

2018 Week 18: The Week Ending Saturday, May 5th

Paul R. Potts

Sunday

I've not got reading or video entertainment to report on. I slept pretty well, although Grace and I got to bed very late. Last night we went out for a few groceries and I bought a bunch of Siggi's yogurt. It's very good and I like the fact that it is low sugar, and that they have 2%, 4%, and 9% milkfat versions. It seemed to settle my stomach. I've also been taking ranitidine 150 mg. tablets from Costco.

This morning we made biscuits and gravy for breakfast, because that was on our pre-written menu. I made the biscuits. It's been quite some time since I made biscuits. Despite thinking I might, I did not make some kind of rookie mistake like substituting baking soda for baking powder or measuring the salt in tablespoons instead of teaspoons, and I didn't over-mix the dough. They came out fine, and all got eaten.

Pippin's Birthday

Today is my son Daniel Peregrine's seventh birthday. Grace is making a special cake and dinner of his choice. Pippin requested lemon pound cake with lemon curd filling and strawberry icing (he's calling it a "strawberry lemonade cake.") For his dinner, he requested burritos with ground turkey and a side of steamed broccoli. We don't really get gifts for the kids on their birthdays, but they get a dinner and cake of their choosing.

Grace and I are trying to come up with a topic for a podcast today, and struggling a bit. I think I'm going to wind up talking about *Doctor Who* but I'm not really sure what else we might cover.

Sunday Night

Grace and I got the podcast finished and we had a small birthday celebration for Pippin.

I also uploaded a YouTube video containing my reading of *Moby-Dick* chapters 28 through 31. But it was then removed from YouTube and I was given a

“community guidelines” strike. I have no idea why. I have appealed, requesting an explanation. I hope it wasn’t just because some script flagged the word “dick” in the title.

Monday

***Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien, Book 1, Chapter 6: “The Old Forest”**

Last night, I finished reading chapter 6 of *The Fellowship of the Ring* to the kids. This part introduces Tom Bombadil and sees the hobbits rescued from Old Man Willow. I was hoping for more reaction, but to be fair it was very late and everyone was tired. We’ll see how chapter 7 is received.

In the past when I’ve read Tom Bombadil’s songs I’ve made them deliberately silly. This time, as an experiment, I tried to imagine what it would be like to try to do Bombadil straight up, as written, in a movie or television adaptation, without over-playing or under-playing him. What I came away with was the realization that like a lot of the other verses dropped in to the text, a lot of Bombadil’s rhymes don’t scan very well.

Let’s say we hired a well-known actor — oh, I don’t know, say Sir Anthony Hopkins — to play Bombadil. He’s described as follows:

...then suddenly, hopping and dancing along the path, there appeared above the reeds an old battered hat with a tall crown and a long blue feather stuck in the band. With another hop and a bound there came into view a man, or so it seemed. At any rate he was too large and heavy for a hobbit, if not quite tall enough for one of the Big People, though he made noise enough for one, stumping along with great yellow boots on his thick legs, and charging through grass and rushes like a cow going down to drink. He had a blue coat and a long brown beard; his eyes were blue and bright, and his face was red as a ripe apple, but creased into a hundred wrinkles of laughter. In his hands he carried on a large leaf as on a tray a small pile of white water-lilies.

Right off the bat you’ve got a problem with his *costume*. In Peter Jackson’s trilogy the designers made a serious effort to take Tolkien’s descriptions of character clothing seriously. They used materials that were appropriate to the time and technology. They made them look lived-in. In particular, I think Aragorn’s costume is just amazing.

Bright Blue Jacket

Bombadil’s look pre-dated the detailed construction of Middle Earth. In his rhymes, Tolkien describes Bombadil’s clothing: “bright blue his jacket is, and his boots are yellow.”

Bright blue. So — in a pre-industrial society, is a “bright blue” dye even available? Would yellow leather even have been available? We’re talking Northern Europe about the year 1,000, and not the Renaissance. Some notes I’ve found about leather in the Medieval period say:

Leather. Extremely common and used for over tunics. The tanning process meant that dying leather was rolled in with curing the leather and brightly dyed leather was definitely more expensive and very, very rare. Colors were limited to green, red, blue, black and brown. With stiffer leather... it was often painted, or “washed over” with a color, sometimes to represent a shield of a house. White leather and bright yellow leather were uncommon in the early period.

You could get fairly bright yellow fabric, but yellow boots would have been uncommon or nonexistent. Blue dye was widely available and so you might see a blue jacket (and in fact in the films, blue fabric shows up now and then). But I’m not sure you’d call it “bright.” To a modern eye it would probably look like it came from a palette of “earth tones.” Brighter blue colors would mostly have been developed later. So right off the bat, you’ve got a little problem: if you keep those lines intact, Bombadil seems like he’s not accurately describing what he’s actually wearing. If you make his costume match what he’s saying, his clothing will be anachronistic. So the production team has to start making hard choices.

And then you have to consider what kind of line reading you would actually choose, when your lines are:

Hey dol! merry dol! ring a dong dillo!
Ring a dong! hop along! fal lal the willow!
Tom Bom, jolly Tom, Tom Bombadillo!

There are moments in the films where Jackson’s team, in my view, got it just right — showing how the culture of the hobbits was filled with music: instrumental music, like the Plan 9 piece called “Flaming Red Hair,” the hobbits singing in a pub, and especially Bilbo singing softly to himself as he walks away from Bag End, never to return. But if you look carefully you see that Jackson’s team adjusted and tweaked and re-contextualized bits of Tolkien’s verse, to make it scan, and to put it into scenes where it would fit.

With Bombadil’s singing, even if a production team did some very clever and respectful editing and eliding of verses, I still have a hard time believing that the result would be convincing; we want the movie-going audience laughing, or at least smiling, *with* the character, and not smirking *at* the character. And I’m just not sure that’s possible.

To put it another way — I’m pretty sure it *is* possible: in an *animated* version of *Fellowship* that was tweaked and crafted specifically for a younger audience — a show that would look more like the Rankin-Bass version of *The Hobbit* (a show which, by the way, I consider a nearly perfect adaptation). But in a live

action show? Let's just say I'd have to be convinced.

Tuesday

It's May Day.

Indigestion and Stress

Yesterday afternoon and evening my stomach was just roiling with acid. I'm not sure what's going on. I think somehow my general stress level has become so high that my belly is just very touchy. Is this still partly because of the fallout from the norovirus infection the weekend before last? I don't really know. I haven't vomited or had diarrhea since then, but everything's just burning constantly, and I'm belching constantly. I was taking one ranitidine tablet a day but I stopped because it seemed like it was making things worse. And it seems to leave a terrible metallic taste in my mouth all the time. That happened the last time I tried to take it a few years ago, but I had forgotten.

I went to Costco after work and picked up a few things for the week including some bags of kale salad and a tub of sauerkraut. Grace roasted some chicken, but all I wanted to eat for dinner was a big plate of salad with a couple of cups of sauerkraut on top. That actually made my belly feel considerably better.

But then after dinner we got into the struggle to get the kids doing their after-dinner chores. The younger kids were, it seemed, all melting down at once.

Bills

I got out my laptop and Grace and I tried to plan out our budget for the next few weeks. We've had to pay for a number of repairs on the old house in Saginaw. We have two separate claims in to our insurance company for damage. But for each claim we have a thousand-dollar deductible. So we'll spend \$2,000 out of pocket on the damages, and may need to spend more for some of the repairs (and hope that we will eventually get reimbursed).

And we have some medical bills we were hoping insurance would cover, but they won't, so we're writing checks for those. The provider agreed to let us wait while we tried to get it covered. But it sounds like the verdict is no, we have to pay it. So I can't wait any longer on that bill.

I'm trying to plot out the trajectory of our bank account for May, June, and July. If I miscalculate and spend too much now, then we could be in deep trouble in, say, ten weeks.

The truck needs work on the transfer case and I was hoping to get that done. It's got some kind of an oil leak as well. I was hoping to get it looked at this week but the money that might have gone into the truck has gone into the old house.

On top of that, we're trying to figure out how we might possibly travel for a family member's funeral. There's no money for such a trip. We'd basically have to put the whole trip on a second credit card. That's sort of what I have that card for — emergencies and contingencies such as this.

But I'm already planning to borrow \$25,000 in a few days, assuming the appraisal goes through, in order to settle up at closing. Because we're about to borrow such a large sum, I *really* don't want to do anything that might affect my credit situation, like increasing my debt.

There are a number of other issues we're dealing with, some of which I don't feel I can share. Basically, everything is happening at once. We feel like we might be only a few weeks away from selling the old house, and if we can do *that*, and have no other emergencies or big changes, then we might be only a few months away from getting ourselves into a more secure financial situation. It's possible that by the end of 2018 we could have a decent emergency fund built up. Probably not three months of expenses, but maybe half that. But if anything goes wrong just now, it could go really wrong.

“Escaping Poverty Requires Almost 20 Years With Nearly Nothing Going Wrong.”

With all this churning in my head, perhaps it's no wonder that my belly started burning again.

So: no story last night. And not much restful sleep either. It seems like I need to go off coffee entirely. Even the cold brew seems to rile up my stomach. But to be honest, I'm not sure I can do my job, or be a decent husband and parent, without the juice of the blessed bean.

Wednesday

I don't have a lot to report today. Last night was a *little* better. My heartburn seems like it is easing up a little bit. Last night I had a salad and chocolate pudding for dinner and slept without much heartburn. For breakfast I had more pudding and some granola. For lunch, yogurt and a slice of bread.

At work today I found and fixed a couple of significant bugs. It's a quarter to eight and I'm still at work. I'll leave in a few minutes. The number of code changes I'm trying to manage is, well, becoming a little unmanageable. I'm planning a major build in June and that build will get as much regression testing and inspection as I can give it.

Thursday

No story last night. I was at work quite late, and got home late, and basically didn't do anything useful until it was bedtime.

My stomach is gradually feeling better. I think it is a couple of factors. I've been eating sauerkraut and yogurt every day, and also trying to eat only a very

small dinner.

Besides the ongoing stress, which has eased up a little in the last couple of days, I think our habit of eating dinner very late is not doing my belly any favors. If I could set everything up the way I want it, I'd get up at 7, eat a large breakfast about 8:30. I'd have a moderate lunch about 2 p.m. Then I'd have a small dinner about 7. Dinner would be a salad of some kind, or a smoothie, and a small serving of a protein. I think that would be a big improvement. But we often are eating dinner around 9:30 p.m. and then trying to go to bed an hour later, after 30 minutes spent fighting with the kids over cleanup and chores and bedtime preparation.

DreamHost Webmail Failures

Yesterday and today our Webmail interface (via DreamHost) was down most of the day. Grace couldn't get into her e-mail at all for most of the day. I got into a support chat with DreamHost. Later in the afternoon it was mostly accessible again. But today it's down again.

I've been using DreamHost for our family's e-mail (and web hosting) since 2002. Grace bought me the domain "thepotthouse.org" back then and I've maintained it.

I use IMAP from my Mac Pro at home, and my iPad, to access my e-mail. But from other computers I use the Webmail interface. And Grace has gone through a series of computers as the kids damage and break them, so it's been just about all I can do, by way of technical support, to keep her set up with a working system with a working web browser. Although when I can get a little more cash together, I'll try getting her a better new-old stock ThinkPad.

I tried setting up her current (very beat-up) ThinkPad with Linux, but I haven't been able to get the WiFi to work on that model. (And again, the time I can put into technical support is limited, and I *want* it to remain limited; I work on computers all work day, every day, and I write and record and produce podcast episodes on computers in the spare time I have; I don't actually want to spend even more time trying to repair them.)

So for the immediate future her mail client is a web browser. And therefore it's very frustrating when she can't get into her e-mail. She's trying to manage all the business of our insurance claims and repairs on the old house. It's all in her e-mail.

I'm not sure exactly what is going wrong, but the symptoms are that we can't sign in; the webmail interface tries for a few minutes, and then tells me my username or password is invalid. (It isn't; it's a spurious error; in fact, I think the webmail server has timed out trying to communicate with some back-end mail server.) Or, sometimes I'll get an error message with a long hexadecimal error code.

The problem seems to have something to do with traffic to DreamHost. Possibly due in part to a denial-of-service attack? I really don't know.

There are some solutions... I might buy a wireless keyboard and mouse set and configure an account for her on the Linux box in our bedroom, which I'm using as a Squid proxy server. I could set up a mail client like Thunderbird for her. But I don't seem to have the Squid proxy server configured the way I want it on that box, because it seems to filter connections I'm trying to make *from* the box.

In other words, I have clients that communicate with the Squid server using a specified port, to get access to the filtered web. But a browser running on the box itself using the normal ports for HTTP and HTTPS should not be filtered. For some reason, it is.

More tech support.

And I still have four ChromeBooks to deal with; I think we may just return them.

Last night and this morning I read more of *Unspeakeable* by Chris Hedges and again, it's energizing, inspiring, and grim as hell. I'll finally finish this short book soon.

Friday

My stomach continues to improve, slowly, although it still seems far too prone to leaking acid into my esophagus. Again last night I was quite tired, and again didn't do all that much after I got home. Lunch was sausage and sauerkraut. Dinner was sausage and sauerkraut and salad.

***The Ill-Made Knight* (part 3 of *The Once and Future King*) by T. H. White**

Last night I was reading a bit of T. H. White's *The Ill-Made Knight*, one of the books that makes up the larger omnibus volume *The Once and Future King*. I noticed something odd (well, more odd than usual; there are already plenty of strange references to nudity, sadistic violence, and men's buttocks). In the scene where Lancelot meets Arthur (in chapter 4), there is something missing in the text:

The black knight, however, did not do the usual thing. He was evidently a more cheerful kind of person than the colour of his armour would suggest, for he sat up and blew through the split of his helm, making a note of surprise and admiration. Then he took off the helm and mopped his brow. The shield, whose cover the horse's hoof had torn, bore, *or, a dragon rampant gules*.

I wondered if there were some words missing in my edition, so I got out my old brittle paperback, which I probably bought around 1979, and noticed that the text in that edition is exactly the same.

Is *The Ill-Made Knight* Missing Illustrations?

I think White must have had a *drawing* in the text at this point, which showed the “blazon,” the heraldic image on Arthur’s shield. There are some small drawings elsewhere in the books. For example, when Merlyn magically summons a series of hats, in the text White included a series of small drawings of hats. I’m guessing there must have been a similar “inline” drawing, showing a “dragon rampant gules,” right after the word *bore*.

I think this is what a “dragon rampant gules” looks like, more or less.

There’s another spot:

The big knight lifted the prisoner’s shield, which was hanging behind him, and showed *or, a chevron gules, between three thistles vert*.

I suspect there was another “inline” drawing right after the word *showed*.

I wasn’t able to find an image of “chevron gules between three thistles vert” but I think this coat of arms may show the chevron and thistles. Imagine the lions missing and the thistles where the lions are. (Or something like that; I know nothing at all about heraldry.)

For what it’s worth, if you look up “Potts coat of arms” you can find a variety of images, and I honestly have no idea whether or not they might represent anything accurate about my family’s history.

First editions of the book go for a lot of money, so I don’t think I’ll be able to confirm whether drawings exist in these spots in the original first edition anytime soon. Are there modern editions that are facsimiles? I don’t know. But maybe I can confirm this some day. I wonder if the manuscript survives in a library collection?

It really seems like the editors of one of these contemporary re-set editions might have corrected this, or at least indicated in a footnote that the original drawings have been lost.

Tonight I’ll head to Costco and pick up our usual Friday salmon, and a few other things.

Costco Run

For posterity, I bought:

- salmon (packaged up in a aluminum pan in a ready-to bake “salmon milano,” with scoops of pesto butter and sprigs of dill on top — this is our usual Friday fish)
- a large cheese pizza (we often get two packages of salmon but we had to buy a big box of diapers this week so I got one package of salmon and a cheaper cheese pizza)
- two packages of blackberries

- two packages of blueberries
- two packages of strawberries
- we don't usually get bananas, but Grace requested bananas, so twelve pounds of bananas
- a two-loaf package of "Dave's Killer Bread"
- three packages of Kerrygold butter
- a package of boneless beef ribs
- two bags of kale salad mix with topping
- a double loaf of Costco's multi-grain bread
- three boxes of granola
- a package of frosted shortbread cookies from the Costco bakery, for desert
- giant box of size 3 diapers
- a bottle of allergy pills (365 tablets of store brand loratadine 10mg) for \$10.99

Grace is going to try to buy local eggs and maybe a few more items. I will probably go back to Costco for a few more things on Monday. This run cost about \$250.00.

Earlier in the afternoon I went out to Meijer on Jackson Road, close to my office, and got a refill of my albuterol inhaler prescription. My co-pay was \$20.00. Last time I went, I got two, but had to pay for one of them out of pocket, which I think was about \$60.00 more. This time they didn't fill the prescription for two even though I was willing to pay out of pocket for the other one. They were willing to fill it but I didn't want to wait another half-hour in line. I'll have to go pick it up next Friday. The idea behind getting two is that I can go to the pharmacy less often. But I guess I'll have to go back.

While waiting for the first inhaler I bought some more Siggis yogurt to keep in the refrigerator at work, and some pop-tarts to keep in the cabinet, and a brown rice susi roll for my lunch. I got some candy as well. So I was not hungry when I showed up at Costco. I always try not to go to Costco hungry, but sometimes I miscalculate, and then I'm prone to buying too much. Today I didn't actually buy more than planned. I had a list from Grace and didn't even finish the list.

Creeping Grocery Expenses

Our grocery expenses are creeping up and it kind of makes sense when I consider that we're feeding 3 adults and 9 children now, plus supplying some groceries for our friend. But the extra expenses, while we're still in the middle of the house sale process and repairs, are adding to my stress level. I really, really hope this sale goes through, and we suddenly have more disposable income, so I can get our emergency fund balances up. But that's not going to be quick even if everything goes as smoothly as possible. Which it won't. I think the entire trip to Connecticut will have to go on a credit card. And maybe some car repairs to get ready for the trip.

On the way to Costco I tried recording a monologue, but as often happens when

I do that, I got to thinking about what I was saying rather than where I was going, so I missed my exit and had to loop around and go back, which was not quick during rush hour traffic. Still, traffic could have been worse, and I'm glad to be out and about on a spring day, even if it's just at Costco. I have felt the need to do even more writing and recording. The monologues are sometimes a sort of self-care for me.

I really need a vacation!

Saturday

***Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien, Book 1, Chapter 7: "In the House of Tom Bombadil"**

We had a great bedtime story session last night. I read a section of *Fellowship*, roughly the first half of chapter 7, "In the House of Tom Bombadil." We talked a bit about the history of the character, how he doesn't really fit into Middle-Earth, and what it would be like to try to adapt him into film or television.

Dinner last night was salmon and cheese pizza. Dinner tonight was nachos: Grace made two big pans of nachos. It turned out to be too much. The leftovers are in a big zip-lock bag in the refrigerator. I have this idea that I want to try to reheat them for breakfast and add a fried egg. I also had some blueberry smoothie Grace made, with coconut milk yogurt.

I've been tired today and the fighting kids are wearing me down. My heartburn situation seems to be gradually improving. The nachos weren't great for my digestion, but the smoothie seemed to help a bit. It's 9 p.m. and I just took a couple of chewable Tums and we'll see how it goes.

We are trying to schedule podcast guests. We've heard from a number of interested people, but weren't able to schedule anyone tonight. I was hoping we could record tonight, so I've got to look at my notes and consider whether we want to try to do a show without a guest tonight. Or maybe I'll just do what I feel like doing instead, which is to go to bed early. My eyes have been stinging, and my vision's been a little compromised. I think it's seasonal allergies, even though I've been taking loratidine and Flonase.

The Kano Proxy Server Problem

I heard back from the Kano folks about their software and the proxy server setting that I couldn't get working correctly. They don't have a patch for me yet, but they did confirm the problem. They suggested that I might try installing Firefox or another browser which might allow me to set the proxy server address without using the system configuration.

I haven't tried that, mostly because it seems like the setting could be easily bypassed. But then again given the default Kano security settings, it seems like the system proxy server setting could be easily bypassed as well. I may just

have to accept that given the kind of I. T. service I can personally provide in my very limited spare time, this proxy server system is always going to have to run partially on the honor system.

Books, Music, Movies, and TV Shows Discussed This Week

This list does not include books, chapters of books, or other works that I only mentioned briefly in the text above.

- *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien, Book 1, Chapter 6: “The Old Forest”
- *The Ill-Made Knight* (Part 3 of *The Once and Future King*) by T. H. White

Pittsfield Township, Michigan

The Week Ending Saturday, May 5th, 2018

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