



Samples from
Here's the Scoop
Weekly Humor Column

Lost and found?

The scene began innocently enough. I sat down, ready to get to work. The only things I needed were the job materials. I said, the only things I needed were the job materials.

As you may have guessed, the vital paperwork for this project was not in sight. The stuff was around, though, I knew that. Sort of. Didn't I?

The search started out at a leisurely pace. After all, I had been using this very thick manila envelope, filled with various important papers, just two days earlier. I looked in the most obvious places. Pretty soon, the only thing obvious was the fact that the envelope was not around.

Still, I remained calm. I called my wife at home and explained that I was pretty sure — nearly absolutely, positively certain — that I had left this envelope on the cupboard where I've been asked a million times not to leave things when I bring them from the office. She looked, but reported no luck. Since I had walked to the office, I wondered if she would mind looking in the car. I was really sure that I remembered having the envelope there two days earlier.

The fact that I'm only five paragraphs into this column should already be telling savvy readers that the envelope was not discovered in the car. Well, if you're so smart, where was it?

Calming effect

My wife, sensing a little temper tantrum about to sprout forth from me, came to the office to join the search. We scoured every file drawer and all the nooks and crannies.

"Did you throw out the garbage?" she asked.

Here, I took the opportunity to hesitate. Was this a trick question? When I moved from a pretty cramped home work environment into full-blown office space, one vow I made was to keep things neater. And I've been pretty successful in the neatness department. In fact, I've sort of gotten to the point where I can't stand to see anything in the garbage can. I'm sure psychologists would have a field day with this bit of weirdness, but I didn't have time to consider this particular personality trait.

Unfortunately, as all the "obvious" places were eliminated from consideration, the garbage can began to take on a prominent position as this "cleaning soap opera." I'm sure many of you have spent a small percentage of your life plunged head-first into an aromatic trash can frantically pawing through overripe strawberries and remnants of General Tsao's chicken looking for a mistakenly tossed out paycheck. Or, is that just me?

Anyhow, performing a "dump dive" in the relative privacy of one's garage is one thing. Heading to the very public transfer station to do this dirty work is quite another. I really felt that I had little choice.

Just a few hours before discovering (or is it not discovering?) my loss, I had made my weekend trek to the transfer station. I'm proud to say that I'm normally pretty picky about recycling. Still, sometimes the paper destined for recycling mysteriously mixes with the takeout lunch containers. Such was the case with the stuff I had hauled to the transfer station in the morning. Some went into the proper paper recycling bin. Laziness won out with the other bag and the mix of some paper and lunch-related trash sailed into the murky depths of the "real" garage pit. For those unfamiliar with the transfer station setup, I'll just say that the pit is not a place you'd want to enter in search of missing items. No matter how important they are.

I figured that I had a 50-50 chance that the missing envelope was sitting in the paper bin. Let the pawing begin. The good news was that I had emptied my recyclables right in front. The really good news was...someone had tossed out a perfectly good copy of People magazine right on top of my stuff! Score. But that was the only worthwhile item I discovered. My catalogs and paperwork were there; but no precious envelope.

Naturally, I spent a good deal of my search time explaining to passersby that no, I was not trying to save on magazine subscriptions (I had already hidden the People in my car), but that "someone in my family" had tossed out something important.

But the goal of my search was nowhere to be found. Until the following day. That's when, for some unknown reason, I opened the closet in my old office at home and there sat the envelope — staring up at me like a lost puppy. I was thrilled. Embarrassed, too. I'm sure this story is going to become another skeleton in my closet.

— *Brian Sweeney*

Seeing is believing

Back in April, I wrote a piece about covering a music video shoot that took place in Margaretville for the band Fall Out Boy. I can't remember exactly what I wrote, and I don't want to go back and look — I'm afraid of some embarrassment.

As far as I recall, I talked about the video-makers being very professional and kind to the press. I do think, however, I expressed a bit of skepticism about this music video seeing much light of day outside the living room disc players in the homes of the band members' parents.

When I did an initial news story on the video shoot, the producer told me the video would be on MTV within a month of shooting. I thought that would be cool, but I also figured that he was being overly optimistic. Again, the producer seemed like a straight-shooter and he told me matter-of-factly that he had worked with some of the giants in the industry. Still, when he listed Madonna as one of those with whom he had toiled, the cynical part of me (a dominant part of my brain) silently wondered if he had experience selling those religious statues that dot so many lawns.

After a month had passed, I began to tune in to MTV to see if the video would really appear. It didn't. But while reading a newspaper, I noticed that the band's new disc was in the Top 10 in one of the categories....hmmm.

So I started doing a bit of research on the Internet about this band. In this day and age, it's not an exaggeration to state that a reference to just about anything can be found on the Internet. But I found a lot of mentions of Fall Out Boy. And not just stuff made up by the band's management. Oddly enough, on many of the sites there were mentions that Fall Out Boy had been shooting a new video "Sugar, We're Going Down." The prerelease news was that this video (replacing an earlier band montage) was filmed "upstate." Then I read on some fan sites how the video indeed had made its way to the airwaves. It was playing on both MTV stations, Fuse and others.

I kept flipping through these stations during baseball game commercials. Finally, I saw it. I think "neat" is the best description. In a nutshell, the video theme involves a girl who is in love with a boy who has antlers. This does not "endear" him to the girl's dad. Ultimately, while trying to take a shot at the boyfriend, the dad is struck by a vehicle and in the aftermath it's revealed that he has hooved feet. Ouch. Obviously, there's a life lesson in

there. A headline on the MTV website states “Bizarre Fall Out Boy Video Gives New Meaning To The Term ‘Young Buck.’”

More importantly to me, it’s really fun to see local scenes captured in this video — the local Grange Hall, Margaretville Bowl, the cemetery where the crew promised not to film (opps!) and the house featured in the video is a place where I spent lots of hanging out time in my formative years.

I’m a huge fan

Oh, yeah, did I mention that the song is very catchy? It was obvious to me that it was time to jump on the Fall Out Boy “bandwagon.”

After a bit of research I managed to track down a band official and told him how I could utilize the power of the press to help boost the band’s career. “Without exposure in the Catskill Mountain News, I don’t really know if you can claim to have ‘made it,’” I explained.

The official obviously had been leading kind of a sheltered existence and asked about what type of publication I was referring to. Having watched my share of presidential press conferences, I gave my best beady-eyed squint (forgetting I was on the phone) and responded with a question of my own. “Have you ever heard of Rolling Stone?” I shot back. He said that he had...what was my point?

I’m not a good enough politician to keep avoiding the question, so I improvised. “Well, in this area we’re a lot like Rolling Stone — but with less circulation, little music news and we rarely have scantily-clad starlets on our cover. But our type is larger and easier to read,” I bragged at the end.

I got the sense that the official did not feel that the News was going to make or break Fall Out Boy’s career. “What do you really want?” he asked.

“Well, you know I have been a strong supporter of Fall Out Boy for quite awhile. How about a few T-shirts and discs?” I asked.

Afterwards, I figured I probably sounded like thousands of other new fans who had seen this unique video and were now “fawning” over the band.

— *Brian Sweeney*

Something new...

I just wrapped up another vacation. Much of the trip involved routine vacation stuff such as fighting traffic, laying around on the beach, overindulging in the food and beverage departments. However, making this journey much more special than any others was the fact that I “gave away” my daughter in marriage.

The wedding date came nearly two years after our daughter and son-in-law (first time I’ve written that one) announced their engagement. Of course, “the date” seemed like a long way off at that time. But the days of the calendar were steadily peeled away and the wedding approached at the rate of exactly one day at a time.

After the initial excitement of the engagement announcement came the wedding planning. I have problems figuring out what to have for breakfast, so organizing a wedding was pretty far out of my realm of expertise. My wife put my mind at ease by assigning me check-writing duties. My handwriting is poor, but people always seem to cash my checks, so I guessed that would be OK.

All sorts of ideas were tossed about for the wedding site. Finally, the happy couple told us they had decided on a beach wedding. Our daughter had spent countless summers at her grandparents’ beach house in North Carolina. Her fiancé was a big beach fan with the heart of a surfer. The location was perfect.

Not being a fan of formality and tight, really shiny shoes, I was probably the happiest person about this decision. When they told me I’d be wearing flip-flops as the father of the bride, I knew this was my kind of event. The only thing I would have to do was get a bit of tan on my feet.

Coming together

During the last year, the plans really began to take shape. I just sat back and occasionally asked: “Will that cost money?” After receiving knowing glares from the wedding girls, I quietly wrote the checks. I really wanted this to be a special day, but I couldn’t chance anyone seeing through my “tight wad” façade.

As the day drew near, I kept hearing the question, “Are you nervous?” I wasn’t. After all, my wife and I had come up with the idea our daughter and future son-in-law dating in the first place. And we had this thought at the same time his mother did. They hit it off immediately. It soon became apparent that the love part was not in question. And they had plenty of time to figure out if they liked each other enough to be married. Everything was in place...it was just a matter of a ceremony.

Of course, when the wedding is 700 miles away, there are some logistical issues. A pre-wedding planning trip was necessary last fall. With the help of the Internet and good recommendations, all the pieces were assembled.

Fast-forward to the wedding day. The questions about nervousness continued. I was feeling confident. My daughter makes good choices. And we really like our new son-in-law. Although it does worry me a bit that he is very intent on my learning to use a chain saw. I’ve tried to explain that my power tool skill level stops at a hedge-trimmer, but that’s a minor issue.

I’m normally someone who suffers from “weather stress” when outdoor activities approach, but I had no doubt that the sun would be present for the beach wedding. And shine it did, despite threatening morning clouds. When it came time for the evening beach wedding, the sun was bright and toasty and the ocean had taken on an uncharacteristic calm. Just like the father of the bride.

It was indeed a very special day. The couple did things a bit differently than most, but that fit them perfectly. They got the wedding thing right. They made everyone feel good about the union. To borrow a line from those TV commercials: Priceless.

— *Brian Sweeney*