

#954

1.5.2015

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1. Reflections

Note: See Section 1D a special contest prize (a piece of art).

Also, if you're reading this via Facebook and/or in the unlikely event you're not already a subscriber, you can make sure you don't miss an issue (and you get it earlier, too) by clicking:

<http://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin/ea?v=001YDR0eD3D1Rctbm-pINkOJA%3D%3D>

A. Cynthia, my beautiful bride, and I:

(1) Welcomed in 2015 with a New Year Eve's party at our place. We are not big on late evenings, so at 6:59 p.m., we "advanced" the clock some five hours (left photo) and dropped the ball, then celebrated immediately afterward (right photo).



For more pictures, please click:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152924120149757.1073741849.519364756&type=1&l=434409b839>

We had a lot of good food, thanks to the catering folks at both Rosetta's Kitchen and Vinnie's. Special kudos to Brian Biro's mom and Brad Morris for providing the oh-so-tasty desserts. Thanks, also, to Brad for sharing the menu for what he brought:

Bradley Morris's World Famous Chocolate Chip Muffin Tops

Ingredients (original recipe makes 4 dozen):

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs

2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons hot water
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F

Cream together the butter, white sugar, and brown sugar until smooth. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then stir in the vanilla. Dissolve baking soda in hot water. Add to batter along with salt. Stir in flour, chocolate chips, and nuts. Drop by large spoonfuls into cupcake holders. Bake for about 10 minutes in the preheated oven, or until edges are nicely browned.

Source: AllRecipes.com

(2) The next day, we continued our celebrating with a party at our friend Barrie Barton's home. Pictured with us: (left photo) Barrie Baron and (right photo) Cappy Tosetti and David Wright.



B. We also got to spend time with our friend Tammy Strange, meeting her in Greenville, SC, for a movie that we enjoyed (*INTO THE WOODS*; see last week's issue for my review) and then an early dinner at Everyday Organic. We really like this place and only wish it had an Asheville location. In addition, we liked being able to get gas at nearby station for \$1.89/gallon.



We met another friend, Ellane Chandler, the next day, again for a movie and dinner. We saw *BIG EYES* (see Section 4A for my review) and then had dinner at Green Sage--another place we both enjoy



C. Congratulations to:

- (1) Brad Morris on having been invited to join the board of the Western North Carolina Jewish Federation.
- (3) Trevor Rayshay Perry on making it through to the next round of SING FOR YOUR LIFE.
- (3) Mike Andrus on having graduated from the International Circle Of Masters School of the Pyramid training.
- (4) Debbi D. in NJ, winner of Contest #1 (of 2015), an autographed copy of THE CANOE--Michelle Baker's great debut novel.

Note: If you'd like to purchase your own autographed copy of this book, send an email tomichelle@michellebakerproductions.com.

All told, there were 7 entries. And that reminds me that it's now time to announce:

***** CONTEST #2 *****

One lucky reader will win this piece of art done by Tebbe Davis.



It is a piece from 2013 called "Forest Path." The size is 12x16," and it is unframed. It was inspired from a digital image he viewed while getting a root canal at the dentist. They show photographs from a flat screen in the office that the patients can gaze at while getting treatments. He photographed the screen with his phone and then painted it from the picture he took. This painting and all his art can be seen at his website: <http://tebbeart.com/>

Note: I recommend that you also get Tebbe's free newsletter. You can do so by clicking:

<http://tebbeart.com/email-newsletter>

Tebbe Davis has been an artist his whole life, working in various mediums including photography, charcoal and acrylics. His recent works in oil show a more mature expression of nature, an abstract style with unique inspirations and signature process. His work is in galleries in South Carolina, Georgia and Connecticut.

To enter: Put "CONTEST #2" in the subject line of an email and send it to bjinbc@aol.com ... make sure you include your name AND snail mail address in the body of the email . . . all entries must be received on or before 9 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 19, 2015

D. Condolences to:

- (1) Pat Laser and family on the passing of Pat's father, Charles Willis Stager, on December 30, 2014, at the age of 94.
- (2) Karen Covington and family on the passing of Karen's grandmother, Roberta Covington, at the age of 98.
- (3) The family of Australian actor Rod Taylor on his passing. In honor of both him and his classic film, THE TIME MACHINE, I thought you'd like to see this clip from THE BIG BANG THEORY:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OHTb3lg5C8>

For Taylor's obituary, please click:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/10/movies/rod-taylor-hollywood-leading-man-who-battled-the-birds-dies-at-84.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

***** BLAINESWORLD BEST AWARD *****

This week, it goes to Steph Hickling Beckman--Artistic Managing Director of Different Strokes! Performing Collective. In addition, she served this past fall semester as a guest director at UNCA.

Steph has done a fantastic job in with Different Stokes! over the past several years, producing and/or directing many excellent plays that I have had the pleasure of seeing. She has also acted in a few others, and I have always been impressed whenever I've seen her on stage.

But perhaps her greatest success came recently as a result of officially becoming a parent for the first time, along with Trish Hickling Beckman, to their now 4-year old son. For more information, please see (below) this write-up from The Buncombe County Foster Care program:



Stephanie's and Trish's decision to foster was one that they inched toward. They became licensed and provided respite, caring for a three year old and a 5 month old. After they were able to experience what fostering was like temporarily, they decided that they wanted to become more involved. Their first placements didn't work out but it helped them realize that the licensing workers could match them to a child that better fit their lifestyle. The licensing worker helped them to understand their limits and identify their needs as busy professionals.

One day Stephanie missed a phone call from a licensing worker who was trying to place a one year old child. She felt like she had lost the opportunity to care for a foster child that was matched just for them. But the phone rang again, and this time she was able to answer.

The child was placed in their home on his **1st birthday**. Because bringing families back together is the goal for kids in foster care, there were several attempts to place him back with his birth family through kinship care with other members of the child's birth family. This was difficult time for Stephanie and Trish, not knowing what would happen. Eventually, it was decided that the child could not live with his birth family and would need to be adopted into loving and stable home.

Recently Stephanie and Trish signed the official adoption papers for their now 4 year old son. She never thought she would be a parent. Her parents never thought they would be grandparents. While she freely admits that fostering was not always easy, she says that it has given her a whole new perspective about parenting and life. Stephanie's advice: share the love in your heart; don't hold it in, because there is a child out there that needs it. The experience of knowing that a child in your care is loved, safe and engaged is the most satisfying feeling in the world - for Stephanie was all the more precious given that it started from one phone call. Saying "yes" made all the difference in the world.

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2. FYI

COOL IDEA! Take unused phone booths and make them aquariums. To see other ways that neighborhoods are being beautified, please click:

<http://distractify.com/culture/arts/beautify-street-art/>



FYI, part 2

A. Clips

(1) Marvin S. in NC: If you have friends or family who may be moving or living in Asheville, please share. This is a home Annemarie and I just renovated. Basically a new home from the crawl space up. Let me know what you think. It is on the market in the most popular area of Asheville. Walk downtown, 2 blocks from Whole Foods and Trader Joe's.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Bp7H8CHjSo>

(2) Iva M. in NC: The Stanley Steamer Variations (by Mia)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4pBMOemTZ0>

(3) Mark A. in PA: Yusuf/Cat Stevens: Tiny Desk Concert
http://www.npr.org/event/music/368934858/yusuf-cat-stevens-tiny-desk-concert?utm_campaign=storyshare&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social

(4) Bill K. in CA: Film Shows the "Nice Living Folks" Of Levittown (PA)
<http://levittownnow.com/2015/01/03/must-see-films-shows-the-nice-living-folks-of-levittown/>

(5) One of the most amazing basketball shots you'll ever see!
<http://sports.yahoo.com/blogs/nba-ball-dont-lie/utah-s-trevor-booker-hits-the-shot-of-the-season-in-0-2-seconds-024101951.html>

B. Other tidbits from readers

To reach each of the following contributions in full, please click:

<http://wp.me/p1g9Ev-1N1>

(1) Tom F. in NJ: Happy New Year to the character I have grown to appreciate and admire even from afar. (2) Carle R. in PA: Great quote [from Cuomo]. (3) Terry B. in FL: I still enjoy all your pictures, your articles, everything you do!!! (4) Ken G. in GA: Saw Top 5 yesterday. (5) If You Want to Meet That Deadline, Play a Trick on Your Mind. (6) 30 adorable animals sleeping. (7) The liberation of growing old. (8) Natalie K. in PA: Just watched this [DEAD POET'S SOCIETY] again. (9) Tom S. in NY: Thanks, Blaine, for the "Into the Woods" recommendation. (10) Anne C. in NC: Wal-Mart: An economic cancer on our cities. (11) The One Universal Secret To A Lasting Marriage. (12) Creating a New Mission Statement. (13) To fall in love with anyone, do this. (14) The 36 questions referred to in #13. (15) When Autocorrect Goes Horribly Right.

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3. Joke 1

This has me humming along. Join me by clicking:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RejMtE2zAYM&index=8&list=PLE54F4F3DC063C60E>



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4. Reviews

A. Saw **BIG EYES**, an excellent film based on the true story of Walter Keane (Christoph Waltz) who was one of the most successful painters of the 1950 and early 1960s. As it turns out, however, he never did any of the paintings; rather, they were done by his wife Margaret (Amy Adams). Waltz dazzles as a guy you grow to hate. His performance in a courtroom scene was one of the funniest I have ever seen. Tim Burton was both the director and producer, and I liked the fact that this was a change of pace for him. Rated PG-13.

Note: I've just added **BIG EYES** to my list of all-time favorite films. If you'd like a copy of this list, please send an email to bginbc@aol.com and put FAVORITES in the subject line.

B. **BOYHOOD**, also on my all-time list of favorite films, is now out in DVD format ... my review from **BLAINESWORLD #934** follows:

BOYHOOD, filmed over 12 years with the same cast, is the story of a boy growing up as seen through the eyes of a child. Ellar Coltrane in his first role is amazing as the boy, but so is another newcomer--Lorelei Linklater--as his sister. I also very much liked the work of Ethan Hawke and Patricia Arquette as his parents. This is unlike any film I've ever seen before, and it left me thinking about what my life was like when I grew up. It is 2 hours 45 minutes in length, you won't notice the length at all; in fact, I actually wish it had been longer. Rated R, though I think it would be appropriate for any mature teenager--and should be seen by that group, too.

C. Read **THE INNOVATORS: HOW A GROUP OF HACKERS, GENUISES, AND GEEKS CREATED THE GENIUS REVOLUTION** (Simon & Schuster) by Walter Isaacson.

The book gives a comprehensive, highly readable story of the people who created both the computer and the Internet, starting from Ada Lovelace, Lord Byron's daughter, who led the way to computer programming in the 1840s. It then covers such other personalities as Alan Turing, Bill Gates, Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs. Even Al Gore is covered, and I was surprised to learn about the actual role he did have in the development of the Internet.

I especially liked how Isaacson showed the importance of collaboration is to the process of innovation, and I got a kick out of this one tale:

Bell Labs enforced the rule that Shockley be in every publicity photo along with Bardeen and Brattain. The most famous one shows the three of them in Brattain's lab. Just as it was about to be taken, Shockley sat down in Brattain's chair, as if it were his desk and microscope, and became the focal point of the photo. Years later Bardeen would describe Brattain's lingering dismay and his resentment of Shockley: "Boy, Walter hates this picture. ... That's Walter's equipment and our experiment, and Bill didn't have anything to do with it."

I also liked reading about the development of Pong because I so well remember wasting many hours on that game.

Though THE INNOVATORS take 543 pages to tell its story, including as fine a job of documentation as you'll perhaps ever see, you won't be bored by it.

D. Heard THE ART OF ASKING: HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LET PEOPLE HELP (Hachette Audio), written, read and sung by Amanda Palmer.

I first became aware of the author when I heard her TED Talk, which has been viewed over 8 million times around the world. Wanting to learn more, I then checked out her singing when she was part of The Dresden Dolls, the acclaimed punk cabaret duo.

So when this book became available, I looked forward to listening to it--and wasn't disappointed. It's part autobiography, part self-help book and, overall, quite fascinating.

I learned what it involves to be a living statue performing in a wedding dress, but most interesting to me was finding out more about how she asked her fans to support her in making an album that eventually became the most successful music Kickstarter.

What I didn't know was that Palmer has also struggled with asking for certain things in her life, and that she is not alone in this, in that so many others are afraid to do the same thing.

I've been there at times, too, so let me see if I've learned anything by reading ART OF ASKING ... if you find this subject as interesting as I do, could you do me--and yourself--a favor? Please read this book.

You'll also like the excerpts from music by Palmer, as well as The Dresden Dolls, Ben Folds, Walt Ribeiro and Sxip Shirey.

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5. TV alert

A. THE 72ND ANNUAL GOLDEN GLOBE AWARD: Sunday, Jan. 11, at 8 p.m. on NBC
Tina Fey and Amy Poehler as cohosts make this show watchable.

B. TOGETHERNESS: Begins Sunday, Jan. 11, at 9:30 p.m. on HBO
According to THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, "This complex, pathos-filled and very funny comedy series, by Jay and Mark Duplass, [is] about a family group of sorts in east Los Angeles."

C. THE WORLD DOG AWARDS: Thursday, Jan. 15, at 8 p.m. on THE CW
Hosted by George Lopez, this show will include such categories as "Most Pawpular."

D. WHITNEY: Saturday, Jan. 17, at 8 p.m. on LIFETIME
This made-for-TV biopic tells the story Whitney Houston, who left behind a legacy of both incredible music and tabloid tales when she passed away in 2012.

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6. Joke 2

I wonder what's on the menu!



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7. Websites

A. Welcome to Thug Notes, your main hookup for classical literature summary and analysis. I'm your host, Sparky Sweets, PhD. Join me each week for a new episode.
<http://thug-notes.com/>

For more information about the above, click to read this article from THE NEW YORK TIMES:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/25/arts/thug-notes-and-other-sites-translate-literature-into-rap.html?rref=homepage&module=Ribbon&version=origin@ion=Header&action=click&contentCollection=Home%20Page&pgtype=Blogs>

B Dutch Broker Livens Up Real Estate Listing By Installing a Roller Coaster in the Home
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbqkQUrhBHQ>

C. BLAINESWORLD, the website, remains up and running ... to view it, please click:
<http://www.blaineworld.net/>

No need to worry what happens to your email address if you ever subscribe to BLAINESWORLD, the newsletter. To see why, click "Newsletter" to the left and then "Privacy Statement."

D. Are you on Facebook? In the unlikely event we have not yet connected as friends there, please feel free to send me an invite by clicking:
<https://www.facebook.com/blainegreenfield>



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8. Technology tip

How My Mom Got Hacked

by Alina Simone in THE NEW YORK TIMES

My mother received the ransom note on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. It popped up on her computer screen soon after she'd discovered that all of her files had been locked. "Your files are encrypted," it announced. "To get the key to decrypt files you have to pay 500 USD." If my mother failed to pay within a week, the price would go up to \$1,000.

After that, her decryption key would be destroyed and any chance of accessing the 5,726 files on her PC--all of her data--would be lost forever.

Sincerely, CryptoWall.

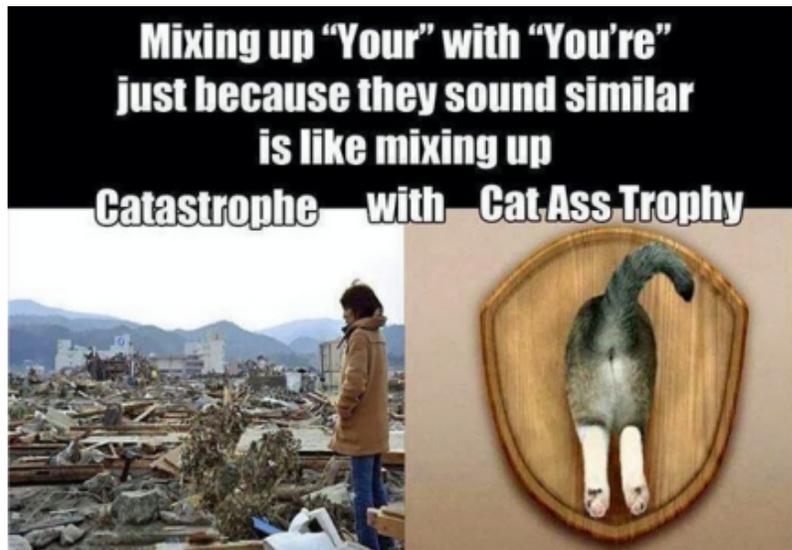
For the rest of this eye-opening article, please click:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/opinion/sunday/how-my-mom-got-hacked.html>

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9. Joke 3

See below for today's grammar lesson. ... Here's one for tomorrow, too: Let's eat Grandma! Let's eat, Grandma! ... Good grammar saves lives!



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10. A quote I like

"The worst time to have a heart attack is during a game of charades."--Demetri Martin, American comedian and actor



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11. Thought for the day

The things you learn online ...



***** SPECIAL OFFER *****

Do you know that left-handed people have always been discriminated against; e.g., with respect to writing utensils? Almost all pencils are made for right-handed folks. But if you would like to have a genuine left-handed pencil, along with a separate one for your right hand, send me a self-addressed, self-stamped envelope (large enough to include two pencils). You probably need about 70 cents of postage on the outside envelope and \$1.82 on the inside one. Send your request to: Blaine Greenfield, 19 N. Kaufmann Stone Way, Biltmore Lake, NC 28715.

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12. Advance planning department

To read about each of the following events in full, please click:

<http://wp.me/p1g9Ev-1N1>

A. NC events

(1) Richard Shulman performances. (2) Pitch for Pitchers. (3) ELEMENO PEO. (4) JOHN & JEN. (6) The Power and Practice of Intuition. (7) Intuitive Tarot WorkshoP. (8) Zuzu Welsh Band at Asheville Music Hall. (9) Food and How To Eat It!

B. PA/NJ events

(1) Shamanic Sound Healing Circle Ceremony. (2) "Look Who's in Love" a cabaret celebration of romance. (3) Sing Along to Disney's "FROZEN" at MCCC's Kelsey Theatre.

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PS. Make it a wonderful week!

