

May 2012

Dave's World

Wednesday, May 16th

Since I placed our "Diaper Genie" in (hopefully) permanent storage, I wanted to pass along some valuable information. If you are the next person to find the "Diaper Genie," you should know that it will grant you three wishes. I recommend the following, "I wish for early and successful potty-training for each of my three children."

Thursday, May 17th

Demonstrating some sort of sixth sense, the children can detect when I am even thinking about disposing a neglected or broken toy. This ability will cause them to show a renewed interest in the toy, as if making one final appeal for it to be spared. Unfortunately, only five options remain.

- 1) Secretly dispose of the toy and remain silent, when asked about it. This will lead to an endless interrogation.
- 2) Lie about the toy's whereabouts. This will lead to constant requests to find it.
- 3) Forever live with the growing stockpile of broken toys, until your house resembles Santa's workshop, after a horrible accident.
- 4) Tell the truth about your intentions. This will result in a constant loop of protests.
- 5) Tell the truth about how you rid the house of this unnecessary and sometimes annoying battery powered clutter. This of course will lead to a major fit and a lifetime of resentment. That's right, folks, tear that bandage off. Number 5 appears to be the only acceptable alternative.

Friday, May 18th

After diving for a ball in left center and missing by about three feet, I am not really qualified to dispense softball advice, but I can tell you with certainty that if you accidentally spill a latte on your baseball cap, you will enjoy the delicious scent of coffee and cream throughout the game. Plus, if you want a little buzz in the outfield, you can always lick your hat.

As I become firmly entrenched in middle age, I would like to thank the late Harry Chapin for making me feel doubly guilty, when I hear the song "Cat's in the Cradle." One-dose of guilt as a father and the other as a son. Folksy jerk.

Saturday, May 19th

Oh dear. I recently recorded 5-year-old Sam's first official "eye roll," in response to something I said. With an estimated 18-year-old departure date, only 13 more years of eye rolling left in that one.

Even though 3-year-old Ben has begun insisting on wearing a batting helmet in the car, I refuse to believe that this is a result of my driving abilities.

Sunday, May 20th

I would like to publicly thank my gray suit for being large enough for me to squeeze into.

May 2012

Monday, May 21st

Poltergeist. That must be it. The only reasonable explanation why my children feel the need to leave fingerprints all over the T.V. screen. Oh, my! Listen closely, you can hear the voices saying, "They're here..." to break all of your consumer electronics."

Dear Facebook Friends,

I apologize if the quality of my posts are beginning to suffer. You see that I played in the "Parent versus Child Game" at soccer camp and I courageously attempted a header.

The bad news: it did not result in a goal.

The good news: someday my cognitive functions should return to normal.

Sincerely,

Paul Davidsen

Tuesday, May 22nd

As I scurried around the house looking for it, I am reminded of the old adage, "Never let one's 3-year-old hold the checkbook."

Wednesday, May 23rd

Probable. On hot days, I'll wander around the house shirtless.

Somewhat Probable. Although awkward and I'll spend half of the time apologizing for my bare belly, I may answer the door shirtless.

Extremely Probable. Next time someone knocks on the door, they will be wearing sunglasses to protect their eyes from my blinding white torso.

There we go. With a few exceptions, all of our Summer activities are now "officially" on the calendar. Although it required an algorithm more complicated than Google's search engine, our "2012 Grand Tour of the Willmar Park System" has been finalized with only a few scheduling conflicts.

Thursday, May 24th

I never thought it would happen, but at 2:40PM, the house fell silent, as 5-year-old Sam ran out of animal facts and his echo (3-year-old Ben) also faded. Fear not, just as Spring follows the silence of Winter, within 10 minutes, Sam returned to quizzing me about such things as my "Fourth Favorite Mammal."

Friday, May 25th

For the record, every morning at 5AM for five brief minutes, as I drive to the gym with my hoodie up and the radio loud, I am a real bad a\$\$!

May 2012

Dave's World

Saturday, May 26th

After taking 14-year-old Jasper the Beagle to the vet for various tune-ups, including a nail trim, 5-year-old Sam proudly announces, "Look. I saved one of Jasper's nails. Maybe Mommy could make some jewelry out of it."

Flash forward seven months...

"Since precious jewels don't always capture the mood or fit your budget, Kay Jewelers announces the gnarly old beagle toe nail collection. Every kiss begins with Kay."

Sunday, May 27th

Dave Paulsen's cooking Johnsonville Brats! Er, um, forget it. Dave Paulsen burned his Johnsonville Brats!

Monday, May 28th

Sign you should start thinking about heading home early from the lake...

At 2AM, you emerge from the cabin to let out the dog out and are greeted by a thunderstorm downpour. Your first barefooted step is onto a slippery wet deck, where your feet immediately fly out from under you. Your next sensation is that of the skin being removed from your pinky, as you crash to the deck. Landing next to your pup, he looks at you like, "What's your deal? Did you leave your brain inside?"

Sign you should head home early from the lake...

The lake reminds you less of a postcard and more like a season finale of "Deadliest Catch."

Sign you made the right choice in heading home early from the lake...

Jasper the Beagle emerges from the car with a front paw encased in an old deflated balloon.

Tuesday, May 29th

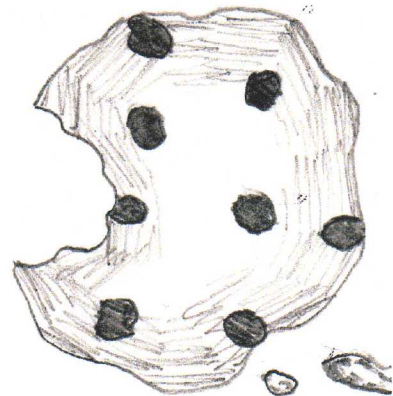
Just another reason that I need to keep a closer eye on 5-year-old Sam: the self inflicted arm hickey.

Wednesday, May 30th

Coming to a couch near you: "Dave Paulsen and the Quest for Another Hour of Sleep"

Thursday, May 31st

Drain the water and plate it. This school year is al dente.



June 2012

Friday, June 1st

No matter how dreadful my play in the outfield at last night's softball game, I still consider myself more fortunate than my dog, who was observed eating dirt from a potted plant.

Saturday, June 2nd

In an effort to jump start the economy, the Paulsen boys have undertaken a major public works project to transform the backyard sandbox into a series of castles and waterways.

During the walk home from the new ice cream shop, 3-year-old Ben gleefully asked for me to carry him on my shoulders. I set young Ben aloft. Then came the sound of "swack... swack" as he placed his hands on my face, immediately followed by Charlene's one-second-too-late-warning, "His hands are sticky." Right you are, my dear. Right you are.

Monday, June 4th

While playing catch with 5-year-old Sam, I paused to see if the soccer ball that 8-year-old Jacob was kicking would miss my head. As I glanced at Jacob, I felt the sharp sting of a softball thrown by Sam hitting my chest. All Daddy wants for Father's Day is a Spotter.

Tuesday, June 5th

It is really too bad that society values Charlene's Summertime hobby more than mine.

Charlene spends the Summer caring for our home's lovely flowerbeds.

I prefer sitting by the kiddy pool with a beer, working on my tan, and watching the weeds grow.

Yes, the ant married a grasshopper.

Wednesday, June 6th

Appearing for one night and one night only, Dave Paulsen stars as Bartimaeus the Blind Beggar on the Road to Jericho, in the critically acclaimed, "You Can Call Me Bart."

This Vacation Bible School performance is a Ticketmaster exclusive.

Thursday, June 7th

You know your wardrobe needs a makeover, when you visit Goodwill and 90% of their items look better than what is in your closet.

Friday, June 8th

Please, ignore the blood curdling screams. Doctor Dave has completed his rounds in the Emergency Child Splinter Removal Clinic.

June 2012

Dave's World

Friday, June 8th

As I entered the checkout line at the grocery store, I could see the steady rain outside. Rushing to load my groceries, all I could imagine was 8-year-old Jacob stuck standing in the rain at baseball camp, after his father had abandoned him on a previously sunny day to fit in the week's grocery shopping. Arriving at the fields, ten minutes later, I was relieved to see the entire team still practicing in the downpour. This is my kind of baseball camp; forget about covering the infield and play ball!

Strolling through the library, I passed a young man, who was watching a "How to Pick Locks" instructional video on the Internet. The library should either foster this young man's interest by showing him the "How to become a Better Magician" book section or quickly place him on a watch list.

Monday, June 11th

Word of Advice. When approached by your 5-year-old with the question, "Where are the shovels?", first take a deep breath and then respond with "Why?" As an alternate response, it is also o.k. to ask, "What did you do to your brother?"

Tuesday, June 12th

As 5-year-old Sam looked down on me from the dock, he gleefully noted, "You swim like a beluga whale." Perhaps I can spin this bad news into a song deal with Raffi.

A sign that you built the campfire a little too large: your wife refers to it as a pyre.

I may not know much about the Crimean War, but I suspect that the "Charge of the Light Brigade" did not have much on the stampede created, when I let my kids know that they can have popsicles for snack time.

Wednesday, June 13th

You know that Summer is in full swing, when the grocery list contains only two items: beer and mulch.

Thursday, June 14th

How do you know that a toy is functioning properly?

8-year-old Jacob will design a complicated new set of rules for it, which will almost ensure his victory.

5-year-old Sam will retrofit the toy into a weapon to be used during a claim of self defense.

3-year-old Ben will either climb or step on the toy to test its craftsmanship.

Friday, June 15th

Ronald Reagan once said, "...America will never make concessions to terrorists..." I would like to add to that grouping "3-year-old children throwing tantrums."

June 2012

Friday, June 15th

Sometimes you just find yourself in a phase of life, when you can judge how well your week is going by how many times you needed the "Spot & Stain Carpet Cleaner."

You know that it was a rough night at the plate, when you manage to crack your trusty bat. It is even worse, when you were using an aluminum bat, with a titanium reinforced shell. What was that pitcher throwing at me? Kryptonite?

After finally (FINALLY) tracking down a fly ball in Right Center, my only response was an exhausted sigh of "Jesus." Although it was not exactly a Tebow moment, the dear Lord may be the only explanation for this declining vessel of an athlete closing out an inning.

Although my bat certainly did not contribute much toward the first win of the season for the Bethel Lutheran Church softball team, I like to think that my outfield chatter was crucial.

Saturday, June 16th

As 5-year-old Sam charged his brother, while holding his baseball glove high in the air, I called a preemptive strike and sent him to timeout. On his way to the timeout bench, Sam filed his formal complaint and claimed that he "was trying to hug him." Uh, if that is the case, the world needs a lot less affection.

If Abner Doubleday had known our 5-year-old Sam, baseball fields would have been designed to include a penalty box.

It has been a nice run, but it appears to be time to release 3-year-old Ben back into the wild.

When 8-year-old Jacob and 5-year-old Sam asked me which one of them was the best "big" brother, I decided to demonstrate the "Judgment of Solomon" (1 Kings 3:16-28). I said that the only way to settle the dispute was to cut their little brother in half. Unfortunately, I was saddened at how long it took for either of them to register a protest.

Monday, June 18th

Yesterday afternoon (after my nap, of course), Jacob and I went to the park to hit a bucket of baseballs in their batting cage. I soon realized another key difference between an 8-year-old boy and his middle-aged dad. The 8-year-old has an ability to hit and throw baseballs for four hours straight, while after about 15 minutes, the aging pop's body informs him that it might be time to visit the freezer to put a bag of frozen peas on his elbow.

This Father's Day Moment has been brought to you by the Tommy John Medical Center.

June 2012

Dave's World

Tuesday, June 19th

While dressing in the locker room, after an afternoon at the pool, a man entered wearing a cowboy hat. My son, Ben's response demonstrated how easy it is to excite a 3-year-old, "Daddy, a cowboy is going swimming!" In order to pass on the fun, I am considering wearing my bucket hat to the pool (future unidentified child, "A fisherman is going swimming!")... or perhaps a pith helmet ("A tropical explorer is going swimming!")... or perhaps the most startling, a beret ("A Frenchman is going swimming!").

Wednesday, June 20th

Although I am not a sports historian, I am beginning to suspect that the Arena Football League was founded on a rainy Summer morning by three young boys, who felt trapped inside their home.

At the park, 5-year-old Sam and 3-year-old Ben seemed momentarily memorized by a girl flipping around on the jungle gym bars. Either a 90% potential for bad times ahead (i.e. a lifelong sibling rivalry over the affections of a gymnast) or perhaps I am reading a little too much into playground behavior.

Thursday, June 21st

Only the first day of Summer and my children have already increased the stock value of Spray 'n Wash by \$2/share.

Friday, June 22nd

Our 5-year-old Sam may have a future as a food critic. After having him sample some Grape-Nuts, I asked how they taste. "It tastes like sand." Spot on.

Call it whatever you want: a blooper, a dying quail, a dink, a drop shot, or a kerplunk. To a player mired in a slump, when my gentle pop-up landed softly in the outfield grass behind third, it was a thing of beauty.

I take comfort in the fact that my epic "swing and a miss" puts me in the company of Babe Ruth. For the record, I did not use any performance enhancing drugs to accomplish this feat.

Saturday, June 23rd

Yes, taking a 3-year-old to a baseball game officially qualifies as an aerobic activity.

Yesterday, I found the boys engaged in a long jump contest off the back porch. Considering that they were jumping from an apparently safe height, I decided to encourage their interest in track and field by giving it a try. It did not take long for me to learn an important lesson in physics: a full grown man jumping off a porch will experience the force of a pile driver concentrated on their ankles, upon impact with the ground. For future backyard long jump competitions, I believe that I will volunteer for the role of "Measuring Tape Official," rather than "Jesse Owens Wannabe."

June 2012

Monday, June 25th

You know you are middle aged, when you go to brush some hair out of your eye and realize that it belongs to your eyebrow.

Tuesday, June 26th

One benefit of owning a home along the Willmar Fest Parade staging area: for a few hours, you could have the Willmar Stingers Northwoods League baseball team float sitting outside your side door. You could also be lucky enough to have some waiting players need to use your bathroom. On a related note, rough calculations indicate that a Northwoods League player has a 2 out of 10,000 chance of someday being elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. I am pretty sure that those two happen to be included in some of the players that used our bathroom. Just in case, I am mailing our toilet to Cooperstown.

Wednesday, June 27th

You suddenly realize it. A chill runs over your body. A mixture of panic and urgency overwhelms you. You have just realized that you had better "save" your work, because your spreadsheet has become "too big to fail."

Thursday, June 28th

As a long standing parental tradition, I will announce "car," if I see any auto moving, as the family walks toward a road or parking lot. This is my way of ensuring that my kids, who odds are running toward danger, are at least aware of the traffic. Yesterday, as we were leaving the ice cream shop, I saw a car leaving the parking lot and provided my usual warning. Even though all of the kids were still traveling on the sidewalk and were a minimum of 20 feet from any possibility of danger, 5-year-old Sam took it upon himself to locate his little brother and ensure his safety. In one swift motion, Sam located 3-year-old Ben, grabbed him, and threw him to the ground. Mission accomplished. With his younger sibling lying on the ground, Sam had protected him from the approaching vehicle. While I appreciate Sam's passion for safety, he may need to tone it down a tad.

Friday, June 29th

The Good: we won yesterday's church softball game and climbed back to .500.

The Bad: playing catch before the game, I gave my 5-year-old Sam a bloody nose.

The Ugly: unfortunately, most baseball superstition experts credit our victory to my child's bloody nose.

I guess it is time to teach the kids about "taking one for the team."

June - July 2012

Dave's World

Saturday, June 30th

While playing baseball with the boys, they were complaining and fighting a little too much. I let them know that I needed a break and went inside. After a few minutes, 5-year-old Sam came inside to inform me that, "We are not fighting anymore." Looking into his blue eyes, I was amazed at how he had grown. Where was the baby I used to nap with? Where was the little toddler who used to laugh, while grocery shopping? Sad about how his days would soon be spent in school, I said, "You are going to do great in Kindergarten." Replying with a simple, "Yeah," I gave Sam a hug. I love my boy and am so proud of the young man he will become. Grabbing my baseball glove, I returned to the moment, because it is the only time we have.

Wimbledon Update. I would strongly recommend against having a big bowl of fiber laden cereal, immediately before playing tennis with your 8-year-old.

Monday, July 2nd

I just completed my entry form for the "Cookies in the Jar" competition at next month's Kandiyohi County Fair. Now, if you will excuse me, I will need to enter into several days of Zen-like meditation to prepare for the big event.

Monday, July 9th

Cabin Vacation Postmortem – Putting away my clothes from vacation, I realized that all of my exercise clothes were perfectly clean and unused. Somehow, catching kids leaping off the end of a dock for hours on end does not fit the conventional workout standards.

Cabin Vacation Postmortem – This morning, I caught a glimpse of myself in the rear view mirror. Of this I am now certain, there is something about the Northwoods look that does not translate upon your return back home.

Cabin Vacation Postmortem – I was unaware that we were renting our house, but the neighborhood ant colony appears to have moved in and made themselves comfortable.

Tuesday, July 10th

As 5-year-old Sam and I were horsing around at the dinner table, Sam playfully pointed a finger in my face. For fun, I figured that I would surprise Sam by snapping my jaws at him. Unfortunately, Sam was so surprised that he did not pull back his finger and I was fully committed to the act. Luck would have it that my attempt at playfulness just glanced his fingertip; our faces filled with shock, followed by relief. Good thing we were serving hot dogs, with fava beans and a nice Chianti.

Wednesday, July 11th

After seeing Sam score five goals in last night's soccer game and considering that he now leads my career total by... um... five goals, I need to check on David Beckham's whereabouts in May 2006.

July 2012

Thursday, July 12th

It's never a good thing, when you settle in to watch your son's soccer game and realize that you sat in close proximity to an ant hill. By the way, the real purpose of this post is to help clarify to other soccer parents why I was suddenly (and as discreetly as possible) thrusting my hand down the back of my pants. No one wants an ant down there.

Friday, July 13th

It is my understanding (although I have trouble believing it) that someday, the attachments on the vacuum will no longer be needed to clean the table after dinner.

Saturday, July 14th

As 5-year-old Sam attempted to make a play at first base, he tripped and fell onto the infield dirt. Administering the time tested parental-kiss-of-healing to his skinned elbow, I experienced what is known among baseball trainers as the "Gritty Kiss."

Monday, July 16th

The front storm door appears to be permanently fused in the locked position. Either our home is attempting to achieve supermax status or the term "kept man" has been redefined.

Tuesday, July 17th

On a recent trip to visit Charlene's grandmother, an episode of "The Waltons" was on T.V. This led me to a suspicion that once you reach a certain age, the satellite T.V. provider supplies an endless stream of "The Waltons," but I digress. Since I had not seen an episode of the Waltons in over 30 years and this one featured high drama and guilt trips, I watched as the father considered selling Walton Mountain to a developer, who is proposing to build a hilltop resort, I thought: "Sell! Sell! What are you thinking? The view is not THAT amazing and it is after all the GREAT DEPRESSION! Sell!" but I digress.

One particular scene caught my attention, as Grandma and Grandpa Walton return to the mountain to enjoy the view, thinking that the father may soon cash in. After receiving a back rub from Grandma Walton (What? I don't recall any physical contact on the show.), Grandpa reaches for Grandma's hand and reminisces: "Remember the first time we came up here?" Grandma pushing away Grandpa's hand: "We should not speak of such things."

Grandpa: "Why not? After all, we were married."

Grandma then smiles and accepts Grandpa's offer to hold his hand.

What is going on here? Was I accidentally watching an episode of "John-Boy's Secret Diaries?" But, I digress. "The Waltons" providing quality family entertainment and strong sexual innuendos, since 1971.

Wednesday, July 18th

Scientists agree that the recent tidal fluctuations experienced in the backyard kiddy pool can be attributed to one large daddy cooling off.

July 2012

Dave's World

Thursday, July 19th

As three-year-old Ben traveled from the bathtub to the bedroom, to put on his pajamas, he stopped in front of the air conditioner to do a "happy dance." I could not agree more. If anything deserves a "happy dance," it is A.C.

Friday, July 20th

During yesterday's final game of the church softball league regular season, I threw a bullet to the cut-off man, while simultaneously blowing an impressive bubble. Clutch play, baby. It appears as if my bubble gum skills are peaking, just in time for the playoffs.

Tuesday, July 24th

Pontoon cruising: no need for speed.

Reluctantly, I left the cabin and traveled to Walmart for some essentials... fresh fruit, drinking water, worms, etc. The place was packed and my mind and body were immediately forced into survival mode. Unfortunately, that meant that my brain purged any information absolutely essential for life. This became apparent as I checked out and completely forgot my debit card's randomly bank generated password. Stunned, I began to fear that the Walmart animated smiley face logo, in addition to creating low prices, had actually rolled back my hippocampus.

People ask me all the time, "Dave, how do you land such big fish?" Well, the my secret is simple. Four words: Tweety Bird Fishing Pole.

Wednesday, July 25th

Prior to entering the pool, I slathered 3-year-old Ben in sunscreen and soon realized that we can easily dress him as Casper the Friendly Ghost for Halloween. Plus, the SPF 50 will prevent any jack-o'-lantern related sunburns.

Thursday, July 26th

One year, since our move to Minnesota, and I am proud to report that I only slipped into the accent once. I believe this would qualify as the opposite of uff da.

Friday, July 27th

Exclusive excerpt from Dave Paulsen's upcoming book, "The Science of Hitting a Softball." "After sundown, it was amazing how much my hitting improved, once I removed my sunglasses. As Ted Williams always used to say, 'Function, before fashion.'"

July - August 2012

Monday, July 30th

Lessons learned from a boy who attended church, while on vacation, and happened to stumble upon "Polka Sunday."

First, you should always reference the church newsletter, before heading off to worship. Second, the polka type rhythm is not included in everyone's singing repertoire, myself included.

Third, a single "Polka Sunday" is enough to last an entire year.

Tuesday, July 31st

My "Proudest Moment of July 2012"... helping my team take 3rd Place (Pontoon Division) in the Cotton Lake (Minnesota) Fourth of July Boat Parade. Hey kids, remember that nothing exudes "patriotism" more than a Mount Rushmore made of paper yard waste bags.

My "Most Terrifying Moment of July 2012"... seeing if I could fit onto the teeter totter at the park and if it would do any permanent damage to my bottom.

Wednesday, August 1st

As I pleaded with 3-year-old Ben to please stop yelling in the car, he clarified that it was his Elmo toy that was screaming. Good. In that case, everyone in the car will understand when I throw the screeching red puppet out the window. This heartwarming story has been brought to you by the International Adopt-a-Highway Association, promoting litter-free roadways around the world.

Thursday, August 2nd

As the third child, 3-year-old Ben has gained the distinction of being the "child who has yet to play with a toy containing fresh batteries."

Friday, August 3rd

Sometimes no matter how hard you swing the bat. No matter how much you want to keep the inning alive. No matter how much you want to save the smell of a well worn glove, the sound of gravel under your cleats, and the hope that accompanies you as you walk to home plate. Sometimes, you simply swing and hit nothing, but air. In an instant, the ball lands in the catcher's mitt and the season is over. Nothing is left to comfort, but the knowledge you tried your best and the promise of next year. Sometimes against your will, one chapter ends and you must wait and prepare for a new beginning.

Saturday, August 4th

Oh yes, the "cookie" grocery list has been prepared for the Kandiyohi County Fair. Soon, the pantry will be packed and ready for action!

August 2012

Dave's World

Saturday, August 4th

Please, do not panic, but I need to inform the public that I was recently attacked by a barracuda at the swimming pool. Wait. No need to worry, after all. I have just been informed that it was just my 3-year-old, who needs to have his fingernails cut. Please, resume your summertime fun.

Monday, August 6th

Forget about Olympic doping scandals, I demand to know how Pabst ever won a Blue Ribbon!

Tuesday, August 7th

3 days, 13 varieties, and 561 cookies later, the oven rests. Bring on the County Fair!

Wednesday, August 8th

After telling Charlene, "If you were a sauce, you would be hot!" I realized that my boys may have to go elsewhere for quality advice about how to compliment women.

Open your window and listen to the Northern winds, which carry a message of joy. A new Cookie King has ascended to the throne in Kandiyohi County, Minnesota, and Dave Paulsen has been crowned co-champion and Blue Ribbon winner in the "Cookies in a Jar" competition. Sleep well lovers of baked goods for all is right in the universe.

Thursday, August 9th

When it is time for me to die, please place me in the Dairy Association's ice cream stand at the County Fair and I will leave this world with a smile on my face.

Friday, August 10th

It is a close call, whether my hours and hours of training for the County Fair cookie competition are best embodied in my new Blue Ribbon or my newly expanded waistline.

Saturday, August 11th

I am a "Sweet Genius." Are you?

Dear Lovers of Baked Goods,

As the Kandiyohi County Fair comes to a close and I prepare to pick up my Blue Ribbon cookie jar, I realize that after taking a year off from competitive baking, my cookie comeback is now complete. Come to think of it, the road back was not too complicated. I just needed to combine a love for cookie baking with a complete dedication toward the task at hand, oh and by the way, throw in a heaping amount of obsession and a pinch of insanity. Come to think of it, a lot of life's success includes those same ingredients.

See you around the cookie jar and at next year's County Fair.

Sincerely,

Cookie Dave

August 2012

Sunday, August 12th

Congratulations to the Loon Cookie Jar, which has officially entered the Paulsen Family Cookie Jar Hall of Fame. Way to go, swimming birdie of the North.

Monday, August 13th

Terrifying Update to the Classic Nursery Rhyme...

There was a middle aged man who drank some beer,

Following here is how he drank some beer;

He drank the beer to chase the Zantac,

He took the Zantac to calm the ice cream,

He gobbled the ice cream to cool the hot salsa,

He ate the hot salsa to stop the hunger that nibbled and gnawed and clawed inside him.

Perhaps he'll die!

Tuesday, August 14th

After seeing how dirty 8-year-old Jacob got in sandbox, I suspect that he is actually part Chinchilla (gasp!). This would also help explain his super soft hair. Although it may result in a promising future in a carnival sideshow ("Step right up and see 'Chinchilla Boy.'"), I will have to ensure that he is properly protected from fur traders.

Monday, August 20th

It really is amazing that the boys do not fall off playground equipment more frequently.

Strange, but true, the American Bar Association reports that "Irreconcilable Differences" is not the number one reason listed in divorce filings. Shockingly, the top spot went to, "I cannot believe that we cannot agree on a restaurant for lunch, after five hours in the car, while we are stuck driving around in the middle of nowhere, in which the city appears to have decided not to invest in signage, as our blood sugar levels continue to drop, and the stinking kids need it to be quiet in the car to watch the same DVD for the four thousandth time even though I could be listening to the Cubs game on the radio while the reception is momentarily great, and oh, I know you say that it would be o.k. to eat at McDonald's, but I remember the time you told me that you can only handle McDonald's once per road trip and I know if we stop you will look all disappointed, and did I mention that I happen to need a nap?" Yep, that took the top spot.

Tuesday, August 21st

We appear to have the special high tech smoke alarm that is factory programmed to provide the every-45-seconds-low-battery-"chirp" exclusively at 3:30 A.M. Lucky, lucky, sleepy me.

August 2012

Dave's World

Wednesday, August 22nd

During my visit home, I was cleaning some old stuff out of my parent's house. One random box contained an old cassette tape that a friend made of his garage band, "Rapid Fire." The flip side contained Mötley Crüe greatest hits. Handing my mother the tape, I informed her that I had discovered some songs from Bob's old band. My mom's response, "Mötley Crüe?" That's right, Mom. Bob was a member of Mötley Crüe. Let's Google them and see if they made it big.

Thursday, August 23rd

Headache? Check. Dizzy? Check. Oh, dear. I could have any number of things... Swine Flu, Bird Flu, West Nile, Ebola. Wait a second. I just need a large cup of strong black coffee. Caffeine: the wonder drug that works wonders.

Friday, August 24th

I realized that I sound just like Michael Bubl , when I sing in the shower (this claim has not been independently verified). Unfortunately, I need to work on his lyrics (although I am getting close)...

"I give it a try, but can't get it right.

I eat sandwiches in the middle of the night."

Saturday, August 25th

Pleased to report that I said goodbye to my 30s around a campfire with my three happy boys, while I had melted marshmallow from a S'mores stuck to my chin. I would not have wanted it any other way.

Sunday, August 26th

In case turning 40 did not make me feel old enough, after telling 5-year-old Sam my age, he asked, "How many is that in people years?"

Monday, August 27th

Success! My summertime diet of beer, brats, and s'mores has resulted in the Coast Guard increasing my buoyancy rating.

Tuesday, August 28th

Why try? I cannot hide the ugly truth. I have not been flossing and I am going to see the dentist. Nothing left to do, but repent, suffer through the scraping, and change my lazy ways.

Wednesday, August 29th

Today, the battle begins! Today, I will begin to erase the results of a summer full of gluttony and sloth, although I certainly enjoyed the gluttony and sloth in the moment. Today, I embrace self control, moderation, and exercise, although I cannot promise to enjoy any of them. Today, the long march toward "Summer Tummy 2013" begins!

August - Sept. 2012

Thursday, August 30th

Drum roll, please. Today's category is "Things that are Hot"... a Ford Escort's tail pipe... the inside of a Totino's Pizza Roll... oh yeah and even at 40, Cameron Diaz.

Friday, August 31st

As my kids and I sat around a table in Dairy Queen, trying to give ourselves brain freeze, 3-year-old Ben's remark made me realize that he learned something this summer. "If you are going to throw up, throw up on the grass." Wisdom beyond his years.

Saturday, September 1st

Watching the sunrise = Spectacular; Watching the sunrise, followed by a quality nap = Even better!

Sunday, September 2nd

As I watched my team fall behind 21-0, my 5-year-old Sam provided some comfort, "Dad, don't worry 'last is really first.'" Alas, the lesson of Matthew 20:16 paraphrased for college football.

Monday, September 3rd

Dermatologists agree that the covering of dirt and chocolate on 5-year-old Sam's face serves as a natural sunscreen.

Tuesday, September 4th

With my 3rd grader, Jacob, starting school today, I don't know how I will manage without someone playing the role of a third parent around the house. Don't worry, this dash of sarcasm was provided free of charge.

Wednesday, September 5th

As it spastically went up and down, I had a sense that the garage door was cheering my return to a morning workout.

Thursday, September 6th

Today, the house will be a little less enthusiastic, a little less talkative, a little less creative, a little less bustling, a little less blonde hair and blue eyed, a little less perfect, as our beloved Sam leaves the nest for Kindergarten.

Friday, September 7th

Like most people, I have some regrets. Actions taken or opportunities missed, where in hindsight I would have made a different choice. Personally, my biggest regret is ever having purchased an imitation train whistle for my 8-year-old. "All aboard!"

September 2012

Dave's World

Saturday, September 8th

Transcript from last night's emergency hearing of the Senate Committee on Nighttime Emergencies (SCONE).

(Grumpy Old) Senator: Am I correct that you knew about the rip in the plastic mattress cover?

(Nervous) Mr. Paulsen: I knew of a small rip, which I positioned in a safe location by the child's head. I had no idea... (Senator interrupting answer)

(Grumpy Old) Senator: So you knowingly let a child sleep on a mattress that was in danger of being, um, soiled?

(Now Defensive) Mr. Paulsen: I had no way of knowing that this would happen. Frankly, I should be hailed as a hero for my immediate response and swift use of Febreze. This appears to be nothing more than a witch hunt. (Senator interrupting again)

(Grumpy Old) Senator: Mr. Chairman, I believe that we have heard enough to forward this matter to the Attorney General for further consideration.

[To be continued on a cable news channel of your political persuasion...]

Monday, September 10th

Perhaps it was a desire to drive safe or fear of getting a speeding ticket or more likely just an attempt to live life a little lazier, in any event, I was pretty disappointed to learn that my car will not allow me to set the cruise control at 25 MPH. Sunday driving on a Monday morning?

Tuesday, September 11th

Dear Lord,

Today, as we relive painful memories and reflect on lives lost and those forever changed, please help us respond to hate with demonstrations of your everlasting love.

Amen.

Wednesday, September 12th

I would like to thank the Academy for nominating me "Hypocrite of the Day," as I told 3-year-old Ben to keep a penny out of his mouth, while I was clenching my car keys between my teeth.

Thursday, September 13th

In an attempt to free myself, long enough to shower for the day, I asked 8-year-old Jacob to please try and entertain his sad younger brother. For the next 45 minutes, 5-year-old Sam was witness to Jacob's bizarre blending of acting, a sort of muted yelling, singing, running around, plus an odd cowboy sequence. Although Jacob may not be ready for prime time, he may have a future in Rodgers and Hammerstein productions.

September 2012

Friday, September 14th

I would like to thank 3-year-old Ben for joining the "Save the Dave" fitness initiative. His recent insistence on being carried everywhere will no doubt help tone my arms and upper body.

Saturday, September 15th

It's that time of year, again. Time to call my insurance agent and update our homeowner's coverage to include the "footballs going over the fence into the neighbor's yard" rider.

Sunday, September 16th

One of the best things about reading the part of God from the Story of Noah, in church, is that you get to select a voice for God of the Old Testament. I am thinking James Earl Jones with a Midwestern twang. The power of the Almighty, with a dash of down home sensibility.

Monday, September 17th

Recently, 3-year-old Ben has been taking a toy or some other random item with him, whenever we leave the house. After a few minutes, he often grows tired of carrying the treasure and I end up trying to figure out a way to ensure that it returns home. This has not been too much of a problem... until Saturday. As we left the house, Ben was carrying about a dozen refrigerator magnets. When I was eventually asked to carry the magnets, I stored them in my hoodie's pouch. This was not an issue, until I was overcome by the fear of walking past a refrigerator, lest I be pulled against my will toward the appliance and end up stuck there for days. Even worse, any passing truck could magnetically drag my unwilling body into the street. God forbid, the worst scenario, a passing refrigerated truck! I shudder at the thought. Try explaining that to the responding firefighters and ambulance crew.

Tuesday, September 18th

I never realized that attending a high school junior varsity football game has something for everyone. While my two older boys enjoyed getting seats really close to the action, my 3-year-old was fascinated by all of the stuff that drops underneath the bleachers. Personally, I was happy that the 3-year-old could only view the bleacher droplets from above, which eliminates the need to bust out the Purell.

Wednesday, September 19th

As my attempt at zucchini bread split apart upon exiting the pan (I neglected to line the bottom of the pan with parchment paper), 5-year-old Sam offered words of consolation, "You could feed it to Jasper (our beagle, who will eat anything)." Gosh, thanks. Now feel free to stop talking and get far, far, away from me.

September 2012

Dave's World

Thursday, September 20th

Yesterday, I took my 3-year-old Ben to a playgroup activity for preschool kids and parents. Since the program was funded in part through the government, I needed to fill out a short demographic survey. Before glancing at the form, I overheard two moms bemoaning the fact that they no longer fell in the "b" category for parents "Ages 20 to 29." Looking at the form, I realized that I am now in the oldest category, which is for parents "Ages 40 and up." I was kind of hoping that they would rename this classification, "You are over 40 and you have a preschool child, which explains why you are so tired all of the time." Somehow, that may have made me feel better about my advanced age.

Friday, September 21st

, +Perhaps, I should have waited until my tape7-measure- wielding897456-constantly-chatting-insisting-on-touching-the-keyboard 3-year-old I was distracted, before I attempted to12 update my status on Facebook.

Saturday, September 22nd

You might be able to convince me that it is o.k. to install your Christmas lights now, in order to beat the first snowfall and before it gets super cold, but really, do they need to be lit up already?

Monday, September 24th

It appears as if 3-year-old Ben's plans for the day consist of being my full-time shadow. A very loud, question asking, cute, and somewhat destructive shadow.

Tuesday, September 25th

As I sat down with my nighttime snack of an oatmeal stout, pita chips, and hummus, I believe that there was an act of divine intervention on behalf of my struggling diet. My beer suddenly erupted in a volcano-like gusher of sudsy brew. As I rushed to clean up Beerma-geddon, my dog decided it would be an opportune time to stand in the middle of the room and urinate. The final liquid in this parade of sadness? A lone tear running down my cheek, as I surveyed the disaster.

Wednesday, September 26th

Having spent the last twenty minutes using a paperclip, in a vain attempt at picking the lock on the bathroom door, I can at least eliminate locksmith as a future career path. Looking at my newly bruised and battered thumb and index finger combo, I can also rule out professional "hand model." The score: Clarity in Life - 2, Open Bathroom Door - 0.

September - Oct. 2012

Thursday, September 27th

There I was, happily pushing my shopping cart with child on board. Suddenly, my little kingdom came crashing down, as I saw a younger, more handsome, and fit version of myself pushing a cart around, along with a littler and cuter version of my child on board. Yes, instead of experiencing a sense of stay-at-home dad camaraderie, I swung into territorial mode. Watch out, bud, this is my grocery store turf. The caveman lives and he is, uh, I.

Friday, September 28th

As I dropped Sam off for Kindergarten, he observed with delight, "Hey, there's the girl that I chase after." Attaboy!

Sunday, September 30th

I find myself overwhelmed with a sense of urgency, as I try to eliminate my son's "plumber's butt," before heading off to church.

Monday, October 1st

Forget about the falling leaves or the brisk wind from the North, a true sign of cold weather approaching are my freshly blown out flip-flops. No, I did not step "on a pop-top" or "cut my heel" and "cruise on back home," but given that finding a replacement pair of flip-flops may be impossible this time of year, I may as well slip on my snow shoes and wait for Spring to arrive.

Tuesday, October 2nd

As my two older boys attended football camp, I decided to entertain 3-year-old Ben by singing him songs from his "Children's Songbook." Sitting on the back of my car, enjoying the nice Fall evening, I decided that "Do-Re-Mi" from the "Sound of Music" would be an appropriate selection. As I belted out "La, a note to follow Sew," the vacant parking lot was suddenly filled with a man walking to his car. The gentleman looked somewhat disappointed to see me singing the song, rather than a deceptively sexy Austrian nanny nun-in-training. Hey, what did you expect? This show is free.

Wednesday, October 3rd

After visiting four stores and purchasing 82 "Jack O' Lantern" leaf bags, it is safe to say that I have gone a little bit overboard with this year's Fall decorations. Folks, this is going to be "pumpkin-rific!"

October 2012

Dave's World

Thursday, October 4th

Okay, I take some of the blame. Sure, I did not finish the mountain of laundry, but I thought that it was obvious that the clothes were clean and unfolded, sitting in their lovely baskets. Now, some additional yucky, dirty, and in some cases, disgusting clothes have been plopped on top. As a result, I declare myself judge of what was actually recently clean and what has been soiled by the new deliveries. Congrats household, you will be treated to America's favorite game, "Laundry Roulette." That's right, it may be dirty, it may be clean, who knows, but it will be in your dresser waiting for you.

Friday, October 5th

After he had licked off all of the icing and sprinkles, my 3-year-old Ben handed me the remainder of his doughnut. I wish I had the willpower and common sense to resist, but instead I gobbled up the repulsive remainder of his fatty treat. On a positive note, we can now update the classic nursery rhyme, "Ben Paulsen just licks the icing; his dad will eat anything. So between them both you see, they are thoroughly disgusting."

Saturday, October 6th

I have decided to encase my head in cookie dough. It was only a matter of time.

Dear Facebook Nation,

I beg your help! Someone told someone else, who may have mentioned it to another person, that rumor has it, our beloved country estate (i.e. second mortgage) in Kansas may receive an bid for purchase on Monday. So here is the request, please pray, wish luck, send happy thoughts, engage in necromancy (on second thought you may want to use your best judgment on that one), anything that you feel would be helpful in getting a reasonable offer on the table. Your efforts are much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dave the Reluctant Land Barron

Monday, October 8th

My wife seems to be hiding the ice cream in the deepest recesses of the freezer, in order to have me burn more calories, while digging it out.

The Wonderful World of Dave's Formal Explanations...

What is up with the Psalms?

At our Lutheran church in Kansas, I facilitated a weekly adult bible study and the part of the bible I had the most trouble with was the Psalms. Why? Because, the Psalms are songs/poetry, which I find much harder to read than straight forward prose. I made it my goal to comprehend and actually enjoy the Psalms. Armed with the insights of Rolf A. Jacobson in the Lutheran Study Bible and two hours of uninterrupted free time per week, while young Sam took swim classes at the Y, I became determined to explain each Psalm in 420 characters or less (i.e. Facebook style). That's it. The genesis of the sorta Psalms.

October 2012

Tuesday, October 9th

At 5:30AM, as I tended to a child with a sour stomach, 5-year-old Sam came in to use the bathroom.

Little did I know that I had unwittingly signed up to attend "Sam Paulsen's One Man Morning Wake-Up Show."

Act I – Sam's dramatic narrative covering the history of toilet paper (I kid you, not) from "leaves and grass" to its current rolled configuration.

Act II – Sam's acrobatic attempt to fall back asleep, while visiting my bed. This now comes in an iPad app called the "Flopping Fish," where the iPad will flip and flop around uncontrollably for 30 minutes.

Act III – Sam's grand comedic sendoff, featuring the joke, "What did the white milk say to the strawberry milk? Hey look, there is a brown cow!"

Not to be critical, but this show really needed to feature a coffee bar at its conclusion.

Wednesday, October 10th

I never saw any of the Exorcist sequels, but after my boy got sick last night, I imagine that they detailed Linda Blair's parents mopping up vomit. Exorcist II: The Cleanup.

Thursday, October 11th

This morning, 5-year-old Sam commented, "I am surprised that Mommy came home (from a municipal manager's conference in Phoenix)." Given our home's level of illness, the Minnesota Fall chill outside, and the ever present chaos, I must say that I am also a little surprised with her prompt return.

After yesterday's "Sick Day Deluxe" featured a Star Wars movie marathon and California rolls for lunch, I consider it a small miracle that I got 8-year-old Jacob off to school this morning.

Friday, October 12th

Update from the Halloween Front Line... Fort Jack-O-Lantern suffered moderate damage following an assault from two angst filled teenagers. After losing 6 large pumpkin leaf sacks, 2 medium real pumpkins, and 2 deluxe "bumpy" real pumpkins, the only comfort is knowing the fear in their hearts as a middle-aged homeowner yelled at them from down the street. My fellow Americans, I promise you that we will bounce back from this attack more "pumpkiny" than ever. We will not let the squash terrorists win!

Humbling Moment of the Day – Helping your elementary student with his homework and realizing that you spell at about a third grade level. I'm telling you, neighbor. Humbling, indeed.

October 2012

Dave's World

Saturday, October 13th

Sadly, I realized that this is my most frequent quote toward the end of the workday: "Ben, you had better stop (insert questionable behavior) or we will both get in trouble, when Mommy comes home."

Monday, October 15th

Attempting to watch TV, when you have been punished with the loss of TV privileges. Attempting to watch TV, when you have been punished with the loss of TV privileges, while your father is in the next room. The greater sin of these two? The later, of course. Among the lessons you wish you could teach your children, but it is better for them to figure out on their own: only commit a sin, when you have a high probability of getting away with it.

Tuesday, October 16th

As I contemplated ways to make 3-year-old Ben stop touching everything in sight and in general reduce his level of wildness, I realized that what I was trying to change was the essence of his being. Stopping the wild child would be like telling the Earth to stop spinning or the wind to stop kicking up leaves. Yes, it appears as if my best strategy moving forward will be to purchase protective gear for myself and others.

Wednesday, October 17th

Right before heading up to the attic to retrieve a box, I apparently hiked up my pants. After Charlene had a good chuckle, she indicated that no matter what size pants I am wearing, I always hike them up as an indication that I am ready to work. Well, in that case, here's hoping that today there will be no need for me to hoist the old trousers.

Thursday, October 18th

As I saw 3-year-old Ben point to his mother's fit tummy at lunch, I could see a train wreck developing. "Mommy, you have a big tummy." (Point of clarification: this comment must result in my stomach being classified as "legendarily gargantuan.") My look of horror was obviously not enough to prevent him from uttering a follow-up. "You should exercise to make it smaller." Young Ben apparently needs to spend some more time in Professor Dave's "Things you should never, ever, under any circumstance say to a woman" class.

Friday, October 19th

And going down as one of my worst ideas, "Hey guys, let's use some glitter." According to EPA projections, the cleanup could take several years.

October 2012

Saturday, October 20th

This morning, in an attempt to shed some pounds prior to the onslaught of Halloween candy, I went to the gym with my wife. I wrapped up my run, before Charlene had finished with her weights, so I figured I would walk on the track that passed by the weight machines and say hello. As I approached Charlene doing curls, I entered my goofy, but suave, mode. Think James Bond meets Mr. Bean. Glancing at Charlene, I gave her a wink, which much to my dismay was intercepted by the woman on an adjacent rowing machine. Not only did this lower my Romantic Quarterback Rating to a record low, it also provided me with a new title, "Creepy Guy at the Gym."

Sunday, October 21st

The family that cooks lefse together, eats lefse together.

Monday, October 22nd

Recently, I observed two occasions that capture the essence of 3-year-old Ben. The first, when he sneezed so hard that the whiplash caused him to hit his head on the kitchen table. The second, when he pulled on the car door handle with such force that upon letting go he flew backwards. Our Ben: Go Hard or Go Hurt.

Tuesday, October 23rd

Ah, the 4AM visit from 5-year-old Sam, the boy who breathes heavy in his sleep. The closest you can get to having Darth Vader in your bed.

Wednesday, October 24th

No matter how much water I put on the comb, my little boy's hair will not stay down. Oh well, why fight nature? Fly away, hair. Be free!

Thursday, October 25th

I am not sure which was worse for my overall health: having the dog sneeze on my leg or my gobbling up dinner scraps from my kids and accidentally ingesting a chunk of well traveled Play-Doh.

Friday, October 26th

As 8-year-old Jacob read to me at bedtime, I snuggled down into the warm covers and closed my eyes. About ten minutes later, I woke up in a startled state. Trying to act like I had been listening to the story, I inserted a "whoa," which always seems to be an appropriate comment for fictional baseball novels written for 8-year-olds. Unfortunately, this was not one of those instances. Jacob stopped reading and asked in a surprised voice, "What?" Still groggy and grasping for an answer, I said, "That thing with Terry (the main character)." Suspicious, but somewhat satisfied with my response, he continued reading. Perhaps, Jacob could earn some additional allowance by putting his father to bed at night.

October 2012

Dave's World

Saturday, October 27th

As we asked 5-year-old Sam how he lost his mittens, he explained that he left them in the school auditorium, because “my pants didn't have pockets and I didn't want to put them in my underwear.” Unfortunately, Sam fails to mention why his underwear ranks higher than his coat pockets, school locker, and backpack, as the preferred place to store things. It does however explain how kids in Minnesota keep extra warm through the Winter.

Monday, October 29th

No need to wait until Halloween for zombies. Just take a good look at my kids, after a Phineas and Ferb cartoon marathon. #DisneyChanneloftheLivingDead

Tuesday, October 30th

As I sat there watching 5-year-old Sam's wrestling practice (i.e. self-defense skills for the middle child), I observed the High School wrestlers and could not ever remember myself being that large in High School. Then it struck me, I did not have my growth spurt until age 38 and strangely enough, it took place in my gut.

Wednesday, October 31st

Forget about “smoke on the water.” It was more like “snow on the pumpkins.”

Among the things that I will someday probably regret, teaching young Ben how to use licorice as a straw.

Between my slippers, who mysteriously smell like something crawled into and died, and middle-of-the-night kid vomit (No, you are mistakenly thinking of Kid Rock “singin' 'Sweet Home Alabama' all Summer long.” I am talking about actual kid vomit.), I am beginning to think that my life is just a big product placement for Febreze.

After squeaking out a victory, by the narrowest of margins, in the Willmar Public Library Adult Fiction Halloween Short Story Contest, I am adding “King of Willmar” to my resume. Stephen King, that is. Quoth the raven, “(Dave, enough with the delusions of grandeur.) Nevermore.”

And now for your reading pleasure (on the next few pages), a “Dave's World” exclusive. The first printing of Dave's award winning (see previous comment) Halloween Short Story, “Homecoming.” In order to provide some context, the short story needed to be under 1,000 words, not contain any profanity, and have a “Halloween” type theme. Enjoy.

Homecoming

Sitting in the front pew was certainly different. As the only surviving relative, Ken had a clear view of his father's open casket. If he had been sitting in their regular family pew, Ken would not have been able to see his father's frozen face or hear so clearly the lay person reading, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death."

Perhaps it was the contrast of the musty overheated church with the cold Autumn day, which generated the kind of nausea in Ken that can only be cured with time.

Sitting in that front pew, Ken drifted in the haze of a familiar hymn, "In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine." In disbelief, Ken thought he saw his father move. Slowly inching upward, until he was sitting upright. Turning toward the congregation, the skillful work of the mortician and the short edge of the coffin blocked any sign of his crushed abdomen. His face was drained, but caked with makeup to provide the illusion of life. His eyelids opened to reveal opaque eyes. He faced his only son.

Speechless and shocked, Ken turned to view the remainder of the congregation, who failed to see the resurrection. Gray and stoic, the room seemed transfixed by the pastor's eulogy, which was highlighting the glory of our new bodies transformed by the blood of Christ.

"You know that it was embarrassing to roll the tractor like that," his father said in an apologetic tone. "I have gone down that hill a thousand times and it never slid like that. Must have been the heavy rains, last week. Somehow they loosened the soil enough to give way." "Guess, I should have waited another day or two to check on the Southern fence," he said with a slight chuckle. "Of course, you will need to check on it, when you get settled in."

The thought of returning to the farm caused Ken to shudder. After so much hard work, he had finally left for school and after his mother's funeral, he seldom found a reason for the return trip home.

"Dad, you know I have two years of school left," Ken stammered.

"Kenny, you are needed here, now. If your mother hadn't died, we could have bought you more time to explore the world and get it out of your system, but not now. You're all that's left," his father replied to him from his resting place.

Slowly peering around the room, Ken saw that the elderly congregation appeared to be statues. Cold, gray, lifeless statues slowly singing the words, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear."

"For five generations, your family has farmed this land. Don't throw it away. Your place is here now," his father pleaded.

Ken's body felt heavy, as immovable as the antique oak pew, where he was sitting. His vision felt cloudy. Beneath him, Ken could hear a small army of women quietly prepar-

Homecoming

Dave's
Halloween
Short Story

ing tea sandwiches and relish trays. It was as if those women had always been there, preparing meal after meal for an endless stream of mourners and the soon-to-be dead,

"I'm too young for this," Ken said, while trying to lean forward and get a better look at his father. "It just isn't fair."

"Fair has nothing to do with it! If life were fair, would your mother have died? Would I have been crushed like a tin can? Fair is not what you should be worried about. Loyalty, obligation, family, those are the things that should be on your selfish mind," his father scolded, in a harsh tone that reminded Ken why he had long resented him. "This town, these people, your family, we all need you. You know you can't leave. You know you never will!"

Still defiant, Ken looked to the floor. Slowly, the sounds of the funeral were replaced by a steady chant, "Honor your father and mother. Honor your father and mother." Barely able to move, Ken struggled to glance at the others. Growing louder, Sunday School teachers, neighbors, and familiar faces, all stared at Ken; expressionless; pressing him; reminding him with chilling voices. "Honor your father and mother."

Ken felt a heavy hand touch his shoulder. Turning toward the touch, Ken saw the hand of his mother. Frozen and lifeless, his mother looked at him. The pleasantries of embalming gone, she had a face ravaged by disease and a body thin and musty from the grave. "Your father is right," Ken's mother said in a loving voice. "We need you here at home. You can't leave."

Suddenly the weight of the congregation fell upon his shoulders, as the church reached for him in unison. Fighting the pressure forcing him down in the pew, Ken struggled for breath, as his ears were flooded with the growing chorus, "Honor your father and mother. Honor your father and mother." As the ceiling of the church began to descend upon him, Ken closed his eyes.

Ken's leaden body sank. His breath faded. Releasing a final gasp, Ken yielded to the pressure. Sensing victory, the hands and building retreated. Righting himself, Ken saw the congregation seated. Their stoney eyes fixed on the pastor.

His mother was gone; her chore complete. Ken looked to the windows, where a light snow drifted down, covering the freshly dug grave waiting for its tenant.

Ken no longer saw his father. This was once again his home, as permanent and confining as the casket.

A sense of stillness drifted over him. Ken was now one of the cold and expressionless faces listening to the pastor's words, "For you were made from dust, and to dust you shall return."

His fate was sealed; the homecoming complete.

Thursday, November 1st

After the latest attempt at selling our Kansan mansion never materialized, we are proud to unveil our new title... Absentee Landlord! This promotion brought to you by the Great (and ever so slowly receding) Recession.

Friday, November 2nd

The manufacturer of the "Thomas the Tank Engine" cardboard puzzles are really missing out on a golden opportunity. While assembling a puzzle of the cheeky blue steam engine, our 3-year-old performed acrobatics and utilized various cardboard pieces as throwing stars, which means they could also market the puzzle as a "Training Kit for Young Ninjas."

Saturday, November 3rd

Although we are still refining the rules, I think that "Nighttime Child Pong" might go viral. You start by having a child crawl into your bed at night. Throughout the night, you volley the floppy kid back and forth. The loser ends up having the child's foot randomly kicking their ribs, while the loving parent dangles perilously off the edge of the bed. Perhaps there is still time to qualify the event for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

Monday, November 5th

Just to mess with people, Wham's "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go" should be played at more funerals. On second thought, maybe I just really need some more sleep.

Tuesday, November 6th

"Oh, I wish I were a voter in a swing state! That is what I'd truly like to be! 'Cause if I were a voter in a swing state, the candidates would give a damn 'bout me!" - This copyright infringement has been brought to you by the Electoral College, "Making a ratified mess of your vote, since 1787."

Wednesday, November 7th

Sam and Ben's room may need cleaning, when upon entering, the first words the come to mind are "trash heap."

Thursday, November 8th

I was wondering how 5-year-old Sam was doing making friends in Kindergarten. Any concerns that I had were wiped away this morning, as I attended the "Breakfast for Buddies" event with him. That boy was working the room and was clearly refining his shtick. Now instead of worrying about him making friends, I have concerns about having the time to prepare enough "Sam Paulsen for President - 2044" yard signs.

November 2012

Dave's World

Friday, November 9th

While strolling through the grocery store, I was so happy to discover "Lemongrass & Clementine Zest" scented dish soap that I had to take a whiff. Giving the bottle a little squeeze, my nose was filled with the pleasant aroma. Eager to share my new fragrance discovery, I offered 3-year-old Ben a sniff. Much to our shock, I put a little too much effort into my squeeze and squirted the new dish soap onto the poor lad. On the bright side, if I had stopped by the store's drinking fountain, I would have been able to clean my child, his clothes, and come away with soft and fragrant hands all from a trip to the grocery store. Next time, I will need to remember to bring along some dirty dishes, too.

Saturday, November 10th

Please, forgive me. One last comment on the felt-like-it-would-never-end marathon that was the 2012 Presidential Election. Today, I am thankful that as a nation, we figured out a way to hold a Presidential Election, without waiting on vote totals from Florida. If I am correct, they are still considering ballots from 2008, which were lost under polling place folding chairs.

Ripley's Believe It or Not! (2012 Edition). In Willmar, Minnesota, an unstable, but harmless, gentleman constructed an 8-foot-tall Christmas tree entirely out of sugar cookies.

Sunday, November 11th

Please, hold your applause (never mind, it is o.k. to applaud), but you are now reading a post from the First Place Winner in the "Mord's Hardware Hank & Plumbing Christmas Cutout Cookie Contest." Nothing says "Merry Christmas" like an old fashioned cookie showdown.

Monday, November 12th

Based on the crunchy sound under my feet, as I strolled across the kitchen floor, I can say with some certainty that, this morning, the kids poured their own bowls of Rice Krispies.

As 8-year-old Jacob and I watched Faith Hill's intro to Sunday Night Football, a momentary bout with silliness compelled me to comment, "I sure like when the pretty lady sings about football." In sincerity, my oldest seconded my comment with an "Uh, huh." In the future, Charlene may need sit in on my television viewing, in order to limit my commentary on universal truths.

Tuesday, November 13th

I could be mistaken, but as Jasper the Beagle stared at me, while standing in front of the shelves holding his biscuits, I believe he was trying to use the Jedi Mind Trick. Repeat after me, "I will place the open container of dog treats on the floor."

Wednesday, November 14th

Healthy as a Middle-Aged Ox

November 2012

Thursday, November 15th

As part of his chores to earn an allowance, 8-year-old Jacob was tasked with walking his younger brother, 5-year-old Sam, home from school. Recently, I looked out an upstairs window to see Jacob chasing his little brother home, while pelting him with snow balls, albeit in an arguably brotherly love type fashion. Well, he was technically walking his brother home from school.

Friday, November 16th

While trying to disable a spewing water heater, I soon learned that it is possible to get shocked, while adjusting an operating sump pump's float arm. Of course, next, I learned that you can also get shocked, while adjusting an operating sump pump's motor. Lastly, I learned that two repeated shocks provide me with super human powers, such as the ability to leap across an entire room to call a licensed plumber. Announcing the newest Avenger: Super Slow Learner Dad.

Saturday, November 17th

Nothing delights the soul of an early rising Kindergartener like the discovery that it is Saturday and he does not need to go to school. Adding to the euphoria, his sleepy parents have authorized the showing of Saturday morning cartoons. A 5-year-old's vision of heaven.

Monday, November 19th

I should have anticipated the run on Twinkies at the grocery store. As I drove around town, trying to find the sugary cakes to share with my boys, I realized that I had never before purchased a box of Twinkies for the family. Forget labor woes, I was part of the problem. I shared the blame. To paraphrase Mick Jagger, "I shouted out, 'Who killed the Twinkies?' When after all, it was you and me. Who? Who?" Sympathy for the snack food, indeed.

After I first heard about labor strife at the Hostess factory, I began work on a solution. Now, thanks in part to a generous grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, I am proud to announce the "Twinkie Tree." Sleep well, America. Your Twinkie needs will be met for generations to come.

Tuesday, November 20th

Tomorrow, I am scheduled to have two gallons of Potassium Sorbate injected into my blood stream. If it has the same ability in humans "to retain freshness," as it did in Twinkies, I will have found the secret to eternal (shelf) life. Eat your heart out, Ponce de León.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, by offering Twinkie clone "Cloud Cakes" at 40 cents less per 10 count box, I believe the real culprit in the death of our beloved Twinkie, is (gasp!) Little "Devil" Debbie. I rest my case.

November 2012

Dave's World

Wednesday, November 21st

After the kids go to bed, I find it refreshing to take my beagle on a walk through downtown and window shop. I never take along any cash or identification, just my faithful, furry, little friend. Recently, we were taking a stroll, when we were approached by an older gentleman, who asked if I could do him a favor. Even though I was not carrying any money, I responded, "Sure," when in fact, I was unsure of how I could possibly help him. At that point, he requested, "In four years, have your dog run for President." Good to know that strangers feel comfortable refining their comedy routine on me. Now, to honor my offer to help, I must undertake the arduous task of amending the Constitution to permit the election of dogs. All in a day's walk.

Thursday, November 22nd

This past week, I seriously flirted with full-time employment. That's right, actual shirt and tie, go to work everyday and earn real money, full-time employment. While an epic fail at the interview stage (personally, I did not think I did THAT bad) put an end to this experiment, the whole process made me very thankful. Thankful that I have the incredible opportunity to spend everyday with my amazing children. Baking cookies, playing catch, talking Star Wars, making sure I do my best to help them grow into fine young men. Thankful for my beautiful, talented, and all around amazing wife, who goes to work everyday and strives to make this community an even better place to live. An incredible wife, who supports her family, deals with tremendous stress, and cares without end. Thankful, yes. I am indeed thankful for this moment, this opportunity in life, and the love that surrounds me.

Friday, November 23rd

As I headed out for another round of Black Friday shopping with my loyal companion, 3-year-old Ben, I figured I should evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of my co-pilot. Looking at Ben in the rear view mirror, I asked, "Can you keep a secret?" Without hesitation, Ben answered, "No." On the plus side, he's honest. His secret keeping deficiency however ruled out the possibility of any actual Christmas shopping involving my spouse, jewelry, any other family members, or toys of any kind on this excursion.

Saturday, November 24th

While watching "Skyfall," I glanced over to see my wife drooling over the sight of Daniel Craig in a towel. This helps explain our household's recent video store requests for direct-to-video titles, such as, "Daniel Craig washing dishes... in a towel" and "Daniel Craig balancing the checkbook... in a towel." It also helps explain, why I will be approaching a personal trainer at the gym with a photo of Daniel Craig in a towel and requesting help in making me look like a freshly showered secret agent. Somehow, I think this will take more effort than learning to say "shaken, not stirred" in a debonaire British accent.

Saturday, November 24th

There we were, standing in line to buy tickets to "Skyfall," when I overheard the young couple in front of us ask, "What is 'Red Dawn?'" That is when it took every ounce of self control not to yell what was running around in my head, "What is 'Red Dawn?!'" It just happens to be a cold war epic, that defined the fears of testosterone filled 1980s boys and also foreshadowed the chemistry between Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey long before they attempted to put 'baby in a corner.' It certainly is not some remake that features a 'secret weapon,' but rather was a raw tale of struggle, although I cannot really make a true comparison, since my wife refuses to see the remake and I don't have the stomach right now to be that creepy loner movie theater dude that society should embrace and bring back into the mix. Do yourself a favor, download the original, and forgive us for the haircuts and fashion from the Reagan administration. Wolverines!" Yep, that is what I was thinking.

Monday, November 26th

I was pleased to find out that our computer does not need any upgrades to install my son's new game. I was disappointed to discover that I will need some Dramamine to play the game with him.

Tuesday, November 27th

Based on how pumped he was for his older brother's birthday, Ben may explode on his 4th birthday.

Wednesday, November 28th

Entering the gas station to buy a morning newspaper, I was greeted by two young attendants, who were giving each other sensual back rubs behind the cash register. Although I did not hear them say, "Hey, let's take this behind the dairy case," the situation was still uncomfortable. Then I remembered a recent New York Times headline, "Employers utilize non-traditional benefits to recruit young employees." Earn a paycheck and work out that knot in your lower back.

Thursday, November 29th

As if it was not insult enough that my 9-year-old has a busier social calendar than me, my assignment of coordinating it sort of rubs it in. Perhaps this could be called Daddy Anomie or Youth Jealousy?

Friday, November 30th

Considering my exhaustive coverage of the national Twinkie Crisis, today I will be taking a comp day from Facebook. Feel free to forward any questions or comments to my indentured servant, er, unpaid intern, Tad.

December 2012

Dave's World

Saturday, December 1st

Every time I dance in public, I am reminded that I was born without any rhythm and if it is possible, I have lost some since then. Now, with a heavy heart, I have reluctantly abandoned my dream of being a Rockette.

Sunday, December 2nd

The family that rings the Salvation Army bell together is unruly at the shopping mall together.

Monday, December 3rd

Mission accomplished. Anakin Skywalker's blue lightsaber successfully exchanged for Obi-Wan Kenobi's blue lightsaber. Those Jedi should really call each other before heading out to protect the galaxy, in order to ensure that they won't be wielding the same colored lightsabers. Sing along with me... "It's beginning to feel a lot like the Day After Christmas."

Tuesday, December 4th

Congratulations to 3-year-old Ben, who has mastered the art of talking non-stop. In order to accomplish this feat, it appears as if he simply catches up on his breathing at night, while he sleeps, enabling him to talk without interruption during all waking moments. Introducing the "Oratory Energizer Benny."

Wednesday, December 5th

Walking through the toy aisle, 5-year-old Sam announces that he would like a "Star Wars Droid Transport Ship" for Christmas. Searching the shelves, I asked Sam if he had ever actually seen one of these in a store. He responded, "No, but Santa's elves could make one." Looking back the appropriate response would have been, "Son, that would be a copyrighted toy and even Santa ain't 'lawyered up' enough to take on the Disney Empire." Instead, I made a second attempt to find the phantom toy. I found it at Target.com for (drum roll, please) five times over budget! Time for this elf to see if he can work some Christmas magic on ebay.

Thursday, December 6th

Since the dawn of man, humanity and religion have struggled with conflict. My living room is no different, as the classic Christmas decorations battle the insurgent "tacky" Christmas forces. Here's hoping that the nativity survives its latest assault from "Bust a Moose," the stuffed animal that croons Young MC's "Bust a Move." The fate of humanity may hang in the balance.

December 2012

Friday, December 7th

The tree tied down on top of the car and the boys (partially) tied down inside.

While on the floor, adjusting the tree stand, I was unaware of the danger towering above. Within seconds, the monstrous pine had toppled onto me. Unable to move (o.k., I could have easily lifted the tree and wiggled out, but it sounds better this way), I contemplated what would be appropriate last words, as consciousness drifted from my pinned frame. On the bright side, I received some free acupuncture therapy and I smell pine fresh.

Saturday, December 8th

Yesterday, I discovered two items that would not work: the top half of the Christmas tree's lights and the snowblower. Unfortunately, I was only successful in repairing the Christmas tree lights. At least, I will be able to watch the pretty lights, as I administer a heating pad to my broken snow shoveled out back.

Sunday, December 9th

Suit up boys, there is fresh powder on the ground.

My Top Three Near Death Experiences (Attributed Entirely to My Own Stupidity Subcategory)

#1 (December 26, 1992) – After a day trip to Indianapolis to visit the grocery store, where David Letterman worked in High School, I spun the car around twice on I-69. Fortunately, the powder blue Escort ended up in a ditch, rather than in front of the oncoming semi-truck. I'm sure the knights returning from the Crusades felt the same way.

#2 (Summer 1996) – After being told to “drop my wallet” and shown a gun, I nervously laughed at the would-be mugger and walked away. I believe that psychologists call this the “Fight, Flight, or Giggle” response.

#3 (Yesterday) – Seeing my broken snow blower burst into flames, as I applied way too much starter fluid (about half a can). Mind you, the starter fluid was recommended by the guy at the hardware store, but I later found out was strongly advised against in the owner's manual.

Honorable Mention (Five minutes after #3) – Admitting to my wife that I had almost blown up myself, her car, and the garage, while I tried to fix the broken snow blower. Turns out that it just needed some fresh gas. Who knew? The owner's manual, that's who.

Monday, December 10th

4-year-old Ben scurried around the house with delight, as he took photos with his new camera birthday present. Among the subjects of his extreme closeup photography, were the TV remote, a kitchen timer, his brother's feet, and of course the floor. I wonder if Ansel Adams also started out small.

Tuesday, December 11th

Climb every (snow) mountain.

December 2012

Dave's World

Tuesday, December 11th

With sad eyes, my wife informed me that she accidentally dropped her keys under our snowy deck. Handing her some spare keys, I told Charlene not to worry, since I could send the kids underneath to find them. Sure it was well under zero outside and I was wearing just jeans and a sweater, but on the way back inside I spied what appeared to be a "Dave sized hole" among the piles of snow, which would enable me to quickly retrieve the keys. Realizing that I only had a few short minutes, before I froze, I got down on my hands and knees crawled through the snow under the deck. Looking for the keys in the spot were small toys often landed in warmer temps, I was sad to see the area covered in fresh snow. Plunging in my bare hand, I fumbled around, as my body temp plummeted to that of a frozen fish stick. Eventually, my chilled hand bumped into the keys and I pulled out my frosty prize. Backing my body out from under the deck, chunks of snow fell on my back and my jeans sunk into the snow drift. Gathering my remaining strength, I burst into the light, as my faithful Saint Bernard delivered fresh brandy out of the barrel hanging down from his collar. It was then that the state slogan began to make sense, "Explore Minnesota, just make sure to wear a coat."

Wednesday, December 12th

After backing up over a mound of snow, my Ford Freestyle is now convinced that Frosty the Snowman is located right in back of my car. Decisions, decisions... either dust the snow off the backup sensor or avoid the shrill warning signal, by never again driving in reverse.

Thursday, December 13th

Based on the reception I received at this morning's breakfast table from my stayed-up-too-late-reading-and-now-is-as-grumpy-as-a-bear 9-year-old, it appears as if I am responsible for all of the world's ills. That's right... the Fiscal Cliff, Global Warming, that whole end of the world Mayan calendar thing, it's all me. Hey world, I'd just like to say "Sorry 'bout that."

Friday, December 14th

Oh, the sadness. Oh, the disappointment. Oh, the realization, upon exiting the shower, that the only towel within arm's reach was recently used by another. Oh, thank goodness for the shower mat that dried the bottom of my feet. Oh, the delight in my self worth for not resorting to rolling around on shower mat to gain some semblance of total body dryness.

Saturday, December 15th

As Charlene returned early in the morning from her trip to the gym, she observed our trusty dog sound asleep in the middle of the hallway. Guard dog, no. Genuine beagle fur area rug, yes.

Judging by how 4-year-old Ben fell asleep holding the newly acquired stuffed gingerbread man, it was well worth the \$3.50 that we sunk into the grocery store "claw machine."

December 2012

Monday, December 17th

Nothing like the exhilaration. Nothing like the surprise. Nothing like the, um, gravity. Yep, there's nothing like that first fall on the ice of the season.

My son Jacob has learned that ramps work best, when your snowboard and you arrive at the same time.

Tuesday, December 18th

As I calmly asked 9-year-old Jacob to please stop drumming with his ruler on the "nice" furniture, I began to wonder if he was actually waging war on our living room's Ottoman Empire. The pun: an overly simplistic comedic tool, but always there when you need it.

Wednesday, December 19th

Hearing about someone in town, who constructed a 12-foot tall snowman, I felt the sudden urge to pack the kids in the car and take a field trip. Another sign that I may have too many Clark Griswold-ish tendencies.

Thursday, December 20th

A decree went out from father Dave that a census should be taken of all of the Christmas presents. He went downstairs to begin counting gifts, because his children were expecting presents on Christmas morning. As Dave was judging the overall quality of each child's gifts, an angel of the Lord stood before him. The angel said to him, "Be very afraid; for see I bring you news that both quantity and quality of toys matter when considering the equality of gifts between the boys. No matter how hard you try, the perfect equality of gifts between the boys will never be achieved and some type of jealousy will be born on Christmas morning. Give them stuff you think they'll enjoy and call it a day." Dave treasured all these words and pondered them in both his heart and checkbook.

Friday, December 21st

Poor Santa. For the visit from the Paulsen boys, he needed to bring along Mrs. Claus, just to maintain some semblance of control.

Report from the North Pole. This elf has begun to accept that his sausage-like fingers were never meant to apply ridiculously small stickers on their small toy companions.

Saturday, December 22nd

To celebrate the last day of school, before Christmas break, Jacob's 3rd grade class went bowling. Parents were welcome to attend and enjoy the event with their children. Since the bowling trip was over lunch, I figured that I would take Jacob's little brother Ben and have pizza, while we watched Jacob and his class bowl. I thought it was a very nice outing, until I received Jacob's evaluation later in the evening. "Everyone thought Ben was cute, but some of the kids thought you were creepy." After I scraped my wounded pride off the floor, I took some comfort in the fact that at least some of the 3rd graders did not think I was a creep.

December 2012

Dave's World

Monday, December 24th

You know it is Christmas Eve, when you see the word "unassembled" and the first response that comes to mind is "Those bastards at Mattel."

I believe there is a spy in our midst. While retrieving Christmas gifts from the guest bedroom closet for wrapping, I discovered a previously tidy stack of presents now slightly askew. Confronting my eldest son, I was met with denials, even after intense eggnog boarding interrogation. I fear this incident is an early indicator that he will spend his future sifting through receipts and VISA bills for clues as to what will be under the Christmas tree. Now I will need to begin hiding presents in cobweb filled back corners of the basement, insulation packed hinterlands, and in that secret room located behind the bookcase, which can only be accessed by removing the dust covered volume of Leonard Nimoy's poetry, "Warmed by Love."

Tuesday, December 25th

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." - John 1:14

Wednesday, December 26th

Bright and early on Christmas morning, the dog woke me up and I emerged from the bedroom in my bathrobe and underwear. Immediately, I was greeted by two eager boys, who were ready to empty their stockings. Before I knew it, the whole family was sitting around the fireplace and I was swept up in the Christmas morning experience. Unfortunately, no one wanted to see me showing that much skin under the Christmas tree. No one. Note to self: Christmas Eve 2013, go to bed fully dressed.

Thursday, December 27th

A little sad. That describes how 9-year-old Jacob looked, when he was informed that, during Christmas break, he would eventually need to wear something other than pajamas.

Friday, December 28th

While looking at a poster showing an invasion by little green men, 9-year-old Jacob asked if I believed in space aliens. In my best age of Enlightenment approach, I explained that there are billions of planets and I believed that somewhere on those billions of planets other forms of life exist. Do I believe in space aliens visiting us? No. Organic forms of extraterrestrial life somewhere out there? Yes, I buy into that. Now, combine that belief with my spot on impersonations of Carl Sagan and Chewbacca (however, I have never attempted combining these two impersonations), my sons may begin to worry about me. Not that I have been crafting a Devil's Tower out of mashed potatoes or anything, but to some I could appear to be edging closer to SETI Dave "In Search Of..."

December 2012

Saturday, December 29th

All it takes is for you to fall asleep once, while playing a video game, for your gaming stock to drop significantly in the eyes of your children. In my defense, the “Phineas and Ferb” game for Wii should really come with a “Do not play this game, while operating heavy machinery” warning.

Monday, December 31st

The library's new play area, a newly discovered Star Wars book, and a brother who can read. A winning combination.

I was so proud of my accomplishment. 4-year-old Ben was walking quietly with me through church. Yes! He was finally understanding the word “quiet.” Wait. What is that? “Vvvvvt, vvvvvt. Vvvvvt, vvvvvt.” A loophole. That's what that is. Never try teaching a child the meaning of quiet, while they are wearing corduroy pants. He'll do the walkin', while his pants do the talkin'.

And to close out 2012, I leave you with “The Cookie Benediction” (see you in 2013)... May your days be blessed and your cookies fresh.



Self Portrait of Dave Paulsen (Nov. 2012)

Sneak Peak
at
“Dave’s
World”
in 2013

Tuesday, January 1st

Let's see.

Lose weight: too common.

Exercise more: tempting, but likely to end in a pulled hamstring.

Father a human colony on the earth-sized planet circling the star Alpha Centauri B: too weird, plus unrealistic considering budget cuts at NASA.

I know, “Make Moderation Sexy.”

A New Year's Resolution, suave enough for 2013.

Wednesday, January 2nd

Ah, the smell of a freshly oiled baseball glove. The first sign that Spring will be here before we know it.

Thursday, January 3rd

There he was running around the Y Center's track at a faster clip than me.

Could it be? Yes, I'm certain of it.

A younger version of myself.

I probably have 15 years on him.

Run “Young Me,” run.

Fight that tummy, it'll soon be gaining on you.

M&M Cookies

A drop cookie

“My wife makes these cookies to perfection, with as many M&Ms as possible stuffed into these delightful treats. I don't even bother trying to make them anymore, because nobody will ever be able to make them better than her. Simply put, Charlene has mastered this cookie.”

1 cup Flour
1 cup Whole Wheat Flour
½ teaspoon Baking Soda
¼ teaspoon Salt
½ cup (1 stick) Butter
¾ cup Light Brown Sugar
½ cup Sugar
1 teaspoon Vanilla Extract
2 Eggs
½ cup M&Ms
½ cup Dark Chocolate M&Ms
1 cup Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips
1/3 cup M&Ms and Dark Chocolate M&Ms, equal mixture of both types

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Combine the flour, whole wheat flour, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.

Mix the butter, brown sugar, and sugar until well blended.

Mix in the vanilla extract and eggs.

Gradually mix the “flour mixture” into the “butter mixture.”

Stir in the ½ cup M&Ms, ½ cup Dark Chocolate M&Ms, and chocolate chips.

Drop the dough by rounded teaspoons onto a parchment paper lined cookie sheet.

Slightly flatten each ball of dough.

Press down onto the top of each cookie, as many of the 1/3 cup M&M mixture, as possible.

Bake 9 minutes or until lightly browned.

Makes about 36 cookies.

Revised Source: “Hershey's Holiday Cookies.”

“The Cookie Bible” Publications International Ltd.

Page 288.

Revised Source: My beautiful, talented, and all-around amazing wife, Charlene Stevens.

Entirely Fabricated Advance Praise for "Dave's World"

"For a short time, the first draft of this book was leading in the 2012 Republican primaries." - David Brooks, political commentator for the *New York Times*

"It's magically delicious." - The beloved pop culture icon, yet still annoying and kind of creepy, Lucky Charm Leprechaun

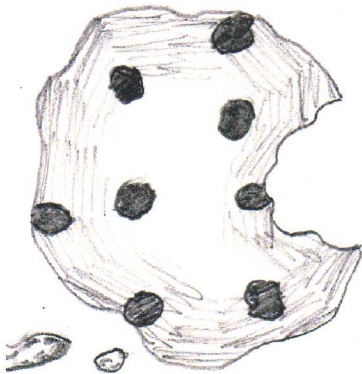
"This book single handedly kept the country out of another Great Depression." - Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor under President Clinton

"My dancing bear can write better than this." - P. T. Barnum

"It is a shame that the world is only aware of Jasper the Beagle's many talents through this limited venue." - Malachy the "Westminster Best in Show 2012" Pekingese

"Netter Versuch, aber das wird nicht beheben Eurozone." - German Chancellor Angela Merkel (rough translation: "This book is truly an amazing work. It is on par with literary classics, such as 'The Canterbury Tales' and 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull.'")

"Dave's cookies are truly ilicious." - Steve Wozniak



"This book was written by my weird dad." - 8-year-old Jake Paulsen

"I am not sure who he is talking about, but it could not have been me." - Dave Paulsen, who is perfectly normal in most ways

