



QUOTE OF THE WEEK "If you want to see a bunch of happy Americans, go out to opening day at any baseball stadium in the land." — Ben Fountain, author

It's enough to make a man blush

Unfortunately, life is filled with embarrassing moments. We all experience those uncomfortable events, we just hope that nobody was watching when it happens. We even have empathy for others when we see another person's awkward moment and look away so he or she doesn't know you saw it.

How many of us have seen someone come out of a public restroom with two feet of toilet paper stuck to your shoe, flapping in the breeze. How about falling on the ice...downtown... at noon...while shouting an expletive? Generally, before we check to see if we've broken anything we look around to see who saw it. It's even worse when there is no ice and you just get tangled up in your own feet and take a nose dive. This will invariably happen when your arms are full and you have a choice of saving a bag full of groceries or protecting yourself from the fall.

A common one for men is discovering halfway through the day that your fly is open. I witnessed the ultimate several years ago when the young man playing Curly in "Oklahoma!" at the Opera House strolled out on the stage for the opening number with his zipper unengaged and a bit of his shirt pointing out the front. He was bellowing "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" to Aunt Eller who was sitting churning butter about eye-level with the wardrobe malfunction. He had about a dozen cowboys off stage in the wings trying to let him know that "his cows were getting out." The actor was one of my favorites, Ted Utoft.

Off the Mark

Mark Wilmes



For years after that he would tell the tale to cast members to warn them about checking their fly before going onstage. If you know Ted, that story got a little bigger and more hilarious with every telling. Aunt Eller? That was Kathy Wilmes. Oh what a beautiful morning, indeed.

Waving at people has gotten me in trouble in the past. I'm not sure how many times I have waved an enthusiastic greeting at someone and then realize it is not who I thought it was. Then there was that time I waved at a friend across the room at the annual hospice auction and bid \$30 on a mani-pedi.

Texting the wrong person is always embarrassing. Nothing worse than texting an "Are you home right now?" to someone who is a casual acquaintance. Or worse, I suppose, "what are you wearing tonight?"

I embarrass myself regularly. I'm not sure how many times I've gotten checked out at Maynard's and realize I've come without a wallet. Another of my favorites is running into someone who appears to know me really well and is really excited to see me so I pretend to know them and I give off a little fake excitement of my own and then they say, "You know who I am, don't you?"

I awkwardly mumble something about a really familiar face and most everything after that is kind of a blur of foolishness.

I avoided major danger over the weekend. Kathy and I had finished with lunch on Saturday and I started reading my Minneapolis paper. I noticed that it felt like something was under the newspaper upon which I kept resting my arm. I would look and nothing would be there. I finally figured out there was something up in the sleeve of my long-sleeved shirt. The first thought that crossed my mind was a very large insect of some kind. I bravely investigated. It was plump and round and slightly sticky. A little crept out, I shook my arm and pulled on my sleeve...and out rolled a tater tot. I have no idea how a tater tot ended up in my sleeve. Granted, we had some baked tater tots with a sandwich for lunch, but how one of them ended up in my sleeve I will never know.

I shared this news with Kathy, who was puzzled, but didn't really seem all that surprised.

I was extremely relieved and thankful that I had discovered it before leaving the house. I had this frightening vision run through my head of how badly that could have ended. Imagine the poor teenager ringing up the portly old guy's groceries at Maynard's when she sees a tot roll out on the counter.

"Um, sir? Did you want this back?"

I'm not even sure how a guy would answer that. Let's hope I never have to find out.

Jordan Peele's "Us" has so much talent that it makes "Us" a serious thrill ride

On the Screen

Paul Olson



A juicy adrenaline rush hits when a movie scares the bejebers out of you, especially when the film builds suspense among believable characters and cranks up the tension until you can barely stand it. That's hallowed Hitchcock territory, a spot where Jordan Peele's "Us" feels right at home.

The comedian-turned-writer/director's 2017 debut, "Get Out," blended terror and social commentary to win an Academy Award for best screenplay. After "Us" Peele may need more shelf space.

A pleasant family getaway is what Adelaide and Gabe Wilson have in mind. Several days at their beach house. Fun for the kids. As serene as can be. Until chaos descends.

Lupita Nyong'o ("Black Panther," "12 Years a Slave") is Adelaide, a woman riddled with anxiety over a childhood trauma she experienced on the same beach. Once at the house, unsettling coincidences deepen her paranoia. Adelaide begs her husband Gabe (Winston Duke) to take them away from the place before something awful happens.

But it's too late. When darkness falls four strangers appear, clad in red jumpsuits, grasping large razor-sharp scissors we know aren't meant for slicing paper dolls. They stand in the driveway... silent... waiting.

That scene is creepy enough. But we've only begun.

You see, the visitors aren't total strangers. These are twins of the Wilsons but with grotesque differences, mounting a home invasion like no other. Here the attackers duplicate the attacked.

Trapped, the Wilsons fight for survival as the confrontation gets bloody. Adelaide's double, in a gasping croak of a voice which sends chills down our spine, says the four live their lives in misery, "tethered" to the real Wilsons. They've come to break this connection. And it's going to hurt.

Not a frame of film is wasted while we are pulled into a cat-and-mouse pursuit on steroids. Saying much more about the

plot would give away too many twists, turns, false endings and, believe it or not, laughs. Just as the tension grows unbearable Peele punctures it with a stab of humor, giving us a moment to catch our breath before he lets loose another salvo.

You might want a couple stiff drinks after leaving the theater, just to get "Us" out of your head. Good luck with that.

Peele's exceptional cast keeps our eyes glued to the screen. They grab us, hold tight, and don't let our attention wander even when we'd rather look away. Each meets a sizable challenge playing dual roles. Duke is both a dorky dad and wordlessly howling predator. Shahadi Wright Joseph (13) and Evan Alex (10) are a sullen teenage girl and cruel tormentor, an adorable scamp of a boy and crawling urchin. So much talent makes "Us" a serious thrill ride.

But Lupita Nyong'o is the pulse of this film and dominates every scene she's in, mastering two opposite personalities – protective mother, traumatized victim, and bringer of carnage, settler of scores. Her sinister grin, riveting gaze and, ohhh that voice!, make her performance an instant horror classic.

What's remarkable is how Jordan Peele moves "Us" beyond the adrenaline rush of fright. One early scene at a carnival hall of mirrors shows where we are heading. Above the entrance are the words "Find Yourself." Yes, the Wilson family and their doubles are somehow tethered. Perhaps also tethered are the dual natures in everybody – good and evil, humane and bestial, oppressor and oppressed – all held in precarious balance.

To paraphrase Walt Kelly: "We have met the monsters and they are us."

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I'm finding treasure for my hoard

I love a good "treasure" hunt. I love searching for hidden treasure, whether it is in a "junk" store or a game on my phone or even going through my parents' basement. But my favorite place to find hidden treasure is in my Bible. Some of the golden nuggets I have found have stuck with me through good times and bad.

God's word tells me that "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," in Matthew 6:21. Basically, if I want my heart to stay in Christ, I need to make sure I build my treasure hoard there too. I can build my hoard by reading and studying God's word.

I have read the Bible cover to cover a few times. I have a daily Bible study that takes me through the Bible in a year and I go to the Bible when I am hurting and broken, as well as when I am filled with joy. It never fails to amaze me when I come across a verse which leaps

Thoughts along the way

Shelly Finzen



off the page and fits whatever situation I am in. I know I have read the verse before, but now it actually means something to me.

For example, when Mouse died, the verse that jumped out was Matthew 10:29, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father." God created Mouse just like He created me, and He loves Mouse as much as I do.

I also came across Luke 6:21, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh," and similarly, Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they

shall be comforted." My grief over Mouse's death will end and one day, I will find peace again.

And then there are the golden nuggets that I "treasure" above all the other ones. There's Jeremiah 29:11, my life verse: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." And then there's Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." These verses remind me that, whatever I am facing at the moment, I'm not facing it alone. They usually come to mind when I am overwhelmed by life and reaching the bottom of my rope.

I would encourage others to look for treasure in the Bible. The best thing about this type of treasure is that there is plenty for everyone to hoard it.

Finzen is news editor of the Lake Benton Valley Journal

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