbled around with Ayla's hair like a dork, gave up and bought a headband, then headed to the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, where we learned science stuff in the Discovery Room, admired an impressive butterfly collection, watched paleo-lab technicians expertly expose real dinosaur bones from raw dig segments, and took a simulated ride through the earth's layers. On our walk back to Magee Women's Hospital, we ate in at McDonald's. Stayed with momma a couple hours until quittin' time. Watched the debates last night.

Today, momma and Jolina were finally released. Big thanks to all nurses & doctors there... very good hospital! The girls and myself went to pick them up and we got back home around 2 PM. We're loving having momma & the baby home!!! Welcome home, Jolina!!!





Posted 17th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [home and family](#) [jolina magee women's hospital](#)

## Happy Town, USA

October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Driving into West Branch, Michigan, I see a bumper sticker which reads, "Proud Parent of a Skateboarder." I chuckle, thinking of the time that Petra went on a tangent about how parents should be proud of their kids regardless of whether they make the 'Principal's Honor Roll' or perform some incredible gymnastics feat. I Remember her saying, "I want to see a sticker that says, 'Proud Parent of a Dumba\*\*.'" (My wife didn't say it, she spelled it out... uncompromising).

As I continued to drive through this quiet town, I noticed their water tower in the distance. It couldn't have been any more perfect if it were shaped like a Coca-Cola bottle. What a welcoming, friendly community! I love it!



If you ever travel to West Branch, may I suggest that you skip out on your Marriott and HHonors point collections and stay at the Quality Inn. Get a poolside room. The whole hotel is filled with tributes to lumberjacks and woodsmen, with a large gift shop foier and an adjacent restaurant / bar that is very accommodating. The rooms wrap around a small domed indoor pool / hot tub area that is open 24/7 and has pool tables, vending machines and seating areas. You'll be glad you stayed here!

Posted 18th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [cool water towers](#) [mi michigan](#) [smiling](#) [unique water tower](#) [west branch](#)

## [DiCicco Shoe Shine: A Proud American Tradition](#)

October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Inside New York's La Guardia Airport is a proud family tradition... and it's the Oldest Small Business Concern in any U.S. Airport. **Dicicco Shoe Shine** can be found in newspaper ads as far back as the 1940's, and the business itself predates not only the dawn of aviation, but of the automotive industry. Below, one of the Dicicco men gives honor and credit to his father for keeping this business alive and strong... and not only in the shoe shine industry, but in several vendor types throughout the airport. I only wish I had done better than a very grainy cell phone camera when taking these two pictures.



Posted 18th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [airport](#) [chico](#) [cicco](#) [de](#) [di](#) [dicicco](#) [dicicco](#) [shoe](#) [shine](#) [la](#) [guardia](#) [laguardia](#) [new](#) [your](#) [nyc](#) [oldest](#) [shine](#) [shoe](#)

## [Freddy K's Graf Art Tribute -- Oakland, Pittsburgh](#)

October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Stumbled upon a touching graffiti tribute Monday, while walking from the hospital to Arby's & back. It was located inside a sectioned off area used to store construction equipment and supplies, and I had to ask permission to walk around the perimeter of the small lot.

Some of the story's plot is obscured by said materials, but the artwork is impressive. In the last few photos--the end of the story--it looks like there were some extraneous tags applied to the wall, which may interfere with the artist's plight. Again, all very good art nonetheless, and doubtless (by both the quality and gist of the story), a touching memorial.







Posted 18th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [art](#) [artist](#) [artwork](#) [good](#) [graf](#) [graffiti](#) [graffitti](#) [grafitti](#) [pittsburgh](#) [quality](#)

## [Carnegie Museum of Natural History](#)

*October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

The Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh offer quality education, entertainment, and culture to the city and its greater region. An unofficial favorite among the Carnegie Museums, our family has visited the Museum of Natural History on three occasions. Here are a few pictures from our last visit:







*PaleoLab* is a working paleontology laboratory. Here fossilized remains of animals are being removed from the sediments in which they were preserved.

## WELCOME TO PALEOLAB

When fossils are collected from a field site, not only are the bones removed from the earth, but also the rock that surrounds them. This is done to protect the bones as they are transported to the museum for further work. This work, called *preparation*, is the process of uncovering the bones, and, if possible, removing them from the surrounding rock.

The scientists working here are known as preparators. The task of discovering and where prehistoric animals was being located for display in the museum's exhibit halls or for study by the museum's paleontologists.





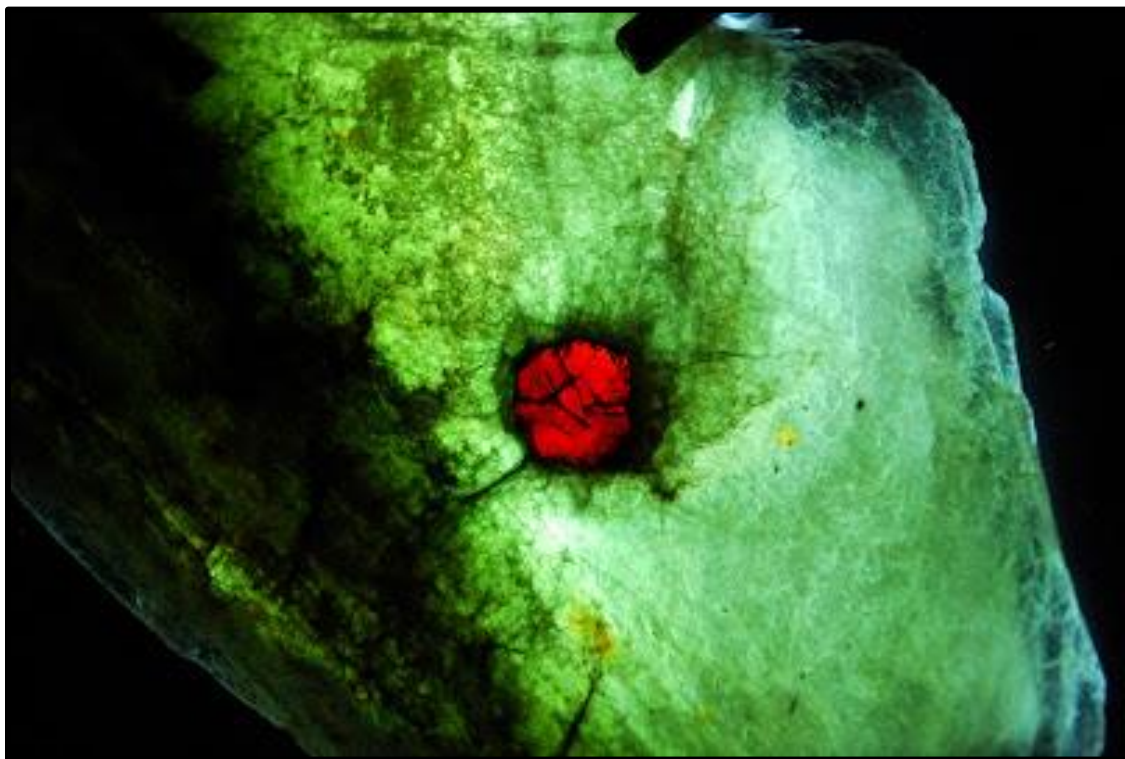
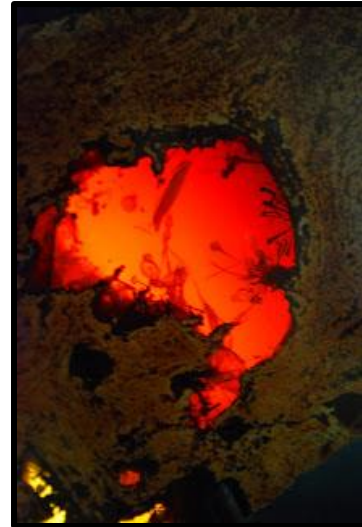
Posted 18th October 2012 by [mj](#)

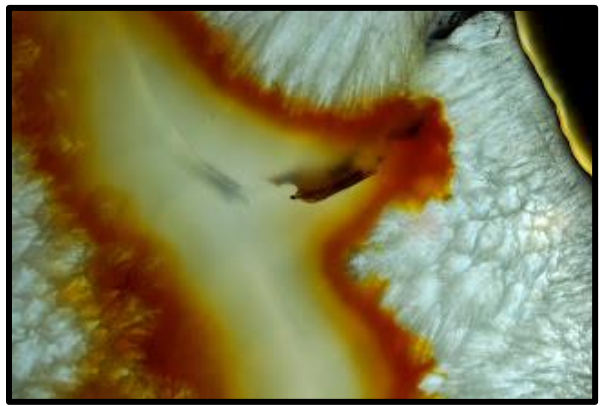
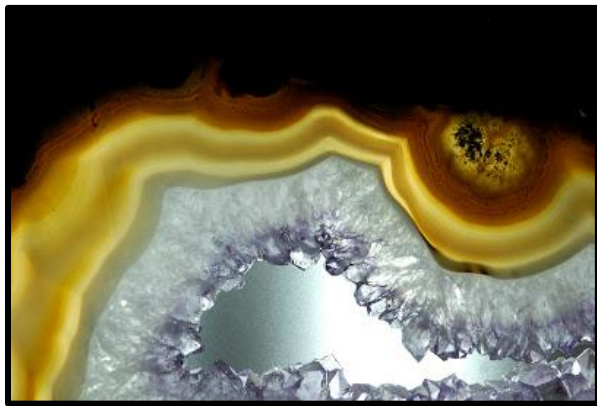
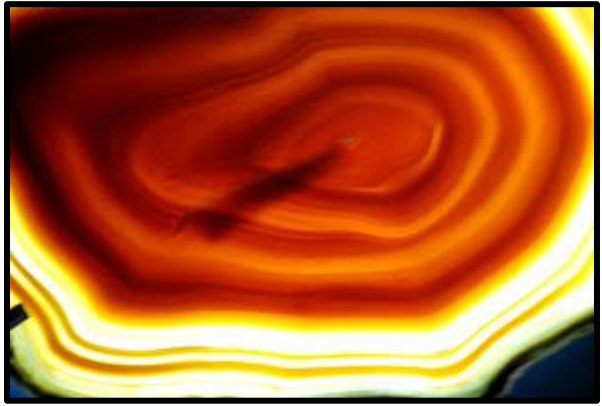
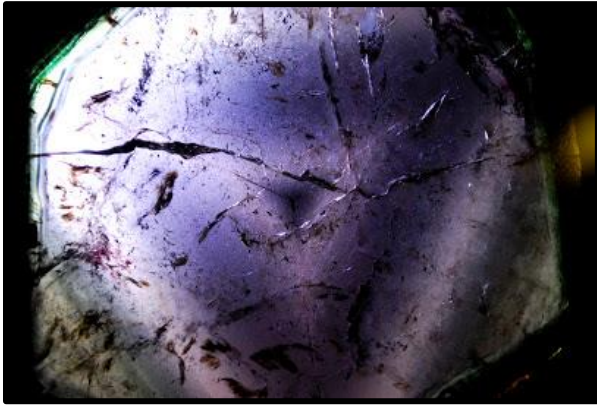
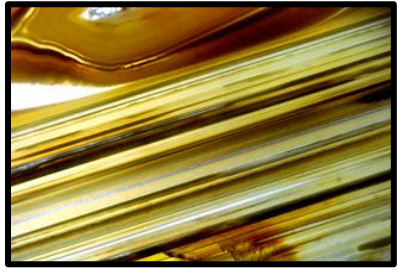
Labels: [carnegie](#) [carnegie museum of natural history](#) [museum](#) [museums](#) [natural history](#) [pa](#) [pennsylvania](#) [pittsburgh](#)

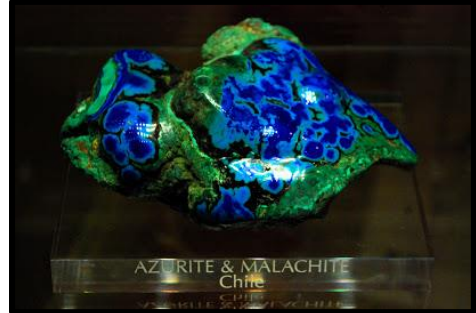
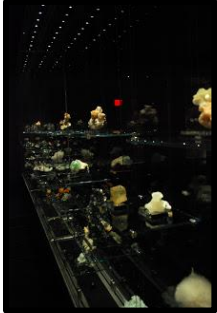
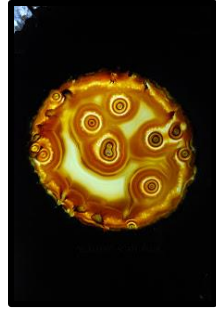
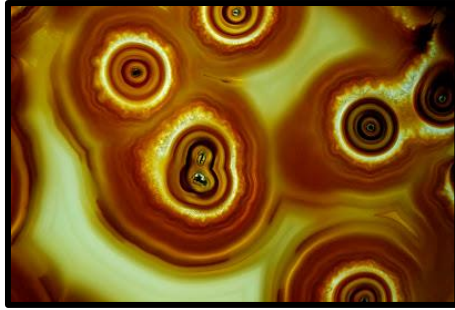
## From the Hillman Hall of Minerals & Gems: Twenty One Stones

October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

This is a sampler of some of the very beautiful stones displayed at the Hillman Hall of Minerals & Gems, an exhibit inside Pittsburgh's *Carnegie Museum of Natural History*.







Posted 18th October 2012 by [mj](#)  
Labels: [carnegie](#) [carnegie museum](#)  
[of natural history](#) [gems](#) [gemstones](#)  
[hillman hall](#) [minerals museum](#) [pa](#)  
[pennsylvania](#) [pittsburgh](#)

## Darndest Things: The Isms and Quotes of October

October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012

A few "isms" and quotes from our girls in the month of October:

"Out, dad, I need my privacy." (Ayla, 3, now that she requires no help going to the bathroom)

"Can I have some more meat love?" (Lily, 5, said of the meatloaf that Kathy brought over for us)

"Daddy look! I found a turkey leaf!" (feather... Ayla)

"Here mommy, I picked you a dandy flower!" (dandelion... Ayla)

"This is the king and queen and these are their babies. You can only move the babies at first, and then it's time for these guys \*points to back row of pieces\*." (Lily, teaching Ayla how to play chess)

"Mmmm, I LOVE flamango!!!" (Ayla, of mango flavored Jelly Bellies)

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Last one: Momma and I were debating what a certain noise was that came from outside. It was a series of steady beeps that became faster and faster until it was a solid 'beeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeep.' Is that a car alarm? I asked. "I think it's a car alarm." "No, it's a stud finder," corrected momma accurately, motioning to the guys building the house behind ours. "But it must be broken because the only stud I see is right here!" I chuckled. Then Lily chimed in without skipping a beat. "I think somebody's gonna blow up."

Posted 20th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [a day in the life](#) [funny stuff kids say](#) [home and family](#) [kids say the darndest things](#)

## [Surfing in Chicago](#)

*October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Having lived fourteen of the last sixteen years on the coasts of Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia, my family is no stranger to hurricanes, tropical storms, tornadoes, floods, power outages, downed trees, washed roads, closed bridges and tunnels, and the associated damage that these incur.

But Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania? Are you kidding me? Right now, we're watching Hurricane Sandy on The Weather Channel--the 'storm of storms'--simultaneously cover every state from Georgia to Maine with gale-force winds. So far, not too bad... just made landfall in New Jersey an hour ago. But it rarely ever is. The damage is usually seen after the storm has passed, folks begin stirring outside, and the floods swell and take their toll on roads, property, and whatever else they may.

Moments ago, we saw surfers hitting 7' breaks off the shores of Chicago. Freakin' nuts.

Update... Now there's a blizzard 12 miles South of our house. Calling for two feet of snow not an hour from here.

Posted 29th October 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [blizzard](#) [blizzard](#) [hurricane](#) [crazy weather](#) [hurricane](#) [hurricane sandy](#) [hurricane stories](#) [pa](#) [pennsylvania](#) [pittsburgh](#) [surfing in chicago](#)

## [Thank You Marines... Happy 237th Birthday](#)

*November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Thank you, Marines... for standing on that wall. Thank you all for protecting our families... my family. Thank you for sacrificing so that many of us do not have to. You're appreciated every day.

Happy 237th Birthday. We're a long way from Tun Tavern, spread to the far four corners in every clime and place... however, I wish you each the

opportunity to share cake, beer, and the finest stories with a brother Marine tomorrow.

Good night Marines, you brave men and women; grunts, wingers, and pagues... you are all amazing and you are all loved. Thanks again. Good night, Chesty, wherever you are!

Posted 9th November 2012 by [mj](#)

## [2012 Marine Corps Birthday Message](#)

*In keeping with LtGen John A. Lejeune's time-honored tradition which began in 1921, on this date every year across the globe, Marines are read a copy of Lejeune's original birthday message, along with the current year's Commandant's birthday message. Then there is a cake-cutting ceremony which involves and recognizes both the oldest and youngest Marines in the room. Then come the beers. And the sword fighting.*



## BIRTHDAY OF THE MARINE CORPS

On November 10, 1775, a Corps of Marines was created by a resolution of the Continental Congress. Since that date many thousand men have borne the name Marine. In memory of them it is fitting that we who are Marines should



commemorate the birthday of our Corps by calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history.

The record of our Corps is one which will bear comparison with that of the most famous military organizations in the world's history. During 90 of the 167 years of its existence the Marine Corps has been in action against the Nation's foes. From the battle of Trenton to the Argonne, Marines have won foremost honors in war, and in the long eras of tranquility at home generation after generation of Marines have grown gray in war in both hemispheres, and in every corner of the seven seas, that our country and its citizens might enjoy peace and security.

In every battle and skirmish since the birth of our Corps Marines have acquitted themselves with the greatest distinction, winning new honors on each occasion until the term "Marine" has come to signify all that is highest in military efficiency and soldierly virtue.

This high name of distinction and soldierly repute we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the corps. With it we also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our Corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of Marines in every age. So long as that spirit continues to flourish Marines will be found equal to every emergency in the future as they have been in the past, and the men of our Nation will regard us as worthy successors to the long line of illustrious men who have served as "Soldiers of the Sea" since the founding of the Corps.

John Lejeune  
Lieutenant General  
U. S. Marine Corps

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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY MESSAGE 2012

**Date Signed:** 10/15/2012

**ALMARS** Active Number: 039/12

R 152053Z OCT 12

UNCLASSIFIED/

ALMAR 039/12

MSGID/GENADMIN/CMC WASHINGTON DC DMCS //

SUBJ/UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY MESSAGE 2012//

GENTEXT/REMARKS/1. AS WE PAUSE TO CELEBRATE THE 237TH BIRTHDAY OF OUR CORPS, WE REFLECT ON THE RICH LEGACY OF SERVICE HANDED DOWN TO US, WE RECOMMIT OURSELVES TO THE TASKS AT HAND, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TOWARD A BRIGHT FUTURE IN SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY.

2. MARINES EXIST TO FIGHT AND WIN OUR NATION'S BATTLES. WE ARE MOST PROUD OF OUR WELL-EARNED REPUTATION FOR ANSWERING THE CLARION CALL FIRST. THIS WAS NEVER MORE EVIDENT THAN AT THE EPIC BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL 70 YEARS AGO. PICKED TO LEAD THE FIRST ALLIED COUNTER-OFFENSIVE OF THE PACIFIC WAR BECAUSE THEY WERE THE "MOST READY," MARINES LANDED ON 7 AUGUST 1942 IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS. THEY PERSEVERED THROUGH MONTHS OF UNREMITTING DEPRIVATION AND BITTER COMBAT. BY THE TIME THE VETERANS OF THE BLUE DIAMOND, THE CACTUS AIR FORCE, OUR LEGENDARY MARINE RAIDERS, AND INITIAL ELEMENTS OF THE FOLLOW-ME DIVISION GATHERED TOGETHER TO RAISE A CANTEEN AND TOAST THE BIRTHDAY OF THEIR BELOVED CORPS SOME THREE MONTHS LATER, THE BATTLE WAS NO LONGER AN ISSUE. THE SITUATION WAS WELL IN HAND...VICTORY WAS ASSURED.

3. WE CARRY THAT SAME LEGACY OF RESOLUTE COMMITMENT AND VALOR TODAY. OVER THE PAST YEAR, MARINES HAVE STOOD FIRM IN THE TOUGHEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES AND ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS. WE'VE TAKEN THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY IN HELMAND AND TO THE HORN OF AFRICA. WE'VE MANNED THE RAMPARTS OF BELEAGUERED EMBASSIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, FOUGHT ALONGSIDE OUR ALLIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, WHILE BEHIND THE SCENES, AFLOAT AND ASHORE, OTHER MARINES DID THE PAINSTAKING HARD WORK REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN OUR HIGH LEVELS OF READINESS AND EFFICIENCY.

4. AS WE LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE, WE KNOW THAT OUR

SENTIMENTAL PLACE IN THE HEARTS OF OUR FELLOW AMERICANS AND CRITICAL ROLE IN THE DEFENSE OF OUR WAY OF LIFE ARE ASSURED. AMERICA HAS ALWAYS WANTED A MARINE CORPS...IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY. NOW, MORE THAN EVER, AMERICA NEEDS ITS MARINES AS WE CONFRONT A DANGEROUS AND UNPREDICTABLE WORLD. FACED WITH DIFFICULT DAYS AHEAD, WE WILL CONTINUE TO DRAW STRENGTH FROM OUR RICH HERITAGE AND THE SHARED VALUES OF THE MARINES TO OUR LEFT AND TO OUR RIGHT. WE KNOW WHO WE ARE...WE KNOW WHAT WE STAND FOR. AS EVER WE WILL STRIVE TO BE FOUND WORTHY OF THE LEGENDARY TRUST OF OUR FELLOW AMERICANS.

5. I SALUTE THE ENDURING FAITHFULNESS OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE, OF THOSE WHO WEAR OUR CLOTH TODAY, AND OF THE FAMILIES WHO STAND SO RESOLUTELY AT OUR SIDES. HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARINES...AND SEMPER FIDELIS. JAMES F. AMOS, GENERAL, U.S. MARINE CORPS, COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS.//

Posted 10th November 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [2012 marine corps birthday message 237](#) [237th birthday commandant corps](#) [marine corps marines message military USMC](#)

## **Never Stop Being Thankful**

*November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012*

*Under the covers with a pen, Marine Corps stationary, and a moonbeam (flashlight), 2AM, Thanksgiving Day @ Parris Island:*

*"Well, Thanksgiving is when I wake up and my Drill Instructor said that we'll be thanking him with sweat all day. Oh boy, I can't wait. I thank God for you. There are so many people in the world, God could have put us with any one. He didn't. He put you and I together for a purpose. I thank Him always for that. I also want you to know that some days are actually okay here. Anyway, I'm afraid I have to go. I'd better get some sleep or I'll be dead tomorrow (today)."*

I still remember. I always said that I would. I remember the Thanksgivings and Christmases and New Years and birthdays and Valentine's Days away from home. I remember the ones where we were together and broke and fighting. I always said there would be better days... holidays together, holidays with food...

But I still remember the hard times. They have made me extremely grateful. Extremely thankful to God for the life and health and happiness of my amazing family... my wife and kids, my parents, sister, brother-in-law, nephew & neices, Petra's parents and brothers & sister & nephew & neices, my mom's parents and dad's mom, and all of our amazing aunts and uncles and cousins and adoptive friends-turned-family to the nth degree. Thankful for longtime friends, and for new friends, and for a great job with a great company where I am surrounded by great people in a jerk-free environment!

Right now, I'm sitting on the couch surrounded by bundles of love. Caleb set up his train, the Pennsylvania Flyer, and Josh is checking out music online. The girls are playing Barbies. Momma's cooking. Baby's sleeping in the rocker--one of those fancy-shmancy new sideways rocker things. The Macy's Day Parade is playing on our big fat TV, and we're all half watching it. Thank You Lord for what we have, and for what we do not have. I will never stop thanking You for the many trials you have brought me through as a person, and have brought us through as a family. You get all the glory.

--MJ

Posted 22nd November 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [2012](#) [grateful](#) [honestly](#) [real](#) [stories](#) [story](#) [thankful](#) [thankful](#) [heart](#) [thanks](#) [thanksgiving](#) [truly](#) [thankful](#)

[Latest Painting: Chateau de Chambord](#)



*Chateau de Chambord*

Size: 20" x 24"

Material: Stretched canvas

Medium: Acrylic

Posted 22nd November 2012 by [mj](#)

## [Thanksgiving at Parris Island](#)

Holidays away suck. Here are excerpts from mine and Petra's letters to each other when I was in boot camp.

Me to Petra: "Hey Beebs, it's Thanksgiving. Nothing special here, just another day. They did, however, let us watch the end of the Detroit / Kansas City game. We have to get shots again tomorrow... "Hormone Immunization." They are the ones in big airguns [autoinjectors] that hurt and make you bleed. They're supposed to take your mind off sex completely for 2 weeks... ...the old shots apparently wore off."

Petra to me: "Dearest Husband, Happy Thanksgiving. I hope you got my card. I miss you to death! I really miss you! It's so hard without you." "I'm feeling terrible so many times like right now cause you are not here. Baby I can't be without you. I need you so bad. I'm so in love with you. I miss you. I can't take it any more. I need you home with me, in my bed, in my arms. I'm crying so hard so many times (like right now). I know I have to be strong..."

See also [Christmas at Parris Island I](#), [Christmas at Parris Island II](#), or [Christmas at Parris Island III](#)

Posted 22nd November 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [Christmas](#) [holiday](#) [holidays at parris island](#) [parris island](#) [thanksgiving at parris island](#)

## Night Before Christmas, Rig 315

*November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

'Twas the night before Christmas, Mighty Rig Three-Fifteen  
And the coldest dang night that the rig'd ever seen.  
The Driller stood chilled with a knock in his knees;  
The Derrickman had ice on his thick FRC's.

This particular crew comprised salt-weathered codgers,  
Especially their leader... old head Reggie Rogers.  
The daylights were cuddled all snug in their beds  
While visions of bonus checks danced in their heads.

Right then on the radio, there arose such a chatter,  
Reggie creaked out of bed to see what was the matter.  
He then keyed his mic, "Hey, what's all that racket?"  
"The big man's here, Reggie! And he brought you a jacket!"

He looked out his window, then he heard himself say,  
"Odd time for a visit from ol' Henry May!"  
"It's Santa!" said Olah. "That's all?" Reggie said--  
"I thought it was Henry. I'm goin' back to bed."

Then a deer stuck his tongue to the skid, and was bleat'n...'  
"Dang it Blitzen! I told you, that salt ain't for eatin'!"  
From his big shiny sleigh, Santa emptied his bag,  
And the crew gathered 'round for some great North Pole swag!

"Where's your Motorman?" "Here, Sir!" "These cluttered my shelves..."  
Then he unveiled three spankin' CAT Thirty-Five Twelves!  
Then a Catwalk! New ladders! And some boots, gloves, and hoodies!  
Heck, Jolly Saint Nick dished out all kinds of goodies!

Then he hitched up his reindeer, and he said something spiffy,  
And then--just like that--he was gone in a jiffy.  
Reggie yelled out the door, "Hey Hand, where's my jacket?!"

"And hey, somebody scrape up that deer poop, and sack it."

Then he walked back inside, and said "Well, looky there..."

At an embroidered Carhart, neatly draped on his chair.

Reggie smiled at the note that came with it. It read:

"Merry Christmas, Old Hand. Sharp Rig." --signed, '*Big Red.*'

See also: [Night Before Christmas, Rig 622](#)

[Night Before Christmas, Alaska Marines](#)

[Night Before Christmas, NOV](#)

Posted 24th November 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [appalachian](#) [Christmas](#) [drilling rig](#) [holiday](#) [holidays](#) [marcellus](#) [night before christmas](#) [pa](#) [Patterson](#) [patterson-uti](#) [pennsylvania](#) [pten](#) [rig](#) [rig 315](#)

## **The Visitors**

*November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

In 2008 our lives came to a screeching halt. The post-Marine Corps construction work was going well, when a big builder I subcontracted for--feeling the strain of the real estate crash--declared bankruptcy and stiffed me \$40K. So I went into deficit, working for free to backpay the laborers for those last couple jobs, and to repay the General Manager of 84 Lumber (Greg) for the 'good-ol-boy' handshake credit he'd extended me.

Already struggling, the situation forced a Chapter 11 bankruptcy and cost us our own house--a little ranch home on a cul-de-sac in the Deep Creek neighborhood of Chesapeake, Virginia. So we did something that we hadn't done since Pensacola, twelve years earlier... we got an apartment. The timing in conjunction with the forthcoming holidays was less than optimal, and what was worse, there was no work.

I made hundreds of flyers and went door-to-door, house-to-house, neighborhood-to-neighborhood. "Handy man... general construction laborer... proficient in plumbing, electrical, roofing, concrete, brick work, windows, doors, cabinets & finish carpentry, LP gas systems, drywall, plaster, decks,



fountains, landscaping, hardscaping..." Everything except painting. I hate painting. "Will beat any reasonable professional quote." A couple days of doing this, and I didn't have the gas in my vehicle to put out another flyer, let alone follow up on a work opportunity. We prayed and prayed. I sent resumes and applied to big and small job postings around the world.

Larry Hayes, my partner in many an opportune construction venture, had a cousin that worked in Smithfield at a meat processing plant. He drove an hour and a half from Franklin to Chesapeake, just to bring us some meat and canned goods and milk and bread to get us through the next week or so. That's when everything closed in. It was the day before Christmas Eve, and Josh was upset because I told him we weren't having a Christmas. Caleb asked momma for Ramen noodles (his favorite still today), and she snipped at him. "We don't have any food, son!! No cereal, no canned food, not even Ramen noodles!" That's when she started crying, triggering a chain reaction with Caleb and little Lily. We had no money, no job, no tree, no presents, no food... not even a twenty-seven cent packet of Top Ramen.

That evening, someone knocked at the door. It was... my sister? She & her family lived in Charleston, SC at the time... some eight-to-ten hours away. What an embarrassing time for a visit from Renee... and Jared... and the kids... and half their church?!! It was their prayer group... and my parents were there as well! They all decided to make the drive all the way to see us and bless our socks off! They brought a tree, and presents, and money, and food enough to choke on! We've always been givers, but had never been on the receiving end. A lot of tears, laughing, smiling, and more crying.

I will never forget what that day felt like. I will never forget the faces of those involved. As a reminder, a photo of this group hangs proudly on our wall today.

Posted 25th November 2012 by [mj](#) Labels: [Christmas](#) [christmas miracle](#) [heiko](#) [jared thomas](#) [matty speights](#) [miracle stories](#) [renee thomas](#) [south carolina](#) [starving](#) [virginia](#)

## Christian Money Dude

November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012

My buddy Hoss was talking to me at work today, about some great Christ-based money management program or system developed by some guy somewhere that really works... and helps you discipline yourself to become debt free and budget better and build wealth, etc.

So tonight I was telling Petra all about it, probably butchering the details... it was developed by, um... by... some guy... I decided to Google it.

"christian budgeting program"

"biblical money management"

"debt management for christians"

"biblical debt management system"

I must have tried fifteen different searches. Millions and millions of results, none of which pointed me anywhere near recognizing the name of the guy with the big Bible-based plan for money management. Then, as if hit with an *Arabian Nights* password combination epiphany, I stroked the following keys on the keypad of my laptop:

"christian money dude"

Ah, there he is. First result listed!!! Dave Ramsey. About to check his site out now. That was funny.

Posted 26th November 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [biblical money guy](#) [christian money dude](#) [christian money guy](#) [dave ramsey](#) [financial man](#)

## Frustrations of Corporate Politics: The Turnover Myth

December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

"People don't leave companies," I've been told. "People leave people." We're talking turnover, that is, employee attrition and retention, and the quoted statement is the basis for a widespread set of beliefs on the subject across modern corporations in America. The gist is that 'we, the company' are not the problem... "It's You. The manager."

Well here's a little truth for you, and I hope you have a Big Gulp nearby because it's a horse-pill. Just because a saying is catchy, because it rhymes, or because it was coined by somebody famous or successful, doesn't make it (1) applicable, (2) current, (3) ethical, (4) feasible, (5) accurate, (6) legal, (7) correct... *need I go on?* Fact of the matter is, many companies are filled with great leaders... much to their organization's credit. In the same sentence, many of these companies have lost and continue to lose a hefty share of their brightest talent.

People leave companies, too. Companies can overanalyze, micromanage, confuse, mislead, misdirect, complicate, and demoralize. They can underpay, overburden, and overstress their employees, fail to offer incentives or formal recognition, fail to progress or produce qualitative / quantitative results, set bad examples as a corporation and overall 'miss the mark' while achieving other amazing accolades.

Oftentimes, the only defense a company has against attrition **IS** its people. People neglect to leave companies because of good people. And to keep from losing these valuable ambassadors, caretakers, and stakeholders, corporations need to humble themselves and model the best practices of their peoplekeepers on every level.

Posted 18th December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [attrition](#) [leadership](#) [development](#) [people don't leave](#) [people leave](#) [people](#) [retention](#) [turnover](#)

## [Princess Momma and the Prince Shirt](#)

December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

"Daddy..." I'm downstairs yesterday, doing a quick load of laundry before heading to State College for a company 'Operational Excellence Meeting.' Ayla likes it when we do laundry, because she gets to wander into my adjacent man room, filled to the brim with medals and trophies and dead things and unique trinkets. "Daddy..." "Yes, Ma'am?" "Daddy is that your prince shirt?" "My what, Baby?" "Your prince shirt on that wall over there." *Oh, she must mean my Marine dress blue jacket, which partially covers the neatly hung military uniforms of my fathers. I guess it does look like something a Disney or Barbie movie prince would wear, with its stiff-necked collar and all those shiny decorations. How cute!* "Yes Babydoll, that's daddy's prince shirt."

"Did you used to wear that and dance with Mommy at the ball back when she was a princess?" *I don't know why they say grown men don't cry.* "I sure did, sweetie. We sure did. And someday hopefully you will too!" Ayla smiled, her eyes twinkling. That Marine had better treat her right, 'cause I don't think she'll want to dance with a man in any other prince shirt.

Posted 18th December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [a day in the life](#) [dress blue jacket](#) [marine dress blues](#) [prince attire](#) [prince jacket](#) [prince shirt](#)

## Those Marvelous Mayans

December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012



When he was alive, grandpa collected all sorts of stuff... least of which may have been this belt buckle, which I've held on to for the last couple years. Until all the hubbub and hype of tonight--being that it's the end of the world and all that--I may have never discovered that this hunk of brass was fashioned as a Mayan Calendar.

So here's what I want to know: The Mayans were something brilliant, right? They were artists, architects, social survivalists and oh, wait--scratch that last attribute of their society. Look, my three-year-old can scratch out the same type of ooga-booga pictographs that exist on the Mayan calendar. That doesn't make her an accurate apocalyptic forecaster.

Nonetheless, since it may have been our last meal as a family, we over-indulged at Taco Bell tonight around Midnight--discovering, I might add, the first sign of the end of the world... *The Bell* ran out of ice for drinks. Crappy Mayans. How can they be so smart as to foresee the existence-altering alignment of planets and stars, detailed on a map so serious that it has a guy sticking his tongue out in the middle of it, and yet so dumb as to instantly cease to exist--along with all their people. Besides, they really picked a wierd day for the world to end. Why not on a Monday? Give us the weekend, for cryin' out loud! And why so close to Christmas? I digress. See you all tomorrow when the world and its people continue to exist... life as normal.

Posted 21st December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [maya](#) [mayan](#) [mayan calendar](#) [mayans are stupid](#) [photo of mayan calendar](#)

## [Air & Opportunity, Part I: Apple through IBM](#)

December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012

### AIR & OPPORTUNITY

#### The Pursuit of High Corporate Excellence

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*Synopses of 2012's Fortune 50 Companies, and What Makes Them Great*

#### Part I: Apple through IBM

By MJ

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#### INTRODUCTION

Innovation in the Age of Technology is compounding by the nanosecond. In the time it takes you to finish this sentence, someone will have built a better mousetrap, coined a new slogan, started a company, made their first million, hired their hundred thousandth employee, signed a multi-billion dollar merger, and rocked Wall Street. Our lives are changed by technological advances every night while we sleep, and the speed and intensity of change is immeasurable. Your brand new cutting-edge smart phone is outsmarted and outdated the instant you swipe your Visa at The Verizon Store.

So how do we insert ourselves and our companies into the technological jet stream? And how do we ensure our sustainability? Our continuity? Our [insert 'power word' of the week here]? What does it take to sit at the table of success... and stay there? We can't just be the best. That's so 80's. We can't just be better than the best... because that's what every other entity is trying to be in 2020. In my company, we have a slogan: to become "the best there ever will be."

Oh, is that all? The best there ever will be? That sounds simple enough. Until you take it seriously. Let's face it, the odds are weighed heavily against anyone who attempts to be the best there ever will be; pursuing a goal with such fierce audacity skirts the knife's edge of one of two certain outcomes... high excellence or overwhelmingly devastating failure. To become 'the best there ever will be,' one would have to sacrifice everything... lay it all on the line, all cards on the table. There will be insurmountable obstacles which can only—by any thread of the imagination—be surpassed by assuming many incredible risks along the way.

Risk aversion—to hock another power phrase—will not get us there. Omelets aren't made without breaking eggs. Risk management will, so long as the pool of risk managers is not controlled by a stagnating few. There is power in the corporate mind of many. Truth is, in order to be the best there ever will be, you have to fight the battle of innovation—and all its inherent risks—with more innovation. No person, no company, no society will EVER attain that goal without tapping the rootstock of innovation... PEOPLE.

A company may have a great leader, and it will be great. To be the best, a company must have many great leaders. To be the best there ever will be, a company must realize its absolute potential by empowering every one of its people to be leaders, managers, ambassadors and stakeholders in the company's success. Only in this, the purest state of corporate democracy, will innovation flourish; every employee must BE THE COMPANY. When you win the people, you win the war.

In the pages that follow, you will see the models of what makes a company great, straight from the source, exactly as you would find poring over the websites of today's Fortune 50 companies. All of these companies are great. Many are, by all accounts, the best of the best... the best there ever was. Only time, technology, and providence will tell if the elite few of those listed will be 'the best there ever will be.'

The founding fathers of this great nation declared each citizen's equality and independence as self-evident endowments of our Creator. Walking boldly in this inherited blessing of air and opportunity, coupled with the unique

technological research advantage of our time, we can learn from the mistakes of others with enhanced clarity and adopt the best practices of the best companies in the world. If we glean this data, chew up the meat and spit out the bones, we can be the best of the best. Finally, if we exercise a little diligence, persistence, patience, and wisdom, we can meet even the most farfetched individual or corporate goals... holding the keys to the gates of the best there ever will be.

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## 1. Apple

Apple was incorporated in California on January 3, 1977. Apples Board of Directors is comprised of executives from JC Crew, Genentech, the Walt Disney Company, Avon, Intuit, Northrop Grumman; and notably Al Gore, former Vice President of the United States. Like many Fortune 500 companies, Apple is fiscally audited by Ernst & Young LLP.

Apple's Mission Statement: Apple designs Macs, the best personal computers in the world, along with OS X, iLife, iWork and professional software. Apple leads the digital music revolution with its iPods and iTunes online store. Apple has reinvented the mobile phone with its revolutionary iPhone and App Store, and is defining the future of mobile media and computing devices with iPad.

Here's how they do it:

"Every detail matters. Every piece of packaging. Every swipe of the finger. Every "How can I help you?" Everything. And it doesn't matter just some of the time. It matters all of the time. That's how we do things at Apple. The result is some of the best-loved products in the world."

"Simplicity isn't simple. Ask anyone here. It's hard work. It means forever asking, "Why is it this way?" and "How can it be better?" It means rethinking every customer experience until the clutter has fallen away — until all that remains is what's essential, useful, and beautiful. That might be a new product



feature that delights even die-hard fans. It might be a customer support call, or even a display in an Apple store, arranged and lit exactly so.”

“Creativity from every corner. When you imagine the creative process at Apple, at first you may not picture someone in HR. Or operations. Or finance. But we expect creative thinking and solutions from everyone here, no matter what their responsibilities are. Innovation takes many forms, and our people seem to find new ones every day.”\*

1[\*] *Frequently Asked Questions, and Jobs at Apple*; [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com), Nov 2012

## 2. Google

In perusing Google’s website, two sections stand out that explain why it is one of the greatest companies in the world, quoted verbatim below.

“Our Culture -- It’s really the people that make Google the kind of company it is. We hire people who are smart and determined, and we favor ability over experience. Although Googlers share common goals and visions for the company, we hail from all walks of life and speak dozens of languages, reflecting the global audience that we serve. And when not at work, Googlers pursue interests ranging from cycling to beekeeping, from frisbee to foxtrot.”

“We strive to maintain the open culture often associated with startups, in which everyone is a hands-on contributor and feels comfortable sharing ideas and opinions. In our weekly all-hands (“TGIF”) meetings—not to mention over email or in the cafe—Googlers ask questions directly to Larry, Sergey and other execs about any number of company issues. Our offices and cafes are designed to encourage interactions between Googlers within and across teams, and to spark conversation about work as well as play.”

“Ten things we know to be true -- We first wrote these “10 things” when Google was just a few years old. From time to time we revisit this list to see if it still holds true. We hope it does—and you can hold us to that.”

1. Focus on the user and all else will follow.
2. It's best to do one thing really, really well.
3. Fast is better than slow.
4. Democracy [on the web] works.

“Innovation takes place through the collective effort of many”

5. You don't need to be at your desk to need an answer.
6. You can make money without doing evil.
7. There's always more information out there.
8. The need for information crosses all borders.
9. You can be serious without a suit.
10. Great just isn't good enough.

“We see being great at something as a starting point, not an endpoint. We set ourselves goals we know we can't reach yet, because we know that by stretching to meet them we can get further than we expected. Through innovation and iteration, we aim to take things that work well and improve upon them in unexpected ways. For example, when one of our engineers saw that search worked well for properly spelled words, he wondered about how it handled typos. That led him to create an intuitive and more helpful spell checker.

Even if you don't know exactly what you're looking for, finding an answer on the web is our problem, not yours. We try to anticipate needs not yet articulated by our global audience, and meet them with products and services that set new standards. When we launched Gmail, it had more storage space than any email service available. In retrospect offering that seems obvious—but that's because now we have new standards for email storage. Those are the kinds of changes we seek to make, and we're always looking for new places where we can make a difference. Ultimately, our constant

dissatisfaction with the way things are becomes the driving force behind everything we do.”\*

1[\*] *Company*, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), November 2012

### **3. Amazon.com**

Amazon, headquartered in Seattle, was incorporated in July 1994. One year later, the company sold its first book. In 1997 the company went public. By the end of 2011, Amazon employed approximately 56,200 personnel. In an October 25, 2012 Press Release, Amazon announced a 27% increase in third quarter sales, totaling \$13.81B. In a web statement updated in July 2012, Amazon.com attributes its company’s success to the following:

“Amazon's evolution from Web site to e-commerce partner to development platform is driven by the spirit of innovation that is part of the company's DNA. The world's brightest technology minds come to Amazon.com to research and develop technology that improves the lives of shoppers, sellers and developers around the world.”\*

1[\*] *2011 Annual Report*, p.11, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### **4. Coca-Cola**

On its corporate webpage today, The Coca-Cola Company proudly boasts its year-to-date achievements: 146,200 worldwide employees, more than 3,500 beverages, and fifty years of consecutively progressive dividends across its 200+ country theater. One statement on their homepage stands out above all others: “Innovation drives our growth.”

Now, for a 126-year-old company, you might think that their people are driven according to the slow, steady growth mentality of a wise old sage. But you’d be surprised at their core values. In a world of corporate safety consciousness, driven largely by OSHA Recordable Incident Rates, Coca-

Cola encourages the safety-converse taboos of “taking risks” and “acting with urgency.” I interpret this to mean that Coca-Cola wants their employees to possess curiosity, drive and ambition.

Coca-Cola lays out their secret to success in their Mission, Vision, & Values statement, posted verbatim as follows:

The world is changing all around us. To continue to thrive as a business over the next ten years and beyond, we must look ahead, understand the trends and forces that will shape our business in the future and move swiftly to prepare for what's to come. We must get ready for tomorrow today. That's what our 2020 Vision is all about. It creates a long-term destination for our business and provides us with a "Roadmap" for winning together with our bottling partners.

### ***Our Mission***

Our Roadmap starts with our mission, which is enduring. It declares our purpose as a company and serves as the standard against which we weigh our actions and decisions.

- To refresh the world...
- To inspire moments of optimism and happiness...
- To create value and make a difference.

### ***Our Vision***

Our vision serves as the framework for our Roadmap and guides every aspect of our business by describing what we need to accomplish in order to continue achieving sustainable, quality growth.

- People: Be a great place to work where people are inspired to be the best they can be.
- Portfolio: Bring to the world a portfolio of quality beverage brands that anticipate and satisfy people's desires and needs.

- Partners: Nurture a winning network of customers and suppliers, together we create mutual, enduring value.
- Planet: Be a responsible citizen that makes a difference by helping build and support sustainable communities.
- Profit: Maximize long-term return to shareowners while being mindful of our overall responsibilities.
- Productivity: Be a highly effective, lean and fast-moving organization.

### ***Our Winning Culture***

Our Winning Culture defines the attitudes and behaviors that will be required of us to make our 2020 Vision a reality.

### ***Live Our Values***

Our values serve as a compass for our actions and describe how we behave in the world.

- Leadership: The courage to shape a better future
- Collaboration: Leverage collective genius
- Integrity: Be real
- Accountability: If it is to be, it's up to me
- Passion: Committed in heart and mind
- Diversity: As inclusive as our brands
- Quality: What we do, we do well

### ***Focus on the Market***

- Focus on needs of our consumers, customers and franchise partners

- Get out into the market and listen, observe and learn
- Possess a world view
- Focus on execution in the marketplace every day
- Be insatiably curious

### ***Work Smart***

- Act with urgency
- Remain responsive to change
- Have the courage to change course when needed
- Remain constructively discontent
- Work efficiently

### ***Act Like Owners***

- Be accountable for our actions and inactions
- Steward system assets and focus on building value
- Reward our people for taking risks and finding better ways to solve problems
- Learn from our outcomes -- what worked and what didn't

### ***Be the Brand***

- Inspire creativity, passion, optimism and fun\*

[\*] Coca-Cola Journey Homepage, [www.coca-colacompany.com](http://www.coca-colacompany.com), November 2011

## **5. IBM**

Celebrating a centennial of positive global impact, IBM's website highlights their promotion of employee volunteerism and service, worldwide leaders' think-tank forums, and future-shaping ideas across the board. As a company, IBM leads the pack in social responsibility.

"IBM believes that a company culture based on core values not only helps our business, but also defines the role that we can and should play in society."

We identify and act upon new opportunities to apply our technology and expertise to societal problems.

We scale our existing programs and initiatives to achieve maximum benefit.

We empower our employees and others to serve their communities.

We integrate corporate citizenship and social responsibility into every aspect of our company.

### ***Corporate citizenship***

IBM has developed a thoughtful, comprehensive approach to corporate citizenship that we believe aligns with IBM's values and maximizes the impact we can make as a global enterprise. We focus on specific societal issues, including the environment, community economic development, education, health, literacy, language and culture.

### ***Environment***

IBM is committed to environmental leadership in all of our business activities. Our global environmental management system ensures the company is vigilant in protecting the environment across all of its operations worldwide.

## ***Supply chain***

IBM spends \$36.5 billion a year with our global suppliers, inclusive of \$3.2 billion a year with diverse suppliers. IBM is committed to holding ourselves—and our suppliers—to high standards in all our business dealings.

## ***Employee well-being and diversity***

Employee well-being is incorporated in every aspect of IBM's global business, from our strategic and business planning to our operations. IBM also has a longstanding commitment to diversity and considers it a competitive advantage in serving clients.

IBM has long understood that investing in prevention and well-being makes sense for both its employees and its business. IBM's goal of building and maintaining a healthy global workforce is contingent upon the personal health and resilience of our employees. IBMers who are healthy, mentally resilient and physically fit tend to experience better quality of life and higher personal productivity, and those who discover health problems early tend to get well faster and spend less on medical care.

"IBM strives to provide a "culture of health" that assumes healthy living as a company norm, where employees are encouraged and supported to maintain healthy behaviors and be smart healthcare consumers. This culture of health is critical to our competitiveness and leadership, and relies on the commitment of every IBM employee."

--Martín J. Sepúlveda, M.D. FACP, IBM Fellow, Vice President

Integrated Health Services

Other responsibility-related areas at IBM

IBM pursues the highest standards of social responsibility throughout our company— from how we support and empower employees, to how we work with our clients, to how we govern the corporation.\*

1[\*] [www.ibm.com](http://www.ibm.com), 'Solutions' tab, November 2012



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Posted 21st December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [amazon](#) [apple](#) [best companies](#) [coca-cola](#) [fortune 100](#) [fortune 50](#) [fortune 500](#) [google](#) [IBM](#) [leadership development](#) [patterson-uti](#) [synopses](#) [synopsis](#)

## **[Air & Opportunity, Part II: FedEx through SouthWest Airlines](#)**

### **A I R & O P P O R T U N I T Y**

#### **The Pursuit of High Corporate Excellence**

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*Synopses of 2012's Fortune 50 Companies, and What Makes Them Great*

Part II: FedEx through SouthWest Airlines

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#### **6. FedEx**

FedEx Corporation stands out among its Fortune 50 peers with a very succinct vision and correlating road map:

##### **Mission**

FedEx Corporation will produce superior financial returns for its shareowners by providing high value-added logistics, transportation and related business services through focused operating companies. Customer requirements will

be met in the highest quality manner appropriate to each market segment served. FedEx will strive to develop mutually rewarding relationships with its employees, partners and suppliers. Safety will be the first consideration in all operations. Corporate activities will be conducted to the highest ethical and professional standards.

## **Strategy**

The unique FedEx operating strategy works seamlessly - and simultaneously - on three levels.

**Compete collectively** by standing as one brand worldwide and speaking with one voice.

**Operate independently** by focusing on our independent networks to meet distinct customer needs.

**Manage collaboratively** by working together to sustain loyal relationships with our workforce, customers and investors.

## **Values**

**People:** We value our people and promote diversity in our workplace and in our thinking.

**Service:** Our absolutely, positively spirit puts our customers at the heart of everything we do.

**Innovation:** We invent and inspire the services and technologies that improve the way we work and live.

**Integrity:** We manage our operations, finances and services with honesty, efficiency and reliability.

**Responsibility:** We champion safe and healthy environments for the communities in which we live and work.

**Loyalty:** We earn the respect and confidence of our FedEx people, customers and investors every day, in everything we do.

FedEx further recognizes their people as the driving force behind the company's success:

“Our people are the foundation of our success and the key to our future. FedEx provides a safe, diverse and rewarding environment where our people have opportunities to grow and succeed.”

### **Diversity**

FedEx was founded on a people-first philosophy, where respect for all people is a fundamental value and everyday business practice.

### **Culture of Safety**

FedEx is dedicated to continuously improving our safe work practices. We actively promote and support a culture of health and safety for the benefit of our employees, contractors and stakeholders, and the company and the public.

### **Recognition Programs**

At FedEx, we believe our success depends upon the dedication of our people. We have developed recognition programs that celebrate the achievements of our people and their commitment to delivering on the values of the company.<sup>1</sup>[\[1\]](#)

## **7. Berkshire Hathaway**

Berkshire Hathaway, parent company of GEICO, Borsheim's, and Berkshire Hathaway Life Insurance Company of Nebraska, is presided over by CEO Warren Buffett... the greatest investor of all time. Instead of listing the core values, strategies, or winning secrets of these distinctly different companies

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<sup>1</sup>[\[1\]](#) *About FedEx*, FedEx.com, November 2012

under the 'BRK.B' umbrella, I would like to share five quotes from the aforementioned 82-year-old sage with the self-deprecating humor that earned him the title, "the billionaire next door."<sup>2</sup><sup>[2]</sup>

1. "Rule # 1: Never lose money. Rule # 2: Don't forget Rule # 1."<sup>3</sup><sup>[3]</sup>
2. "Investors should remember that excitement and expenses are their enemies. And if they insist on trying to time their participation in equities, they should try to be fearful when others are greedy and greedy only when others are fearful."<sup>4</sup><sup>[4]</sup>
3. "Time is the friend of the wonderful business, the enemy of the mediocre."<sup>5</sup><sup>[5]</sup>
4. "It's far better to buy a wonderful company at a fair price than a fair company at a wonderful price."<sup>6</sup><sup>[6]</sup>
5. "Our approach is very much profiting from lack of change rather than from change. With Wrigley chewing gum, it's the lack of change that appeals to me. I don't think it is going to be hurt by the Internet. That's the kind of business I like."<sup>7</sup><sup>[7]</sup>

## 8. Starbucks

Starbucks began in 1971 with a solitary tea and coffee shop, nestled in Seattle's historic Pike Place Market. Today there are over 17,000 Starbucks stores across 55 countries. Presided over by the President and founder, CEO Howard Schultz, Starbucks' eclectic board ranges from a former Secretary of

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<sup>2</sup><sup>[2]</sup> Warren Buffett's 18 Best Quotes, *Business Insider*, August 30, 2012

<sup>3</sup><sup>[3]</sup> Source: *The Tao of Warren Buffett*

<sup>4</sup><sup>[4]</sup> Source: *Letter to Shareholders, 2004*

<sup>5</sup><sup>[5]</sup> Source: *Letter to Shareholders, 1989*

<sup>6</sup><sup>[6]</sup> Source: *Letter to Shareholders, 1989*

<sup>7</sup><sup>[7]</sup> Source: *Businessweek*, 1999

Defense to executives from PepsiCo, Colgate-Palmolive, and J.C. Penney, among other notable corporations and investment groups.

Starbucks' Mission: To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.

“Aside from extraordinary coffee, Starbucks has made a business out of human connections, community involvement and the celebration of cultures. We're committed to upholding a culture where diversity is valued and respected. So it's only natural that as a guiding principle, diversity is integral to everything we do.”

At Starbucks we define Diversity in the form of an equation.

Diversity = Inclusion + Equity + Accessibility

**Inclusion:** human connection & engagement

**Equity:** fairness & justice

**Accessibility:** ease of use & barrier free

“Our company-wide diversity strategy focuses on four areas: partners, customers, suppliers and communities.” 8[8]

Democracy in action: one of the key discriminators in Starbucks approach to cutting-edge innovation is their customer-driven idea machine (<http://mystarbucksidea.force.com>). Through this portal, virtually anyone who feels inspired can submit an idea to Starbucks, where it then runs the gauntlet of comments and votes to accrue points toward the Top 10 ideas on a rolling web board. These ideas are further assessed by Starbucks for potential use across their company, and submission statuses are posted on the company's website. Surprisingly enough, the generated ideas are not only confined to drink flavors, but to topics ranging from processes and business practices to technology, community, culture and motif.

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8[8] *About Us*, Starbucks.com, November 2012

## 9. Proctor& Gamble

This morning, you woke up, brushed your teeth, took a quick shower, devoured your apple and downed your first 8-ounce glass of purified water, fed the dog, changed the baby, wiped up the coffee you spilled on the counter, threw your pointer in the computer bag and headed off to that big meeting you couldn't wait to be done with... and chances are, you used at least one Proctor & Gamble product in the process.

Impressive enough is P&G's well-established foothold on society today. Equally impressive is the deliberate construction of the company's latest document which spells out—in vibrant Technicolor detail—the pillars of Proctor & Gamble's success. It is called [Our Values and Policies](#). I implore you to download it... and while perusing the first seven pages, imagine what a booklet or pamphlet like this could do for your company, with every word and aesthetically pleasing detail being intentionally crafted to exude the quality of your organization. Perception is reality, and at a glance, P&G's reality is resounding excellence.

## 10. Southwest Airlines

There must've been something in the water in 1971. In the same year that spawned Starbucks, America's most customer-friendly airline was incorporated in the great state of Texas. In 1989, surpassing a billion dollars in revenue, Southwest Airlines became a major player in the skies. In 2003 it became the nation's favorite airline, and just last year Southwest acquired AirTran Airways, with 100% integration expected by 2015.

Southwest has achieved many major accolades on its climb to the top, including its prestige as the top employer for transitioning military (several years standing) and as one of the most desirable companies to work for nationwide. A visit to the company's website reveals more than thirty specific commendatory achievements. You don't earn that reputation by accident. Here's a fun fact: Southwest Airlines employs 2,618 personnel who also have spouses working for the company. And another... Southwest is 82% unionized.

“We aspire to make a positive difference in the communities where we fly. To ensure our charitable contributions touch as many lives as possible, we focus our charitable donations and outreach initiatives in five key areas (Families Facing Serious Illness; Military & Their Families; the Environment; Disaster Preparedness; and Youth Leadership) and encourage our Employees to support charities close to their hearts with volunteerism.

Southwest was one of very few companies in the United States to produce an integrated report on the triple bottom line of Performance, People and Planet. The 2011 Southwest Airlines One Report™ can be found at [southwest.com/citizenship](http://southwest.com/citizenship).”<sup>9[9]</sup>

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<sup>9[9]</sup> Fact Sheet, *About Southwest*; Southwest.com, November 2012

## [Air & Opportunity, Part III: McDonald's through General Electric](#)

### A I R & O P P O R T U N I T Y

#### The Pursuit of High Corporate Excellence

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*Synopses of 2012's Fortune 50 Companies, and What Makes Them Great*

#### Part III: McDonald's through General Electric

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### 11. McDonald's

Here's a company that's near and dear to my heart, and even dearer to my stomach. Mickey D's. We've all seen their growing testament to fame and success: "Billions and Billions Served."

Founder Ray Kroc has a saying; perhaps you've heard it.

*"None of us is as good as all of us."*

McDonald's, like other cross-regional or multinational chain restaurants who must uphold their high mark of quality to remain competitive, is presented with an industry-unique challenge: to maintain the balance of freshness and flavor that is unique to their name. For this reason, McDonald's holds one aspect of their business operations in particularly high regard: supplier accountability. I remember when the first McDonald's was opened in Kaiserslautern, Germany in the 80's. Americans came from scores of miles around for their grand opening, only to be disappointed by the fact that all the 'beef' patties were made of soy. The reason, it turns out, is that the local German beef market did not uphold McDonald's high standards of quality.

But this iconic company does not stop at only product accountability. A look inside McDonald's *Code of Conduct for Suppliers* reveals that their vendors



are held to rigid standards of ethics, safety, health, employee compensation, and overall regulatory compliance. The company provides training for third-party entities and conducts periodic audits, among other implemented quality control measures. Essentially, McDonald's sets the bar of excellence so high that only the absolute best can do business with them. McDonald's leaders hold themselves accountable for the practices of their suppliers... for everything their suppliers do or fail to do.

The company's mission is as follows:

"McDonald's brand mission is to be our customers' favorite place and way to eat. Our worldwide operations are aligned around a global strategy called the Plan to Win, which center on an exceptional customer experience – People, Products, Place, Price and Promotion. We are committed to continuously improving our operations and enhancing our customers' experience."

Here are some excerpts from McDonald's *Corporate Values*:

**"We are committed to our people.** We provide opportunity, nurture talent, develop leaders and reward achievement. We believe that a team of well-trained individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences, working together in an environment that fosters respect and drives high levels of engagement, is essential to our continued success."

**"We believe in the McDonald's System.** McDonald's business model, depicted by our "three-legged stool" of owner/operators, suppliers, and company employees, is our foundation, and balancing the interests of all three groups is key."

**"We operate our business ethically.** We are individually accountable and collectively responsible."

**"We give back to our communities. We take seriously the responsibilities that come with being a leader... ..and leverage our size, scope and resources to help make the world a better place."**

**“We grow our business profitably.** McDonald’s is a publicly traded company. As such, we work to provide sustained profitable growth for our shareholders. This requires a continuous focus on our customers and the health of our system.”

**“We strive continually to improve.** We are a learning organization that aims to anticipate and respond to changing customer, employee and system needs *through constant evolution and innovation.*”<sup>10[1]</sup>

## 12. Johnson & Johnson

*“A staple of management and business ethics curriculums, Johnson & Johnson has a long and proud tradition of adhering to its **core values.**”<sup>11[2]</sup>*

Johnson & Johnson’s philosophy is similar to several companies’ that we have explored so far, with one exception. Under the tab on their main website entitled, “Our Commitment,” the company emphasizes a decentralized approach to operations. Delving deeper, here are two other areas of information on this company’s philosophy. Note the weight of importance placed upon Risk Management:

### ***Our Goals***

*The notion of environmental stewardship and corporate citizenship has been embedded into the Johnson & Johnson culture since 1943 when the [Company's Credo](#) was established by its late Chairman Robert Wood Johnson. In 1987, the Company set its first environmental goal aimed at reducing toxic emissions. Over the past two decades, Johnson & Johnson has continued to set and meet a series of long-term targets across a range of environmental impacts – including Pollution Prevention Goals, Next Generation Goals, and its most recently completed [Healthy Planet 2010 Goals](#). The next step in its evolution was to go bolder and broader with*

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<sup>10[1]</sup> *Our Company*, aboutmcdonalds.com, November 2012

<sup>11[2]</sup> *Core Values and the Companies That Do Them Well*, by Allison Canty, via grasshopper.com, April 14, 2010

## [Healthy Future 2015 Goals.](#)

At the heart of [Healthy Future 2015 Goals](#) are 15 of the boldest and broadest sustainability goals we have set to date and extend well beyond environmental stewardship to include an emphasis on improving people's health, increasing corporate transparency and encouraging collaborative partnerships.

### **Risk Management**

Johnson & Johnson recognizes and plans for several categories of risks, including internal and external factors:

#### *Internal*

- *Business strategy*
- *Quality assurance*
- *Supply chain management*
- *Operational efficiency*
- *Environmental health and safety*
- *Reputation*
- *Protection of trade secrets and intellectual property*
- *Business interruption*
- *Challenges inherent in product development*

#### *External*

- *General industry conditions and competition*
- *Economic conditions such as fluctuations in interest rates and currency exchange rates*
- *Technological advances*
- *Competition for talent*
- *Health care reform and cost containment issues*
- *Climate change and related policies*

A comprehensive list and description of risks can be found in Exhibit 99 to the

Company's Annual Report on Form 10-K, available at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov) and [www.investor.jnj.com](http://www.investor.jnj.com).

### Risk Management Responsibilities

*The Company's Board of Directors believes that overseeing how our management manages the various risks our Company faces is one of its most important responsibilities. The Company's enterprise risk management framework reflects a collaborative process, whereby the Board and Company management apply a common risk management approach designed to identify potential events that might affect the Company and to manage the associated risks and opportunities.*

*In carrying out this responsibility, the Board meets at regular intervals with key members of company management with primary responsibility for risk management in their respective areas. The subject matter of these meetings generally falls into the following categories and risk areas:*

- Strategy: Business vitality, strategic planning, talent management, reputation, sustainability, and diversity;*
  
- Reporting: Financial results, finance and accounting, internal audit, independent audit, tax, and treasury;*
  
- Compliance: Law and legal proceedings; legislative and regulatory environment; health care compliance; anti-corruption; environment, health and safety; privacy; quality; and product safety and scientific issues, and;*
  
- Operations: Supply chain (including manufacturing and business continuity planning), security (including security of products, sites, personnel and information), and research and development.*

The Board also receives regular reports on aspects of the Company's risk management from the Company's independent auditor.

In addition, the Audit Committee of the Board meets in private sessions with the Chief Financial Officer, General Counsel, Chief Compliance Officer, Vice President of Corporate Internal Audit, and representatives of the Company's independent auditor at the conclusion of every regularly-scheduled Audit Committee meeting where aspects of risk management are discussed.

The Board believes that, in light of the interrelated nature of the Company's risks, oversight of risk management is ultimately the responsibility of the full Board.

### Compliance-Related Risks

The Chief Compliance Officer chairs the Johnson & Johnson Compliance Committee, whose members include Compliance Officers for our business sectors as well as the leaders or designees of other key company functions, including Internal Audit, Law, Worldwide Security, Human Resources, Operations, Quality and Environment, Health & Safety.

The Compliance Committee reviews many forms of risk as well as our programs in the areas of healthcare compliance, government contracting, anticorruption, privacy legislation, quality, environmental health and safety and regulatory compliance. The sector Compliance Officers ensure that processes and monitoring are in place at the subsidiary and sector level to assess risk, monitor program results and ensure that corrective actions are ongoing. They are also responsible for an annual update of the risk assessment for their sector.

### Reputation Risk

Reputational risk is overseen by the corporate communications function, with representatives from the function in each of the sectors and operating companies, as well as the Law Department.

### Financial Risk

Financial risk, including casualty risk, is overseen by the corporate finance function, including Treasury, the Controller, and Internal Audit, together with finance officers of our business sectors and operating companies.

### Other Forms of Risk

Operational and regulatory risks are assessed and managed by the business sectors and individual operating companies.

### Identifying Risk

Johnson & Johnson uses a variety of management tools to identify risk and measure exposure, including the Mission Assurance Analysis Protocol (MAAP), which is specifically designed for decentralized organizations. We also maintain a database containing current information on risks and risk mitigation and reduction programs. In addition, face-to-face reviews are held to identify, mitigate and reduce risk through appropriate action.

### Risk Mitigation

Risks are mitigated down to the manufacturing plant and department level using management planning tools such as the Corrective Action Preventive Action (CAPA) tool.

The Company's worldwide business continuity planning process addresses emergency response, incident management and operations recovery. Business continuity plans are regularly updated and tested. Tabletop exercises are conducted to confirm site managers understand the plan and can execute it if faced with an incident that could severely impact business continuity.

Johnson & Johnson purchases insurance against risks where coverage is available and the cost is economically sensible. Examples include first party property risks, third party risks such as aviation liability, automobile liability, general liability and clinical trials, and risks involving directors & officers.

## **13. Walt Disney**

Like many dreamers, I have a deep personal affinity for the quotes of Mr. Disney, and for the quotes, ideas, concepts, and overall aura that surround the fruits of the seed he planted in this country and the world. Disney was, is

currently, and will continue to be, a driving force of innovation, invention, determination, and progress the world around. For this company's report, we'll let the dispensation of these quotes abound—for within them lies the heart of an extraordinary company... and the man behind it all.

“A dream is a wish your heart makes, when you're fast asleep... ..no matter how your heart is grieving, if you keep on believing, the dream that you wish will come true.” -- Cinderella

“It's kind of fun to do the impossible.” --Walt Disney

“Always let your conscious be your guide.” -- Jiminy Cricket

“Hakuna Matata” -- Timone

“Ohana means family. Family means nobody gets left behind... or forgotten.”  
-- Lilo

“Everything in the forest has its season. Where one thing falls, another grows.” -- Bambi's mom

“Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it, they will want to come back and see you do it again, and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do.” -- Walt Disney

“I have been up against tough competition my whole life. I wouldn't know how to get along without it.” -- Walt Disney

“I want adventure in the great wide somewhere... I want it more than I can tell... and for once it might be grand, to have someone understand... I want so much more than they've got planned.” -- Belle

“Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world.” -- Walt Disney

“You can design and create, and build the most wonderful place in the world... but it takes people to make the dream a reality.” -- Walt Disney

“Reach for the sky!!!” -- Woody

“The very things that hold you down are going to lift you up!” -- Timothy Mouse

“There is more treasure in books than in all the pirates’ loot on Treasure Island!” -- Walt Disney

“All the adversity I’ve had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles, have strengthened me... You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you.” -- Walt Disney

“Around here, however, we don’t look backwards for very long. We **keep moving forward**, opening new doors and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”

#### 14. BMW

The BMW Group outlook is short and sweet.

“As the leading supplier of premium brands and premium services, the BMW Group offers its customers a unique experience of individual mobility.

The company regards society's demand for future mobility as an obligation. It is what our products and services stand for. They contribute to society as a whole.

At the BMW Group, a long-term approach and responsible action form the basis of our economic success. This is seen in our consistent environmental and social responsibility throughout the value chain.”

In its *Company Portrait* page, BMW takes the following bold approach to future strategy:

“The world continues to change at a rapid pace. In many countries, individual mobility remains a focus of political regulation and national industrial policy. The shift in society requires new mobility solutions. Volatility has long become a constant in our everyday business. Markets and consumers alike remain uneasy in these periods of economic uncertainty.



To meet these challenges we formulated our Strategy Number ONE, which aligns the BMW Group with two targets: to be profitable and to enhance long-term value in times of change. And this applies to technological, structural as well as cultural aspects of our company. Since 2007, we have been implementing various initiatives in keeping with the strategy's four pillars: Growth, Shaping the Future, Profitability and Access to Technologies and Customers.

Our activities will remain firmly focused on the premium segments of the international automobile markets. **Our mission statement up to the year 2020 is clearly defined: the BMW Group is the world's leading provider of premium products and premium services for individual mobility.**<sup>12[3]</sup>

## 15. General Electric

In the Introduction to this report, I mentioned how great leaders inspire companies to be great. What I love about this company's story, is that it began with a mad scientist. Okay, perhaps he wasn't mad, but with aggravated persistence he tried to achieve a result that was too miniscule for the public to take notice of and deem noteworthy. And what resulted, after many figurative flint strikes to the steel, was the spark that turned ember... the ember that smoldered, the smolder becoming smoke... and produced a flame. A flame that never extinguished. And boy, people notice now. This is, in fact, a favored classic tale that resounds throughout the history of humanity... the tale of a very, very successful underdog.

The internet today is jam-packed with inspiration. Quotes and sayings at the end of every email. Forwarded messages about the formative trials and massive triumphs of great and powerful people, from Lincoln to Trump to everyone between. Well, the story of Thomas Edison shares similar roots...

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<sup>12[3]</sup> Company, BMWGroup.com, November 2012

and echoes victory with the snap of every shutter, the upload of every YouTube video, and the beautiful night images of our planet aglow with infinite specs of bright city lights.

Edison General Electric Company, evolved into what is known today as GE, has had a greater role in creating the future that we live in than any other company in the world. This evolution spanned generations and has literally affected every part of the planet.

Here's what GE has to say about themselves today:

“Our Culture—At GE, we consider our culture to be among our innovations. Over decades our leaders have built GE's culture into what it is today—a place for creating and bringing big ideas to life. Today, that culture is the unifying force for our many business units around the world.

Our People – A remarkable thing happens when you bring together employees who are driven to make a difference: they do.

Working Environment – Our employees' performance can only flourish in a sound working environment. That's why GE is committed to supporting its leadership culture through systems and policies that foster open communication, maintain employee and partner privacy, and assure employee health and safety.

Volunteerism – We believe a company can do well even as it does good.

Leadership & Learning – Worldwide, we invest about \$1 billion every year on training and education programs for the people of GE. The results can be measured in the increasing leadership capabilities of our own people and ultimately in the value and opportunity generated for our customers and their communities.

GE Foundation – Philanthropy plays an important part in our goal to be a good global citizen. It allows us to connect with people and make a positive

difference in the communities where we do business and also those beyond our direct reach.”<sup>13</sup><sup>[4]</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>[4] *Culture*, ge.com/company, November 2012

[For Part I of this report, click here](#)

[For Part II of this report, click here](#)

Posted 22nd December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [2012](#) [2013](#) [best](#) [best companies](#) [bmw](#) [Disney](#) [fortune](#) [ge](#) [general](#) [electric](#) [johnston](#) [leadership](#) [leadership development](#) [mcdonald's](#) [patterson-uti](#) [report](#) [studies](#) [study](#)

## **Matty's Recon Handbook**

*December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012*

From 2006 through 2008, I compiled my recon Team Leader notes from the Marines, and in 2009 I published a 722-page reference manual for special operators, specifically for Marines in the reconnaissance field. To date, it has not been available to the unscreened general public.

Following is a slice of the book's Table of Contents. If you are a Boy Scout leader, military member, survivalist or outdoor enthusiast, etc., contact myself and I'll send you excerpts of the book that you are interested in.

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## Christmas 2012... Wrapping Presents

*December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012*

Ugh, I forgot how tiring it can be to wrap presents! But I haven't forgotten what a Christmas without presents looks like. This year, we were blessed with the means to buy quite a few presents for all five of the kids--and help some folks in need, unlike other years where gas money was more important than gifts.

While wrapping presents, Petra and I reminisced about the Christmases of our youth. It started with a conversation about wrapping paper. "You have an 'old man' taste in wrapping paper," she stabbed playfully. "What?! I wanted variety, so I got a little bit of everything... Grinch, Disney Princesses, Barbie, Transformers, Tink, and a whole bunch of patterns... what are you TALKING about?" "I buy Pottery Barn-style wrapping paper, yours looks like it's from Odd Lots."

"I remember when we used to save wrapping paper on a couple occasions, like when it was a big piece," I told Pet. "...I even remember when we would save up our brown paper grocery bags, cut them up and use them for wrapping paper. Of course, that was before the mid-1990's when all the stores went to plastic bags. Sometimes we'd use nexspaper for wrapping paper, especially the Sunday comics... the only problem was that it was hard to read the names on that paper."

Just then, Ayla tried to poke her head in the door to our room. "OUT! Get out, babydollface. Momma and I are wrapping some of your presents right now." Petra locks the door. Whenever we're in our bedroom and she locks the door, my mind dives for the gutter. Usually we'll run the shower as a distraction, but wrapping presents offers another way to mask the sounds of having some good adult fun. I once read an article about how to have sex when visiting family for the holidays. 'Wrapping presents' was the answer. 'Just cover the ground / bed / whatever with paper and it will sound convincing from the other side of the door.' FYI, just make sure that if you're doing it in your aunt & uncle's kid's room while the kids are downstairs, that the baby monitor isn't on! Just sayin.'

"We used to always have to save wrapping paper," Petra admitted. "I wasn't allowed to just tear into my presents, I had to unwrap them very carefully and fold up the paper. I remember coming to the States for the first time, watching kids just rip their presents open, and I would look at the parents for their reactions... *'What a waste!'* I would think to myself."

Petra interrupts her own train of thought to comment on my ace wrapping job. "Wow Matt, that's amazing. You sure put a lot of effort into wrapping that Barbie doll like crap." She was teasing my artistry. "You know," I told her, "I'm really proud of how horribly I wrap presents these days. It makes me feel more like a man." "Whaaat?" She says. I continue: "I remember volunteering with the Christian youth group at Patch Barracks (Germany), to wrap presents one year at the seasonal Christmas store next to the exchange. All the girls in the group who wrapped presents with me, well, they'd comment on how well I could wrap presents. They'd say it again when I'd tie and curl and craft the ribbons and bows. I can't say honestly, looking back, that it didn't make me feel like an A-1 fag! Thankfully, my present-wrapping has gotten progressively worse." We both chuckled.

Somewhere downstairs, we can hear Lily singing *Step by Step*, by New Kids on the Block. Makes you feel good when your kids memorize *Ice, Ice, Baby* and *Can't Touch This* and *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun...* and you didn't teach it to them! In this case, our kids learned it from some dancing video game. I took away video games for the year, but figured we loosen up around Christmas time. Petra was even cracking us up earlier, fencing with Lily on the Wii while breastfeeding Jolina at the same time. "How many mommas you know do *THIS*, suckas!?" Caleb answers into the atmosphere. "Joe Mama!!!" That's his answer to everything these days, and he says it with sass. Also funny.

Anyway, just wanted to put this all down. Will update our Christmastime status later. Be blessed all.

Posted 23rd December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [2012 a day in the life](#) [Christmas gift wrap](#) [kids sex](#) [step by step](#) [visiting family](#) [wrapping presents](#)

## Vegetable Twinkies, Author Unknown

December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012



So I'm sitting at work, minding my own, when somebody mumbles something about cheese-stuffed jalapenos in the break room. So I follow my nose to a jackpot of delectables, namely those pictured at right. I couldn't stop eating them! They were like party snack crack.

I'm a reverse-engineer foodie. On the way home, I picked up a bag of jalapenos, a thing of Philly cream cheese, a small package of Feta, and some Italian dressing.



The beauty is that these things are a cinch to make... mix the cheese together, clean the peppers with a chopstick or whatever you can find in your drawer that works, and fill the peppers with cheese... the biggest problem I had was eating each one just as fast as I'd make it,

instead of making a bowl or plate full! It's kind of like making a tray full of deviled eggs or meat & cheese covered Ritz.

If you don't like spicy food, downgrade to a mild pepper. But if you even remotely like good finger food or cheese-filled stuff, you'll love the phantom chef's stuffed peppers.

Posted 23rd December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [best cream cheese dressing feta italian peppers stuffed stuffed jalapenos](#)

## **Iron Chef @ Home**

*December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012*

We battle over the stove. She cooks, I cook, we cook... we compete for the title of Chef du jour, whether verbally expressed or facially implied by our children. Granted, we don't take pictures of 99% of our meals--most of which are off the cuff--but I found a few through my scattered photos that make my mouth water. In this case, all Petra's dishes.



Mixed Salad & Tartiflette



Finger Foods... This constantly changes and makes up 50% of our diet



Homemade Pizza Margherita



Salad & Stir-Fry



Our house... never sans cafe, vino, or a cup that says "Princess."



Carmel Apple Cheesecake



Carmel Apple Cheesecake, take two

Tonight we went shopping. In order to get all the food in the fridge, we had somewhat of a free-for-all garbage dinner. There was some sort of meat & cabbage dish, sushi from the store, and a Tex-Mex spin on Eggs Benedict--I made a sauce out of the remaining Tostitos Zesty Taco dip, added a pinch of mayo, heavy cream, and salt, then slathered the mix over the remaining toasted English Muffins we had, poached the last couple eggs in one carton, and chopped up some cherry tomatoes and cilantro for topping. We had some siebenkorn 'artisan' bread, finished off the roasted garlic from the fridge and had some stuffed grape leaves (dolmas).

When you surround yourself in good food, here's what you get: you get kids who eat anything and everything, but who prefer coffee, wine, or bananensaft to Kool-Aid; pickled okra and kale over traditional greens, garlic and capers over candy, and mussels and crab legs over chicken nuggets or burgers any day of the week. You get variety, not only in your diet, but in your life. As for me and my house, we will mix it up and eat well.

Posted 23rd December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [competitive](#) [cooking](#) [cuisine](#) [different](#) [family](#) [food](#) [home](#) [homemade](#) [iron](#) [chef](#) [wied](#)



## Emiliano's, Our After-Church Dine

December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012



People who regularly go to church usually have a regular post-service spot where they rustle their grub. As a young kid, I remember that after church dad would always say, "Quick, let's beat the Presbyterians to Ponderosa Steakhouse!" At Liberty Christian in Havelock, every Sunday after church was a rally at the Golden Corral--which, as Pastor Tom used to say, is endearingly pronounced by churchgoers and Southerners alike as The Golden KO-ral. At 3n1 Church in Suffolk, VA, church members would often link tables together at Cogan's Pizza after service...

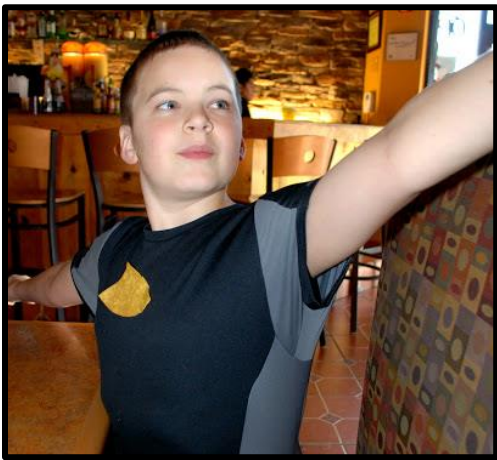
These days, we're the rogue church family who doesn't regularly gather at Michael's Pizza after service at LifeStone Church in Pittsburgh's South Side. We walk an

additional fifty yards to Emiliano's, where our entire family has fallen in love with their Poblano Soup.

Emiliano's is located on the corner of East Carson and S. 26th Street near the South Side Flats. It's not typically crowded on an early Sunday afternoon, but there are big screens over the bar where yinz can catch all your Steelers action. Like every restaurant in or around Pittsburgh during a game, the quality of your service will veritably depend on the game situation.

The food at Emilianos is fantastic, and they keep the chips well stocked at your table. As far as Mexican restaurants go, we're not picky, but we'll travel to Emilianos any day of the week over a closer one.





Posted 23rd December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [best carson emiliano's emilianos food mexican pittsburgh restaurant side south](#)

## [U.S. Air Force Museum, Part I: Aircraft Markings and Artwork](#)

December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012

Visited the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base with the family a while back. It was Apu's treat to the grandkids. I used to love going to this place as a kid... it's better than the National Air & Space Museum, and frankly, it's the best air museum in the world. If you find yourself near Dayton, stop by with your kids for a visit. Admission is free, and it's open 7 days a week from 9AM to 5PM (except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years Day).

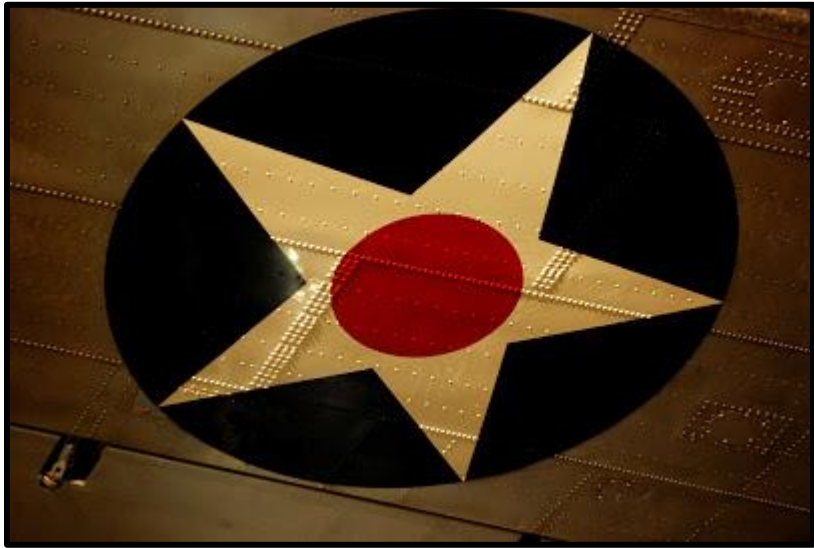
Following are photos of some of the prominent aircraft art and markings:



AC-130 Gunship



Can you say, "braggin' rights?"



The symbol of worldwide air superiority

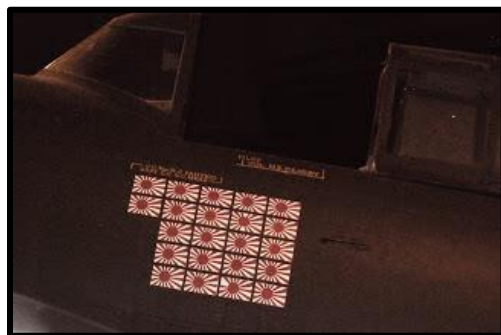
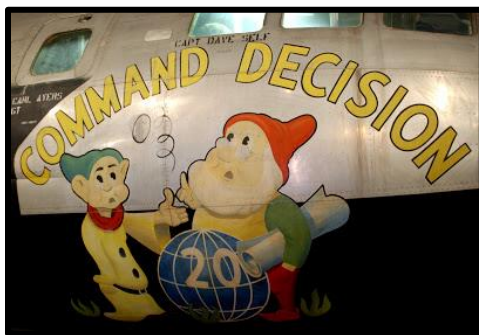




This aircraft dropped the infamous 'fat man' A-bomb on Nagasaki on August 9th, 1945. So named for its pilot, Captain Frederick C. Bock

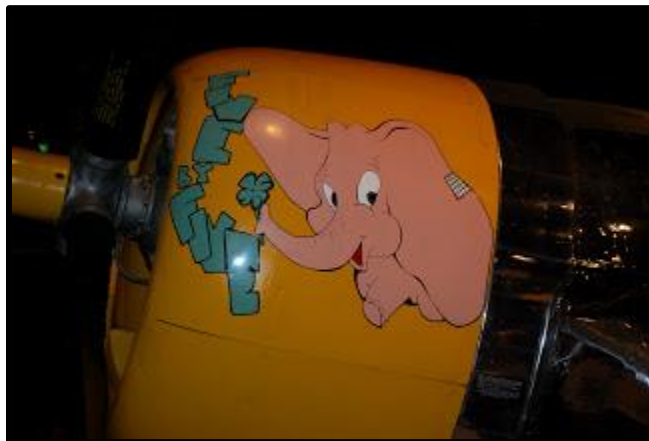


If you visit the museum and don't want your up-and-coming reader to know the word b\*tch just yet, steer clear of this plane





Memphis Belle II





Familiar label to me and my KC-130 buddies







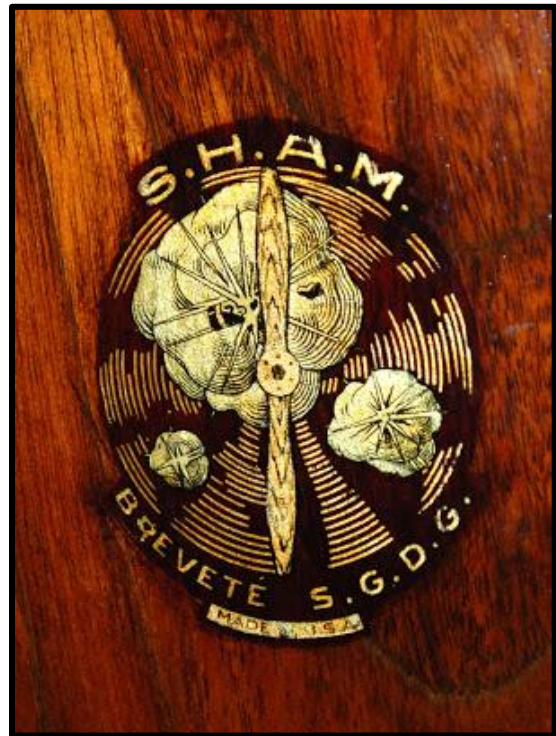
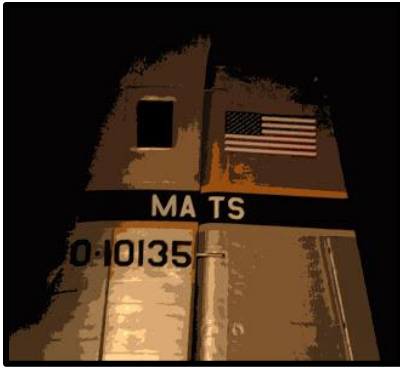
I'm quite certain that they call this stealth "Ed." We had a -130 back at Cherry Point that was a few decades famous, tail number 808, but painted so as to read BOB





Intake plugs







"Scat XXVII" F-4 Phantom



There are no pool boys in the museum. That's a mannequin.

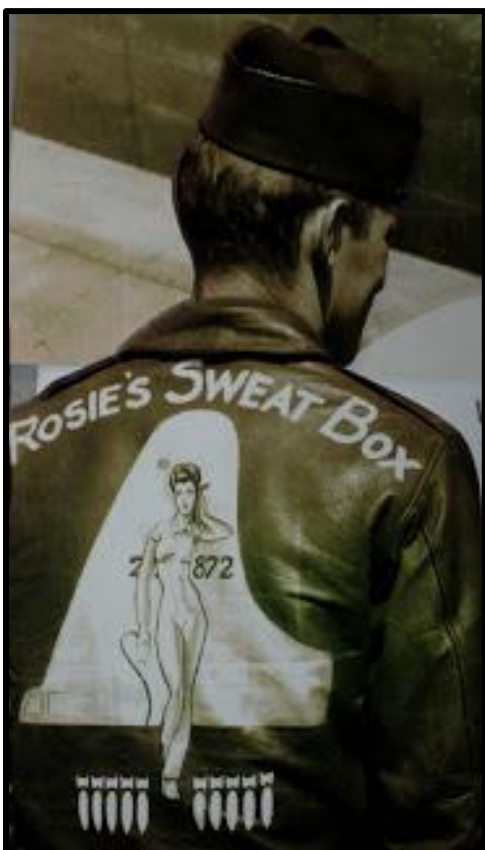
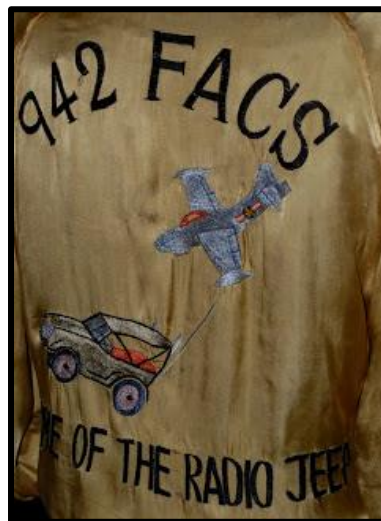


Posted 23rd December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [air force aircraft](#) [best dayton most famous most popular museum national ohio plane united states](#)

# U.S. Air Force Museum, Part II: Patches, Logos, Banners & Flags

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012







Posted 24th December 2012 by [mj](#)

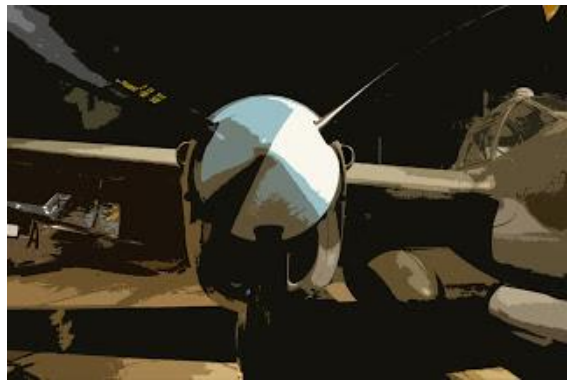
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## U.S. Air Force Museum, Part III: The Aircraft

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012





















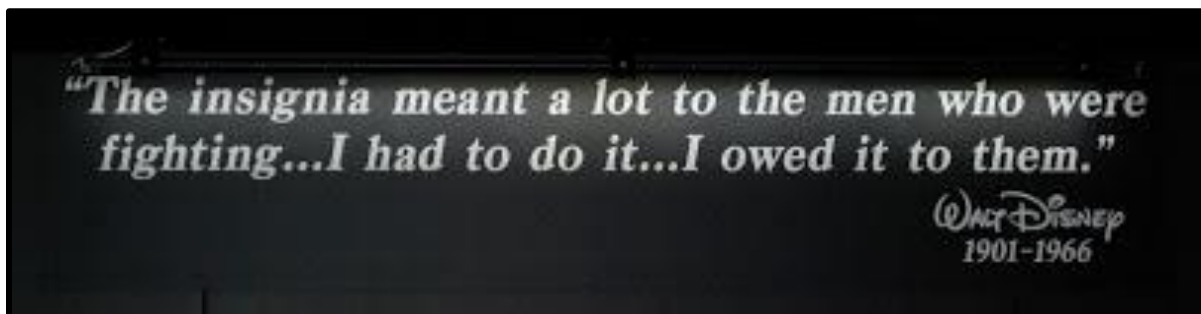
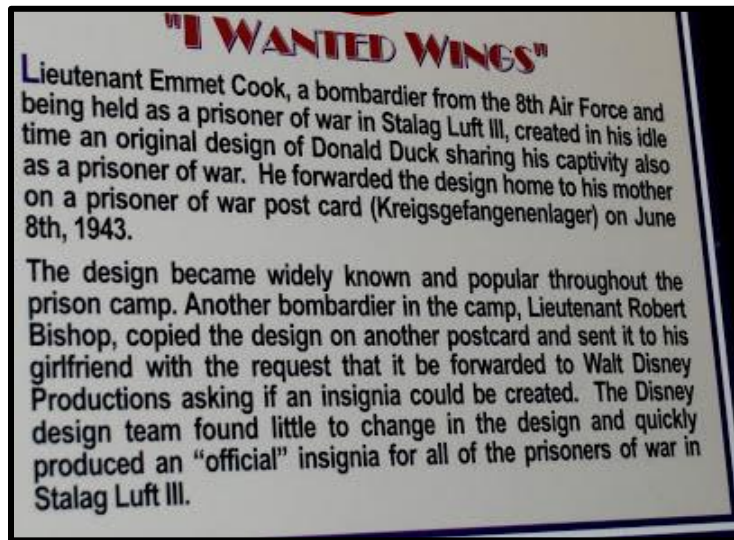
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[biggest collection](#)  
[image jet largest](#)  
[museum photo picture](#)  
[plane](#)

## U.S. Air Force Museum, Part IV: War Disney

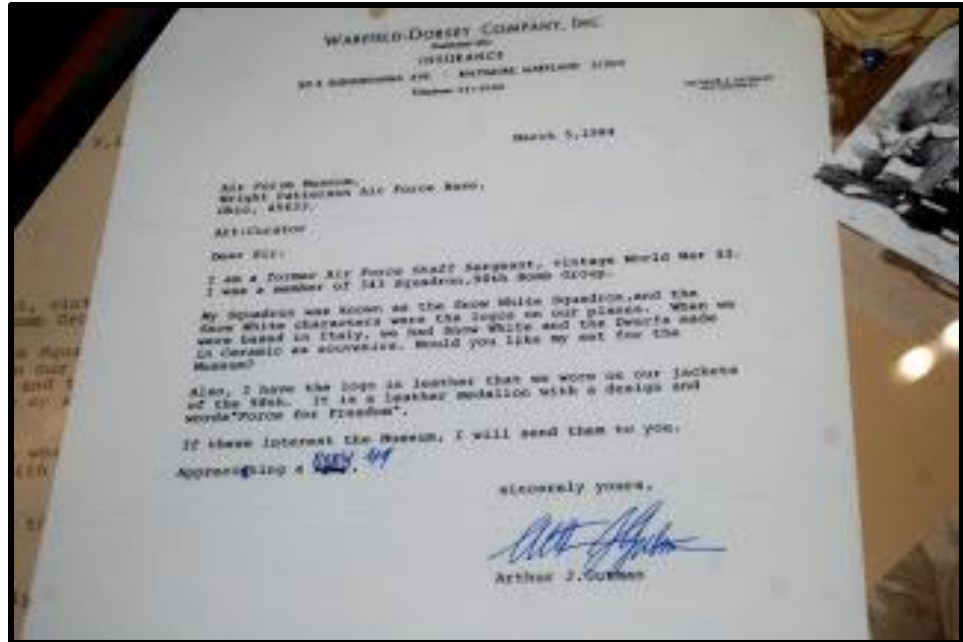
December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012

According to placards at the Air Force Museum, Walt Disney Productions created over 1,200 different military unit logos and insignia during WWII, for all branches of the service. Designs could be submitted directly to Disney without the oversight of higher headquarters; once finalized by Disney artists and approved by the individual unit commanders, original art and full rights of use were distributed to the units, for use on patches, banners, aircraft nose & tail art, golf balls, chinaware, etc. The Air Force, shortly after its establishment in 1947, was the first to ban these light-hearted logos in the interest of standardization and professionalism. Here are some of the displays in that exhibit:









Posted 24th  
December 2012 by  
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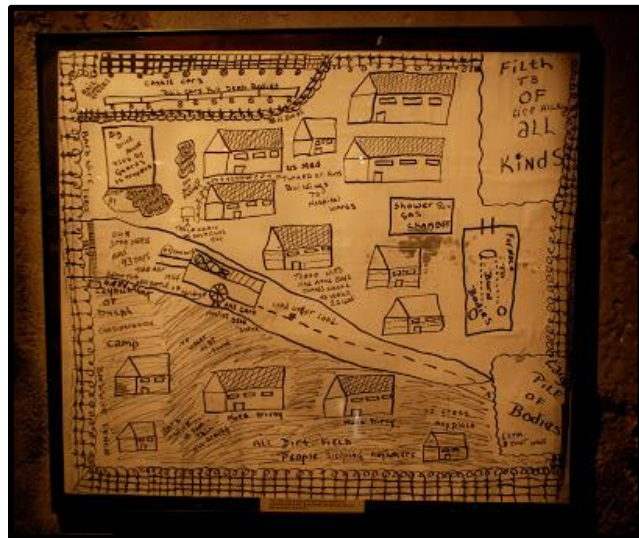
Labels: [air corps](#) [air force](#) [Disney](#) [insignia](#) [logos](#) [museum](#) [patches](#) [walt disney](#) [war](#) [WWII](#)

## [U.S. Air Force Museum, Part V: Holocaust Memorial](#)

December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012

I was about nine years old when we visited Dachau prison camp. I remember the captured images, the smells... I remember walking through the sleeping quarters and the showers and the gas chambers and the human remains-decimating ovens. I have been to Corrie Ten Boom's hiding place, and watched *The Diary of Anne Frank* at an early age. We used to travel into East Berlin as a kid, and I remember watching an old lady being beaten for being too close to the wall. It made me imagine what the Nazis must have been like. Shamefully, I have Nazis in my family history, whom I have known and loved as elderly relatives. Conversely, my family loves Israel, the Jews, Jewish history, and all things Israeli. Love the people, love the country, love the history and its Judeo-Christian significance. Ironically, we possess no known Jewish blood, but mine is the consummate Jewish mother!

The Holocaust is responsible for the systematic, intentional decimation of between 11 and 17 Million people from the planet... mostly Jews. Over one million were children under age 10 and an additional five million were under age 15. No world event or cultural genocide has seen its like. For this reason, museums such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum--and exhibits such as the one shown below at the National Museum of the United States Air Force--are vitally important to the education of our youth... the leaders of future generations.













Posted 26th December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [air force](#) [arbeit macht frei](#) [holocaust](#) [israel](#) [jew](#) [jewish](#) [memorial](#) [museum](#) [nazi](#)

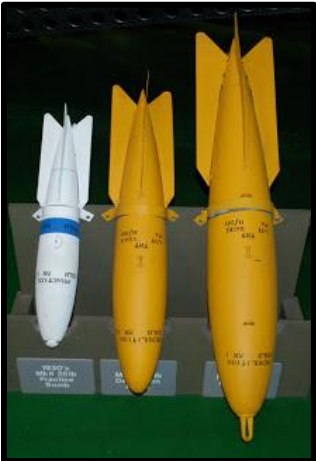
# U.S. Air Force Museum, Part VI: General Images

December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012













These "hash marks" represent the 2,689 days more than seven years, that the longest-held Air Force POW, Maj Hayden Lockhart, spent in prison. He was imprisoned from March 2, 1965 to February 12, 1973. The longest-held American serviceman overall was Army Capt Floyd J. Thompson, who was captive from March 26 1964 to March 16, 1973, or nearly nine years.







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Labels: [air force](#) [aircraft](#) [best museum](#) [national air and space museum](#) [national museum of the air force](#) [ohio](#) [wpafb](#) [wright-patt](#)

## Weary Commander

*December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

Weary commander, do not rest.  
You've given your best, now give  
Your best again tomorrow...  
Every day like all the rest.

For days, you haven't slept.  
In devastating sadness, haven't wept.  
Weep not, sleep not, crippled warrior--  
For in your charge are others kept.

The world today says you are wrong  
Bullish and unsafe your lifestyle  
"Idiot" you're called by others. "Reckless."  
When the piper calls, protect them too.

"Unhealthy," frail, pale doctors say  
They are not you. They're not your kind.  
Sift the ash from your cold mug and take a swig;  
You've fought with harder men

To every soldier, God gives a comrade.  
But not to you. Your place shall be  
In cold and lonely shadows.  
Eat the freezing surf at your Captain's wheel.

No crutch, no vice, no flaw, no soul  
No room for slanderous lies  
No tolerance for the weak.  
No smile. Cocked brim and swagger stick.

Shape the field.  
Storm the gates.  
Do not give ground.

Command the day.

Path Maker.

House Shaker.

Risk Taker.

Make. Shake. Take. Fortune favors the brave.

Posted 28th December 2012 by [mj](#)

Labels: [commander](#) [leader](#) [marine](#) [poem](#) [prose](#) [soldier](#) [songs and poetry](#)  
[warrior](#) [weary commander](#)