I'm a farmer, sitting in my field.

My life is peaceful, serene. My fields are perfectly manicured, orderly, predictable. Months of work is paying off.

In the distance I see a black cloud. The cloud is alive with energy, swarming, changing shape, descending on everything in its path and wreaking havoc in its path. Noisy, hostile, restless: the cloud is locusts. They are coming. My serenity is over, destruction is upon me, and there is nothing I can do.

Yes today is the last day of school. School, an institution ostensibly to educate our nation's youth, but more of a method of removing children from society in order to preserve civilization. Without school, we have anarchy, where the rule is survival, and only the strong will survive. *Lor d of the Flies*
on a macroeconomic scale.

And because the state feels the wardens and guards of the children deserve time to decompress, we have summer break, when the locusts return to the field.

What the hell am I going to do for the next three months? My kids get ennui when they have fifteen minutes of free time, and start to rebel. How am I to maintain law and order for 90 days?

Today, fear becomes reality.

I could ship them to the woods to camp for weeks at a time, but Niles and Fraser Hancock aren't exactly rugged outdoorsmen. We have day camps that emulate school, yet only provide a week's reprieve, at exorbitant cost. A cost which I gladly pay, mind you, for the peace and quiet of the daytime, but a cost which limits the number of such camps they can attend. We will take a vacation, at a cost, where they can be bored for a week in another state, but destroy someone else's property and home. We will try to sell to the grandparents on a week's worth of "bonding". But basically, like the farmer in the field, I'm screwed.

Ironically, this is also about the same time the Indians collapse every year. The locusts of injury ravage them, and we wind up with the Jaywalkers Row of Lopez-Brantley-Cunningham as the 4-5-6 hitters. Cleveland fans watch the destruction ravage the once-strong first place team, eat away at the hope so toughly earned over the prior two months, and make us long for September when the Browns get back on the field. The Browns as the hope of the summer? Only makes sense because it has to be better than watching the Indians' kids run rampant at the Jake, doing live theatre of *Lord of the Flies* as they blow valuable divisional games and fade once again into obscurity in the Cleveland sports landscape. Sigh.

Maybe this year Camp Wahoo will produce some wins, some hope, and maybe even a division title. Sadly, however, I see us going right into 2011 mode again, right when I most need the distraction of sports to maintain my spirits.

Anyway, off to the questions.

**Is it possible to make the Kessel Run in less than four parsecs? Follow-up: Why is there so much nerd rage over one movie franchise? I understand the creator has rights and all, but the Star Wars Prequels were one massive kick to the nuts for geeks like me who just wanted a good movie and got Jar Jar Binks instead. I'm still salty. –justmebd**

It is entirely possible, and likely entirely probable to make the Kessel Run is less than four parsecs, because a parsec is a measure of distance, not time. Specifically, if you make a right triangle with one of the sides as one astronomical unit, and the opposite angle to be one arc second, the length of the second side is a parsec, which is about 3.26 light years. Why

astronomers needed another unit of measure so confusing to represent something so close to a light year is beyond me. Anyway, assuming you have a ship that travels near the speed of light, that means it would take you about thirteen years to make the Kessel Run if your path was four parsecs in length, and that would be a stupid amount of time to travel any shipping lane.

This is the fundamental problem with George Lucas. He stumbled upon a great science fiction film in *Star Wars*, and when he remade the first three piles of shit years later, he forgot his talents were in the “fiction” and not the “science” part of that term. Lucas’ first movie was about an ordinary kid, Luke Skywalker, who we generally liked and to whom most of us could relate. We saw him in an ordinary situation, a perfectly boring life, and then suddenly his world was rocked. His family was killed and his home was destroyed, ending the “normal” chapter of his existence, and next thing you know, he’s the only person who could blow up a planet destroying super base and save the universe. We watch him grow and root for him as a fish out of water, a true protagonist to whom we could all relate. Oh, and there were those revolutionary cool effects to go along with it as well, which made it great in its time. But the story itself allows
*Star Wars*
to stand the test of time and be a great movie independent of the year.

Lucas became a demi-god to nerds everywhere for giving them this movie. But Lucas was like a baseball player that just signed a $12B contract (or whatever Lucas is worth these days), and as a result became no longer hungry nor fundamentally sound. Instead of taking the time to write a good story with characters you like and a plot that was interesting, he instead got lazy and focused on visual effects and the science aspects, and delivered a pile of steaming Wookie shit on a plate for his audience. Seriously, was there one character in the first three movies that you cared if they lived or died, or were able to identify with in the slightest as a human with emotions, feelings, and needs? No, no there wasn't. Plot? There’s a trade dispute, and the senate is disbanding and… ooo! 20 minute pod race! Mitochloridians!

Fucking terrible. So why does it upset you? Let me quote the J. Geils Band a second:

*She was pure like snowflakes*
*No one could ever stain*
*The memory of my angel*
*Could never cause me pain*

*Years go by I'm lookin' through*
*A girly magazine*
*And there's my homeroom angel*

*On the pages in between*

*My blood runs cold*
*My memory has just been sold*
*My angel is the centerfold*
*Angel is the centerfold*

George Lucas played the role of Paul Snider turned that sweet Dorothy Stratton of yours, Star Wars, into a *Star 80*-type playmate, and then proceeded to murder her and defile her corpse. Your hate is justified.

**List the top ten police/detective shows, say from 1970 to present day. -Fred Dryer**

TV was invented for three things: sports, the news, and cop shows. Even the news is essentially just a fusion of the first and last concept – who got arrested, the status of the investigation, and the scores and highlights for the day. The abomination that is reality TV actually started as a cop show – because COPS was the show that ushered in that genre (COPS doesn't make the list for that very reason).

So without further ado, here are the top 10 Cop Shows of the past 40 years:

10) *CSI*. Has to be on the list because it created like 50 different spinoff shows, and the hilarious meme of David Caruso overacting the cheesy sunglasses tagline at the start of every episode of CSI Miami . Plus, CSI made nerds heroes, which is awesome.

9) *CHiPs*. Talk about cheesy, Erik Estrada in a spray-on tight uniform as Ponch is about as cheesy as it gets. But this show was the 70s, in all of its hilarious magnificence. Your kids ever ask you what it was like to grow up in the 70s, have them watch CHiP s. They'll understand, and be very confused, and probably quite afraid, all at the same time.

8) *Police Squad!* Yes, this Leslie Nielsen device was a TV show before it was a movie trilogy.

Gag after gag
, this satire on the genre is spot on and hilarious. Rent the original TV shows sometime, and have tissues ready for the tears of laughter.

7) *Miami Vice*. Vice was the first TV show I remember to show people dying on it. This was groundbreaking at the time – contrast it to the A-Team where a squad of "elite" commandos would blow through clip after clip of ammo and not hit a fucking thing to appease the sensitivities of the viewing public at the time. Miami Vice said "screw that" and showed the gritty realities of the drug trade – people die. Plus, teal!

6) *Kojak*. When Will Smith did the *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, he asked Alphonso Ribero ("Carlton") what his name should be on the show. Carlton told him "pick wisely, because people will call you that the rest of your life". Smith chose "Will Smith". Telly Savalas didn't do much after *Kojak* because he was Kojak the rest of his life. Bald things today are still related to Kojak. *Kojak* was one of the rare successful adaptations of the "tough guy cop" themes, without making it clownish and overblown.

5) *The Shield*. Proved that a show on basic cable, if good enough, can be successful and popular. The Shield took a completely different take on the cop show, occasionally giving you heroes, but often giving you anti-heroes in the same character. It made you think, which is what good TV does. And people found where FX was on their cable system as a result.

4) *Dragnet*. The original cop show (or the original that mattered), it paved the way for the rest of them. They absolutely butchered the franchise with the terrible Dan Akroyd/Tom Hanks movie they made from it. Geez that thing was awful, so bad in fact that when asked about Dragnet, Tom Hanks changes the subject to *Bachelor Party* and *Bosom Buddies*. (Ironically, *Bachelor Party* was Tawny Kittaen's best work, narrowly beating "Humping Trans Am in Whitesnake Video" and "Drunkenly Beating the Piss Out of Chuck Finley". Oh, Chuck, we had such high hopes for you and then you go on the DL because your crazy girlfriend kicks your ass. So goes Cleveland sports. But I digress…).

3) *NYPD Blue*. Great stories, fantastic writing, and very human characters, it was the natural evolution of *Hill Street Blues* into a modern, and often more entertaining, vehicle.

Sure there was a risk on any given episode you'd have to see Dennis Frantz' naked ass, and that's something you can't easily unsee, but by in large it was worth the risk. Well, until they put the *Silver Spoons* and *Saved By the Bell* dudes as leads (they are different people, who knew?) But by then the show had clearly jumped the shark, so we discount those years in the final score here.

2) *Columbo*. No explanation needed. "Playing Columbo" is a colloquialism for being inquisitive. Great character, great show.

1) *Hill Street Blues*. Changed the game on cop shows. They aren't just cops they're - gasp – people too! Real people with real problems, who just happen to be cops as a way to make a living. *Hill Street Blues* turned the cop show from a one dimensional veneer to a truly gripping and thought provoking exploration of society. Every cop show today borrows from this in some way or another.

**Memorial Day weekend makes me think: do you have any immutable food / condiment rules? E.G. - ketchup on hot dogs = never if u are > 8 years old? BTW - is it ketchup or catsup and how did cats get involved anyway? -jb**

Ketchup on a hot dog is probably the biggest sin of them all, and is pretty much the only thing that falls into the "law" category. However, there are other crimes against taste and humanity itself that must be avoided at all costs.

Mayo is first on the list. Putting mayo on any sort of sandwich is a hate crime. It's just some white gelatinous goo that does nothing other than harden your arteries and make your sandwich taste greasy. The worst place to put mayo is on a burger. I can see if you're a horribly boring person that loves dry turkey sandwiches on white bread, then hey, add some mayo to that thing to lubricate your throat so you can choke it down. But a proper burger, succulent with natural fats and juices running throughout it? I don't think so. It's like adding Jaegermeister to a martini, or Johnny Damon to a baseball team – completely unnecessary and only makes things worse.

Next on the list is sweet relish. Gak. The nearest I can figure is that sweet relish is some sort of government-sponsored eugenics program designed to poison the taste buds, minds, bodies, and souls of feeble-minded Americans who would put that slop on a sandwich or a hot dog. And

I support such a program wholeheartedly if it is, in fact, such a conspiracy. I can't even describe the horrific taste of sweet relish, the nearest I can say is that it makes the inside of your body feel the equivalent of having a guy high on bath salts eat your face off. By the way, rumors the Miami zombie spread sweet relish on his victim first are completely specious, although totally believable – that's the type of person that uses sweet relish.

Tartar sauce is a combination of the two above condiments. If you use tartar sauce, I hate you. This is non-negotiable.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, hot sauce goes on anything, and makes everything better. Kids meal leftovers are turned from culinarialy stupid, boring, beige blod sugar spiking carbohydrate delivery systems into haute cuisine with the simple addition of some Frank's Red Hot. Vinegar plus heat equals delicious. It even makes ketchup better.

Which brings us to ketchup and catsup. Ketchup originated as *kĕchap* in Malaysia, starting out as a fermented fish sauce. Indonesian
*kecap manis,*
which is a thick fermented soy sauce, is an occasional delicious visitor in the Hancock household, as Mrs. Hancock has ancestors who spent time long ago in former Dutch Indonesia – in that culture,
*kecap*
is a catch-all for fermented sauces. When Americans eventually took the concept and evolved it to the proper "ketchup", an icon of American cuisine was born.

Via this etymology, "ketchup" is the only proper spelling for the product. Like "cheez" or "cheese food" is to "cheese", so is "catsup" to "ketchup". Note here a fundamental and universal truth of food: if your product has a goofy spelling, it is because said product is of such an inferior quality and formulation that it cannot legally be called by the proper name. This maxim applies in spades to "catsup".

You may ask if there are proper government regulations as to what can legally be called "ketchup", and the answer is no. But a sauce so universally delicious has an aura of its own. Ketchup is the Chuck Norris of condiments. You don't mess with ketchup. You don't pretend to be ketchup when you're not. Be afraid of ketchup should you decide to violate these rules. Ketchup will find you and it will kill you. Slowly. Some say the red is from the blood of its enemies.

The purveyors of “catsup” came upon the product in the exact way* the dramatic recreation of the board meeting transcribed below went:

“Gentlemen, we need to improve our margins on ketchup. I want to see you cut the cost of production by 80%”

“80%?!? Sir, have you gone mad? This is ketchup we’re talking about!”

“I know of what I ask you. Make it happen.”

“But to do that we’d need to cut out so many things. We’d need to remove the love, the soul, the still beating heart of our product. It’s not possible!”

“It is possible and you will do it.”

“If we replace the tomatoes with clumps of used kitty litter, and the vinegar with leftover skunked Natty Light from a fraternity party…”

“Go on, I’m listening…”

“…and if we farmed our vegetables in EPA superfund sites, we could hit your price point. But sir, we couldn’t call it ‘ketchup’, could we?”

“Hmm… though that sounds delicious, we’d need a new name. Something that says ‘ketchup’ but does not misrepresent the product. How about….”

“CATSUP!!!”

… and so it was born.

Remember kids, avoid catsup, mayo, and sweet relish. And if you like tartar sauce, please take your talents to South Beach, jerk.

**** not exact way it happened, merely artist’s representation***

**Wouldn't oil prices come down if we got repaid with say 10% of Iraqis oil output until we were repaid for the trillion "wasted"...er I mean spent to remove Suddam.....or Kuwait paid us back.....or say Libya even kick us some back for our "limited" role in their emancipation....you know stuff like that?**
**Thanks! –pod**

What we have here is a “high horse” problem.

You see, we didn’t fight any of the wars for oil. Nope. We went to war because Saddam was a bad guy that killed his own people, and because he harbored terrorists (nevermind that he was a fundamentally different religion than the terrorists). We fought for Kuwait because the invasion of Kuwait was wrong and illegal, and the USA fights for justice across the world!

You say, well, why aren’t we invading Syria? They are killing their own people, ruthlessly. They harbor terrorists. Why don’t we stop Israel when they extend past their borders and occupy neighboring territories? Why don’t we intervene in Sudan, or work to overthrow the oppressive regime in Saudi Arabia? It is because things are complicated. Complicated!

And because we only fight for justice and right, we really can't just go in and take oil, or demand repayment, or anything like that. That would be like Kojak stopping a man from murdering you, and demanding 10% of your income for the next few years to cover the cost of his brass knuckles and lollipops – WRONG!

A cynic may argue that the financial benefits of being able to control the oil coming from Iraq and Libya, via political means, has macroeconomically created a financial benefit to the US in excess of our investment in the war. Now the regimes work with us, and will work with our businesses, and ensure supplies are kept right, and prices are under control. The war itself cost, conservatively, $750 billion. The US imports $330 billion of crude oil per year. If we can keep prices under control and supplies intact, we could theoretically save 10% - 20% of that number per year. Or, in other words, the IRR for the war, using a 5% discount rate and assuming 20% savings over 20 years of peace and stability, is 110%. But that would be cynical, because we fought for truth, justice, and the American way. And the American way has nothing to do with profiteering, or controlling foreign governments for our own purposes.

*Please email questions to lars.hancock@yahoo.com ,tweet them @ReasonsImADrunk, or DM them to me in the forae to LarsHancock.*