

DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: DEADLY WISCONSIN

PART OF THE "BANNED BY BOOKSELLERS" SERIES

Andrew Zhong, March 19 - April 12, 2025

JULY 2006

Friday, July 21

For the record, I guess Mom was incredibly proud of herself, since last week in the middle of a grocery trip she bought ANOTHER ONE of those “Diaries”.

Didn't I remind her to NOT go to the Barnes and Noble?!

Anyway, she didn't even bother GLANCING at my last one that shows she's REALLY OVERBEARING. I simply told her that I was done once I was all wrapped up with my last entry, and that was that.

“Did you write all your feelings out, Greg?”

I proudly said: “Yeah, for the heck of it! But do you wanna read it?”

Mom simply declined: “No thanks, Greg. That isn't necessary.”

Speaking of “overbearing”, Dad makes me go to swim meets EVERY GODDARN WEEK just because I won a “Most Improved” award one time, for my 10-minute difference between my first meet and my last.

2 weeks ago, I decided to start ducking out of the meets, into the restrooms, and I had to wrap myself in toilet paper in there since it was something like 30 degrees in there.

I got away with it, but then I had to be picked up by RODRICK for whatever reason, other than Mom was BRAIN-DEAD. He made me sit in the cargo hold in the back.

Inside, I constantly prayed I don't either get beheaded by one of his cymbals, get brain damage by one of his drums, or even BOTH. You'll never predict where Rodrick drives.

Man, Rodrick LOVES torturing me EVERY WAY IMAGINABLE.

That's all I've gotta say now. I'm gonna waste my time just ranting about something that's not so important when Dad out of the blue brought up his vacation plan at dinner.

“All right, kids, I've got a SURPRISE trip for you!”

It's official: we're going to Wisconsin IN 2 DAYS.

At first, I was surprised, as I've concluded in geography class that Wisconsin isn't significant, and thus isn't very touristy. Besides, No one in my family lives there, and I'm ASTONISHED that Dad all of a sudden has a change of heart.

But then he rambled on about some AIRSHOW happening there. He sounded like he's going to a WORLD CUP.

If you ask me, that's REALLY OFF. Every night his graveyard shift consists of him tinkering with his Civil War diorama in the furnace room to DEATH, pun not intended.

But anyway, he wanted to go to Wisconsin SIMPLY because his SECOND obsession is AVIATION.

For the record, I'm also pretty interested in aircraft, ever since I went on the spring break field trip to D.C. and Virginia earlier this year. I distinctly remember one place: the Udvar-Hazy aviation museum.

Man, to be frank, I was TOTALLY IMPRESSED by marvels such as the Dash 80, the SR-71, and the CONCORDE.

Those pioneers went out of their way to make their OWN pioneers for their own country's pride. The U.S., off the top of my head, has our state-of-the-art fighters and bombers and all that. So, I'm EXTREMELY glad that all their work wasn't laid to waste.

I chimed in about that field trip, and it's safe to say that Dad was glad that someone finally shared the same interest as him.

He then talked about all the stunt planes and warbirds I'll SURELY like, and their spectacular aerobatics around the airfield and stuff like that. I could tell Rodrick was having none of it.

"Dad. AIRshows are not MY shows! How about CONCERT shows?"

He's always like this whenever a trip gets brought up. Of course, Dad tried to shut him down, like me if I try to ever disagree with Dad's opinion on sports.

"Rodrick, if you don't agree with me don't cry to me that you're jealous."

"Well, I'm FINE just chillin' here! I could go on partying like it's '99 if you wanna see it!"

Rodrick immediately regretted what he said, because Dad yelled:

"IF YOU DON'T COME WITH ME, RODRICK, THEN I'M GONNA DUMP ALL YOUR CD'S AND YOUR VAN KEYS TOMORROW! Whew! Anyway, I've heard somewhere there's a concert there. Now, would you please shut it?!"

Rodrick shut up on the spot.

But Mom is the cherry on top.

"FRANCIS, YOU KNOW HOW MUCH PLANE TICKETS COST?! ADD TO THAT YOU'RE RENTING A CAR! AND HOTELS! AND THAT DUMB AIRSHOW IN OSHKOSH, MY GOSH! MONEY'S TIGHT THIS YEAR, DON'T YOU GET IT?!"

This argument went on for quite a while, and Dad lied to Mom on purpose, vowing to give up the airshow, though for whatever reason we're STILL going to Wisconsin.

Where before I've got the Empire State Building now I'll have Disneyland. I prefer proud landmarks with actual action. My trip's gonna be so much better with those performances I'm imagining right now!

Saturday, July 22

Since Rowley's gonna brag about his trip to Japan or whatever on the first day of school, today I announced that I'm gonna go to Wisconsin for an airshow. I honestly described it as absolutely UNFORGETTABLE.

On top of that, I also told him that if he wanted to brag about his vacation he must owe me \$100, which is a generous price for something as pathetic as his tall tale, except I'm too smart to mention THAT on the spot.

But nonetheless, as soon as I finished, for a second it's like he wanted to KILL me.

He simply told me he has to "go take a nap" and shut the door.

I mean, I'm his best friend for 3 years on-and-off now, and he's traveled throughout the ENTIRETY of Europe for crying out loud! So, what's he AFRAID of?

So, a few hours later I'm writing this as my parents were packing their things and oh, God! What did he remind me of?

The infamous Safety Patrol.

But then again, it wouldn't matter since he'd be off to, I dunno, New Zealand or Iceland or whatever for a month. I think it'd be a nice distraction. I hope he forgets.

Sunday, July 23

You know, this is my first time on a real jetliner, and from the get-go I felt very laid-back and excited once we took off from Boston. Dad reassured me that the pilots flying this 'Mad Dog' are seasoned, so there's a fat (actually means "slim") chance of an accident.

Now, that was DEFINITELY subject to change.

We're reaching Milwaukee Airport in a freak storm right now, and you know it's REAL BAD when the captain says this over the PA:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is Captain Saunders speaking. We're currently facing severe turbulence, and the winds here are the toughest I've ever faced! Please don't panic! We're doing our best to land our plane as safely as possible."

Right after that, my ears were about to POP, and I felt like I'm LITERALLY FALLING. I then felt a sickening, loud THUMP, followed by another, and another, and YET ANOTHER.

The last one was the TOUGHEST of them all.

With each bounce, my neck felt like it was about to BREAK, if not my ENTIRE BODY getting THROWN from my seat hadn't it been for the seat belts. I know it's NOT normal for a plane to do ANY of these.

Dad is right next to me and he seemed very ANXIOUS. Heck, he wouldn't answer me!

"Dad, why did this plane bounce really hard?"

No answer.

"Dad, should this plane even fly in such weather?"

No answer.

When I mentioned to him that I'm smelling fire and that the oxygen masks are down, Dad finally spoke. He tried comforting me, which made absolutely ZERO difference.

"Greg... I know we're in a fire right now... but... the pilots are getting the hang of this... I hope... everything will be a-OK..."

Manny went totally BERSERK. He began wailing constantly. Needless to say, Mom was having a difficult time calming him down.

But if I were to choose between this jetliner landing brutally again (maybe it'd split apart) and a 4-year-old bawling his eyes out, it's ABSOLUTELY no contest. I'd rather have the plane finally land more than anything. I don't care... or do I?

Word got around that the plane's body BENT, and I can see visible SMOKE. All I thought was "OK, there's NO chance we're gonna survive this."

Rowley had one time cut ties with me, I still have the Cheese Touch, and now this MADDENINGLY-MAD DOG IS MADDENINGLY BURNING IN MAD FIRE!

Alright. It's the second descent. Mom finally managed to calm down Manny after like 20 agonizing minutes.

I pray and believe this landing will be actually normal.

Sunday, July 23, 10:11 p.m. CDT

Sorry about that cliffhanger back there, but I'm glad to inform you my whole family's still alive, so do I. Why did I say this? Well, the second attempt was a total CATASTROPHE. Our flight, Midwest 204, EXPLODED on the runway, and our plane flipped over!

Needless to say, the rain extinguished the flames very fast, so most of us walked away with only some nasty cuts and gashes.

Manny's head was half-bloodied, Mom could barely see with her broken glasses, and Dad was unusually glad even though his right arm was bloodied.

"Wow! That was terrible, to be frank, heh... We all could've DIED there without the weather. But on the bright side, kids, it's only one accident, and that doesn't stop us from getting there."

Mom was mad at Dad. I guess she didn't think "there" meant "Oshkosh", but either way Dad quickly shut her up.

"What? I couldn't cheer up my kids? C'mon!"

On the tarmac, I saw a few survivors who got out burned, among dozens with about the same injuries as me. I could only guess the rest had DIED.

The gore was rather minimal, but it's just a SHORT BIT too much. After all, it's my first time seeing ACTUAL BURNS on the survivors. And as I looked down upon myself my gashes on my arms and knees are literally making me GAG.

I couldn't FATHOM what the dead passengers look like, and what their last thoughts were, even though I was in the same cabin.

Of course, we all had to hop in an ambulance for good measure. It's a protocol that I'm sure anyone couldn't go without, and I wasn't even protesting. In fact, nobody was protesting.

We each went through an X-ray scan, and we were bandaged and prescribed some rather simple medicine. We were discharged within maybe 3 hours or so.

Like I said, it's only some cuts and gashes.

After we retrieved our (surprisingly) intact bags, we rented an Expedition, bought the medicine, bought new glasses for Mom, and checked in at the Hilton downtown, all without any issues.

Dad flat-out refused to answer Mom about our plans WITHIN Milwaukee. She had Googled some attractions here, but Dad kept shutting her up.

"Honey, you're just jealous. Just let me do what I want, and we'll sort things out later."

Eventually, she gave up, and went to sleep, but not before she gave Dad a pathetic reminder that we won't be going to the airshow TOGETHER to "save our pennies". We all know she's just lying, though.

"Honey, please for the love of God QUIT! Your obsession is really grinding my gears, and with it you're just flushing OUR money. Respect your own WIFE, Francis!"

Dad was just tossing and turning beside me. I'm also anticipating tomorrow, so that's why I'm the last one awake, and why I'm still writing this entry at 11 p.m. Central Time.

Monday, July 24

Surprise, surprise! We're HIGHTAILING it STRAIGHT to AirVenture! Dad's driving like 80 mph along I-41 while Mom's trying her last ditch effort to get Dad to turn around.

"Francis, listen! I know you're a pilot for Northwest and all, but what if one of those planes were to CRASH like what we've went through?! Oh, Francis! You'd 'promised' that you won't go there, but you're FLAT-OUT LYING-"

"Wait, wait, wait, wait, WAIT, honey! Hold your horses! It's just \$100 more! That crash doesn't matter! Susan, What's the big deal?! Your lies or my... erm, JOY?!"

I think you get the general idea.

Eventually, my parents decided that if Dad was gonna take us with him, then he's gonna leave Mom in a Holiday Inn room he'd booked for us.

I'm proud to say that everything went according to plan... I guess.

“IF YOU GET BEHEADED BY A WING, DON’T SAY I DIDN’T WARN YA! (Sigh) \$100 added to your life... go on, then!” Mom warned as if I care.

Rodrnick GENUINELY felt a bit paranoid, but I reminded him that Dad told us there’s a concert, and that seemed to raise his spirits... slowly and reluctantly.

It’s opening day, and we waited for what felt like AN HOUR just to get our tickets. Dad, Rodrick, and Manny and I went our own separate ways, and we agreed to meet up at AeroShell Square in 1 and 1/2 hours.

Of course, I had to bring Manny with me.

Now, you might be asking: “Why didn’t you have Rodrick or Dad bring Manny?”

The answer is simple: Nobody else wanted that nimrod raining on their parades, and they’ve already made up their minds. I didn’t complain ONLY to shut Rodrick and Dad up.

To kill time (and my annoyance), Manny and I stood facing the runway, pointing out to each other the planes that were landing. A “diamond” formation performed by a dozen Beech “Mentors” was finished, so all the Mentors were landing one by one.

Manny asked about one of them, and I tried to explain it in the SIMPLEST ENGLISH to him.

“Look! That plane, you’ll surely be proud flying in formation to all the guests! You can even perform tricks with it as well if you wanna!”

But he just said:

“Bubby, I don’t understand!”

I now figured out that he was trying to set me off on PURPOSE. He always went “I don’t understand!” WHENEVER I speak. But when I didn’t, he points out a silly thing about the plane.

“Bubby, that airplane is too loud!” (He was talking about a Rockwell “Lancer”.)

Needless to say, I was REALLY starting to lose my steam.

The final straw came when a DC-3 “Duggy” went on a flyby, and TRUST me when I say that it was like love at first sight for Manny, so I had to hold an iron grip on his arms while he kept THRASHING around.

Duggy looked like it came from a kids’ show, which it probably DID: a smiling propliner with bright yellow paint. If Rowley were here he’d JOYRIDE in it! That showboat’s gonna ram it RIGHT at ME. No remorse at all!

But then again, how would he? He and I would just die together.

Anyway, Manny broke down after it landed, disappearing into the crowd, and after a moment of failing to calm him, I decided to drag that kid with all my might back to AeroShell.

Manny caught glimpse of Duggy once again, this time it was taxiing to its spot. He broke free, so I chased after him while also having to dodge visitors.

He was like 20 or 30 feet away from the engines when I YANKED him away just in time!

He thought he CAN go on it. I don't blame him, though.

Dragging him was like dragging an 18-wheeler, not to mention he threw a huge tantrum. All the while, I thought: "Man, if Dad had just left Manny with Mom, then none of this would've happened." But who else would mind him?

"BUBBY, DON'T TAKE ME AWAY!"

After what felt like an eternity of failing to calm him while dragging him farther and farther away, the brat finally broke free AGAIN.

This time, that kid tried to "destroy" each plane while strangers, tourists and presenters alike pulled him away from the planes and worriedly handed him to me.

"Hey, is that your brother, kiddo?" a presenter for a 'Staggerwing' asked while he was handing Manny over.

"Yes! He's... out of... CONTROL!" I panted.

"Well, you'd better tell your parents to look after him, OK?" the presenter told me.

We both basically wrestled each other until we were both TOTALLY burned out.

Since I feared that he could actually break something, I tried to drag him toward the Square again. I asked a fellow visitor to help me get back, and he offered me to carry Manny for me after I'd explained to him he was out of my control. I agreed in a heartbeat.

Eventually, I met up with Dad, and the first second he told me ALL about the P-51 Mustang.

Here's one fact I learned from him: My Grandpa was the its pilot during the Korean War, and that heavily inspired Dad to kickstart his pilot journey.

Rodrick had a blast over at the Beach Boys' concert there, and the ENTIRE ride home he just told Dad all about it. In fact, Rodrick explained on and on for SO LONG and the details SO IDIOTICALLY SMALL that he didn't give me ANY time!

I tried interrupting him THREE times, but Dad quickly shut me up because of "PRIORITIES" or some junk.

"Greg, PRIORITES! It's THAT simple!"

Now that's ONE more bullet point on why I hate Rodrick.

Tuesday, July 25

Last night, Dad persuaded Mom that there's an even FATTER chance of an accident at AirVenture. The pilots there are seasoned to the Creme de la Creme.

But long story short, today was more or less the same thing.

Today, It wasn't ONLY having to yank Manny away from Duggy. Look at all those Staggerwings! All the colors lined up all over! REALLY EASY for a toddler to screw the entire place up!

Sometimes, I couldn't help myself and pause to admire the flybys. Sadly, I learned my lesson the hard way when Manny broke free again and again, so more often than not I had to turn the airshow upside down.

Earlier, I tried to argue it with Dad, but he just told me to try and "suck it up".

I mean, Dad, like it's gonna help by a single ATOM?!

Dad, how about you stand and watch him dismantling the engine of an expensive fighter?! While he's THRASHING at me?!

But to be fair, that didn't happen, but the thrashing did, and I'm SCARED outta my wits that he would break something!

Mom and Rodrick were of equally no help, too!

"Greg, just accept Manny being there! If you don't anger him, then he wouldn't anger you!" Mom told me, like it's MY problem!

If I had a leash, then I shouldn't have to do it, but oh, no! We aren't prepared for that! My parents turned me away when I ask them, saying that it's just plain "dumb".

Wednesday, July 26

The entire last night, I tried to talk Dad that Manny has been a massive pain in the butt the whole time, same answer. I myself tossed and turned in bed until midnight pondering how to solve this issue.

So, first thing this morning, I almost CRIED begging Dad for the THIRD time to change his mind since I feared Manny would go berserk again.

Dad entertained it for an awfully long while, and he finally decided to change his mind, just as I wanted since we came here. He then argued it with Mom. Mom argued that Manny is 6 and he's only "playful", while Dad argued that toddlers shouldn't be allowed at AirVenture at all because I told him so.

As usual, Dad was unmatched. Mom claimed it's "not fair" for one brother to be left behind, and that was FINAL. I wish Mom just wouldn't be so anchored down.

"I want you to take Manny WITH you. No questions!"

Once there, I suggested Dad and Rodrick that we should play Rock, Paper, and Scissors to choose who has to take Manny with him. Rodrick, sick of childish games, stormed off, so I ended up flipping a coin with Dad.

Luckily, I got heads, which meant I get a vacation, NO QUESTIONS. After all, if Dad has to tame that brat himself, then he wouldn't have an appetite whatsoever.

The only other noteworthy thing today is the Avro Lancaster and its flyby. Boring fact: this is one of the last 2 of the type flying!

The engines, wow... they sound like MUSIC to my ears. Everything else is of NO MATCH against these majestic engines! If I could get a recording on tape (get it?), then you'll get to hear what I heard.

But otherwise, this place is starting to bore me. Dad had told us that each day's DIFFERENT, but I'm expecting some MORE action. A performance or two more would definitely do.

The aerobatics we got today are just a SLIGHT bit impressive. I'm impressed only on how the stuntmen could pull such a show off. But nonetheless, I don't care if it's my first time seeing this! I swear TV just makes everything LOOK better.

Rodrick was also bored out of his mind, too. He was pacing around the square. This shouldn't come as a surprise. Beach Boys didn't perform today, and haven't for the past 2 days.

Dad is TOTALLY fed up with Manny constantly raining on his parade chatting with pilots about their own planes.

See?! I knew THIS would happen!

Thursday, July 27

Well, time to change my mind! There's a whole massive ton of activity today! There are no accidents as far as I know! There's just SO MANY performances today it's too cumbersome to list them all. So, I'm just gonna jot the Creme de la Creme highlights down.

By the way, Rodrick bailed out for MTV, and best of all, Manny isn't here with us! So now, it's just father and son. I had to tag along with Dad. Mom made me do it.

While driving to dinner yesterday, I told Dad all about AirVenture that day, especially thanks to the Lancaster, and how I predict the following days will be LIVELY with airshows.

That made Dad tell Mom about it like it's NEWS, again, for 3 days straight now. This time, he gave photos he took there. Now, do you wanna guess the good news?

I'm gonna tell it anyway! She FINALLY caved in, and thought that since we share just about the same interests, we should fit PERFECTLY. If you ask me, that's like the SECOND DECENT thing she suggested.

However, she's not planning to come with us until tomorrow as she's busy "straightening Manny out". Needless to say, I doubt that'll work AT ALL.

Unsurprisingly, Dad just felt glad that his son was finally on the same boat - or rather, PLANE.

First of all, a C-17 landed. Dad immediately saluted, but I don't blame him. Dad has a brother named Samuel Carnegie who's currently fighting in Afghanistan. He apparently went there using this type.

I didn't salute, because I only heard about this Uncle Samuel (yes, that's his ACTUAL NAME) guy JUST NOW. Dad told me so. He saluted just for good measure.

Secondly, Dad LOVES aerobatics where planes perform TOGETHER. The AeroShell team speak for themselves.

As Dad commented, “Son, look. The closer they fly in-between, the riskier the it is, thus the closer they are to collision, thus the cooler the stunt. Everybody loves going out their comfort zone, don’t they, Greg?”

Truly, I’m getting out of my comfort zone A TAD BIT just by coming here, being in that overturn and all. But I’m taking Dad seriously for once all because everything’s going to plan.

Now, I wish Rowley could ACTUALLY be in this stunt. If he thinks THIS is amazing, then I’m gonna have him as the pilot NOW. Man, I feel a bit dizzy even by thinking about how they’ve achieved in the first place.

By the way, I just saw another stunt where one plane flies upside down so its top faces the upright plane’s top, both spewing smoke trails and all. Man, those pilots ought to be MAD right there. That’ll make sure Rowley regrets being with me. I’m getting sick of him anyway.

Then, long story short, I was so distracted by the state-of-the-art fighter F-22 and its CONCORDE speeds that I forgot Dad was even THERE.

When that’s over, Dad practically dragged me to where Blue Angel 7 is parked, and he went on hanging out with its pilot and whatever.

It isn’t very noteworthy, to be honest, and Dad wouldn’t let me out of his sight, so I’m gonna pass the time spilling my inner thoughts out. Here goes nothing.

So, Rowley. Well, while reflecting, I thought “Maybe I don’t really need him”. I want to focus more on myself instead of having to waste my time trying to beat that kid into submission. I mean, all he’s ever good for is to HELP me do my stuff.

I remember we learned in History class about slavery in the South before the Civil War. Thinking about it now, what I’ve done is basically a beginner’s version of that fiasco.

Getting everybody to love me is totally out the window. I’ve connected the dots and I’m thinking, “Maybe I’ve been chucking my classmates under the bus the whole time”.

So now, I’m dead-setting on a BACKUP plan that I’ve thought about just now: My own JOURNAL.

I’ve written down a list of all my friends (which is 8), of course including Rowley, and their qualities that I can think off the top of my head, then I compared them against mine.

The results are out: 4 of them share at least 3 qualities with me, those being “loves video games”, “has annoying siblings”, and “constantly fed up with school”. If they wanna buy my journal and spread the word that it’s relatable, then I ought to be the shot heard ‘round the world.

Now, don’t get me wrong. If Rodrick wants to pick the lock, then I’m letting him. I will be rich and famous ANYWAY. I’m gonna tell Rodrick where my old journal is actually hidden, then I can rest easy. By the way, it’s deep in my closet.

Friday, July 28

Today, on July 28, 2006, I can safely say that I'm HALF-right.

Air-Venture 2006 WILL be unforgettable, but all because something HORRIFIC happened there. I saw it firsthand, alongside my family and all the fellow visitors.

This morning, Mom had dealt with Manny, and she officially changed her mind. All 5 of us went there together, and all was normal. We had a fun time together. The weather was perfect.

Today had the most activity. Stunts and flybys GALORE!

There were, again, SO MANY stunts it's extremely difficult to list them, just like how it's extremely difficult for me to forget this day. One performance in particular ended in sheer catastrophe. I want to forget it all, but I just couldn't.

The Blue Angels flew again, but this time it was the entire team performing. They all took off to perform the "Pierced Heart" formation.

You see, it called for all 6 jets to fly toward us, then climb and split apart, with 3 turning left, and 2 the right, so all 5 were drawing a heart shape. The center jet, Blue Angel 1, was to make a loop and then "pierce" the heart right after the others pass by each other.

Of course, it was VERY TOUGH to nail. In fact, just before, Dad told me that they'd practiced it at least 5 times before with success.

But today they fouled it up in the end, ROYALLY.

When Number 1 tried to pass through, it COLLIDED with another, passing jet. They both exploded in a huge fireball.

I saw the impact alongside my family, clear as day. We were standing at the very front of the crowd facing the runway. The next thing I knew, Number 1 was careening DIRECTLY toward all 800 of us, gathered along the taxiway, while on fire. We'd barely got any time to REACT.

The jet violently PLOWED into the crowd. To make matters worse, it exploded into an even more colossal fireball when it hit the ground.

The other jet (actually, TWO jets) crashed onto the runway like asteroids.

If there's "dodge a bullet", then I've got "literally dodge an exploding jet". It JUST BARELY missed us by like 10 to 20 people to our left. Debris was flying everywhere.

By a stroke of luck, a piece hit Manny's head. It gruesomely split open. His brain matter flew everywhere, just how I wanted ALL ALONG. Manny was such a cretin I was SURPRISED at God for blessing me such a gift. So amazing!

But truly, I was too horrified even then to comprehend anything. Number 1 left nothing but PURE BLOODSHED. We all fled in terror. Practically no one could hear each other but at the same time heard each other's screams.

Actually, only Dad, Rodrick, and I actually ran. Mom stayed behind to weep for Manny. I don't blame her. Manny practically was Mom's ANGEL from birth.

As I ran along, I constantly caught glimpses of a bloodbath. Dismembered pieces of bodies and limbs, organs such as intestines and brains, and sometimes, whole bloodied corpses. Not to mention all are just laying out there, strewn all over the taxiway.

Words alone cannot describe what I had seen. It was a living Hell. I kid you not when I say it's like seeing the Nanking Massacre. Let that sink in.

I swear, Mom and Dad, what's the point protecting me from violent video games and movies when I had to be exposed to something as traumatizing as THIS?!

I couldn't help turning around to stare at the aftermath. I saw Blue Angel 1's remains burning beside the C-17 which only lost its nose. I heard fire engines and ambulances in the distance. For whatever reason, it made seeing the bloodshed 10 times more eerie.

I feel GENUINELY sorry for those killed, especially those who had loved ones weeping over them. They didn't deserve this. None of them did. Well, except Manny, but you get the gist.

Even when we made it to our car, I still couldn't shake it off. I wept when Mom delivered the bad news and argued that she was right all along. I wept the entire drive home. In fact, I'm still weeping glancing at the news on TV as I'm writing this.

It only happened in a day, yet it's somehow as gruesome as the Holocaust. Back then, the photos were in black and white, but now? I saw it firsthand, in full Technicolor.

The scenes back there I will never forget. It looked like a war had just happened.

Unfortunately, Dad accidentally took a whole bunch of photos. A few of them actually showed the bloodbath, and one even showed the instant the jets collided. They for some reason look even WORSE than in person.

Nothing makes a difference at this point. The usual dinner outings didn't heal. Not even my family trying to comfort each other in this adversity.

Sunday, July 30

Shortly after the catastrophe, AirVenture has been canceled this year. No surprise.

Yesterday, Manny was pronounced dead at the hospital, then my parents called a funeral home to transport Manny home. That also shouldn't come as a surprise.

Yesterday, we moved back into the Hilton in Milwaukee. I'd expected it.

For 2 days, Mom looked like she wants to KILL herself. Again, totally expected.

Me, Rodrick, and Dad prayed while weeping. You know the reason.

We're going back to Plainville tomorrow. Neither my parents wanted to go on a plane anymore. Instead, we must go via cruise ferry through the Great Lakes. No one wants to speak with one another. I'm gonna mail this account alongside my old journal.

You've already known why to ALL OF THOSE!

Blame it all on AirVenture! But I don't blame Blue Angel I. He didn't mean it.

Monday, July 31

Right when things seemed to be looking up for us, another member just got killed!

This also shouldn't be a surprise. On the way to the Milwaukee Ferry Terminal, we had to drive below a railroad overpass. Mom suddenly leaped out the car and sprinted up the hill, onto the tracks.

Dad chased after her to try and stop her, but it was futile.

"SUSAN MOORE HEFFLEY! STOP IT! COME BACK! THE TRAIN!"

I also chased after Mom. I just couldn't help seeing what she was up to.

I was right, once again. Mom ran in front of an Amtrak express train traveling at about 60 mph, and committed SUICIDE. I, like I said, don't blame her. I saw her skull BREAK OPEN, just like Manny. Her body was thrown to one side. I hardly doubt anyone noticed, especially the locomotive's driver. It must've felt like NOTHING for him.

I got flashbacks of the catastrophe, but regardless I was relieved to have one less burden of a family member. Dad, on the other hand, muttered about losing his family, one accident after another.

"Why do I oughta suffer through this... the times are just too close. First, Manny and my love for aircraft, then my love Susie, and who's next? Me? With my head smashed open? Today? No. No. I hope my sons and I'll die peacefully..."

Rodrick seemingly couldn't care any less. After all, he didn't see what I saw. He didn't give a darn even after I told him of her suicide.

"Finally, more freedom." He scoffed.

We had to move on because we shouldn't miss our ferry. If we did, then we'd have to wait excruciatingly longer for even more expensive tickets! There's a 50% off discount for the Golden Jubilee, or the 50th anniversary of Pan-Laker Lines this month. At least they've got a jubilee in the first place.

At a stoplight, Dad called 911 about the suicide, and then at another, he called the funeral home in advance to claim Mom's body ASAP. At the third light, he called Pan-Laker Lines to refund 1 adult ticket.

I don't even need to ask Dad to know why we had to take the ship. He doesn't want to drive for another mile. All I wanted was to chill and take a breath of lake air.

We made it aboard the cruise ferry "Superior" without incident. Right from the get-go, everybody wanted to sleep the sorrow away. Not me. I went up to the Sundeck on Deck 8 for the Lake Michigan air. This is where I'm writing this entire entry.

AUGUST 2006

Tuesday, August 1

For the love of God, FOUR tragedies in ONE week?! Is my family CURSED at this point?! Just because I EXIST?! Let that sink in.

I'll bet Rowley's laughing hysterically in Tokyo or Seoul or Beijing or whatever.

This morning I woke up to a hideous THUD. At the time, I couldn't care any less since it's our first time on a ship.

We got prepared for the day, then this PA announcement started blaring on loop.

"Attention, all passengers of the MS Superior! Captain Francis Kittinger would like to inform you to stay in your cabins. It is absolutely dangerous to move, so please do not risk your lives. Please wait until an evacuation order is to be given."

At first, we took Captain Kittinger seriously, but it's been 1 and 1/2 hours and the "Superior" is CAPSIZING! We at first gave the benefit of the doubt and thought the captain would eventually give us instructions, but OH, NO! So far we've heard NOTHING ELSE.

To add insult to injury, it's starting to feel tougher to MOVE, and I'm starting to smell ROTTEN EGGS! And the captain's STILL instructing us to STAY!

The Coast Guard arrived, but they just CIRCLED around us. I'm starting to lose faith.

I persuaded Dad and Rodrick to go and to bring our bags with us. They said "no" at first.

"Greg, it's the CAPTAIN's orders!" Dad persuaded back.

But once I told them about the smell and how tough it is to move, they gave in to shut me up.

"OK, Greg. Fine. Let's roll the die, then!" Dad said.

So, we did. We had a neighboring couple carry half our bags, and then we all struggled up the stairs, with the smoke getting EVER THICKER. Sometimes, I almost didn't know where to GO.

We eventually managed to make it to Deck 8 for the lifeboats, and HOLY JESUS!

This entire ship's BURNING UP! Smoke is billowing to I don't know how high! The deck's ALMOST EMPTY! And to top it all off: The helicopters did NOTHING. Same for the cutters. I thought the Coast Guard were supposed to SAVE US. That's their ONLY JOB.

Waving them is absolutely useless. No one has a flare. Dad spotted a passing ship off in the distance. It's a sister ship in a different paint job. We've dead-setted on sailing toward it since the Coast Guard are mere BYSTANDERS.

So, all 5 of us went into the first lifeboat we can find with difficulty. The "Superior" has tilted so much it's a MIRACLE there's a lone nearby sailor shoving us in.

Once we were all in, the boat was lowered without incident. We couldn't be bothered waiting for anyone else. The sailor had told us this ship's gonna explode any moment.

We went to the other ship, and its sailors lowered a ladder for us to climb. All 5 of us had to pass our luggage with difficulty to one another to toss onto the deck.

They told us this cruise ferry is the "Wilcox Albatross" of Wilcox Seaways. It was an empty ship returning to Chicago from Detroit when it by sheer luck stumbled upon us. We were the first passengers to be rescued.

We were led to the bridge to personally meet its captain. He greeted us and introduced himself. His name was Jeffrey Kinney, and he had always wanted to be a cartoonist, and was in fact once the cartoonist for Igdoof at Maryland. However, no one else wanted Igdoof, and so he became a ferry captain as a stop-gap solution.

He lives in the same city as us: Plainville, Massachusetts, with his wife and 2 sons. I asked him his address and number, and he wrote them on a slip for me.

Since I thought we might actually be good neighbors, I couldn't help introducing myself in DETAIL. I told him about EVERYTHING: My daily life, my family, my journal, my hopes and dreams, and whatnot.

As soon as I mentioned the word "illustrations", it struck Captain Kinney.

He wanted to carry on his passion, and to him I'm the "perfect kid", particularly since I jotted down my daily life - EXACTLY what he was looking for.

But first, I'll have to mail him my 7th-grade journal to kickstart. The catch is that it has to be both funny with jokes, and relatable to a typical middle schooler's life. Now, I'm no extraordinary kid, and that's Jeff's type. So, I'm up.

While Jeff was talking to the couple, at least 20 more fellow survivors came in. Most are adults, and 3 or 4 are kids like me. This time, I saw some burns on them. A lady even had part of her hair burned off.

A minute later, we all heard a loud explosion. Dad froze while I tugged Rodrick to see. I thought the "Superior" exploded. When we got to the window, we both froze. Turns out, I was right.

It's like an atom bomb had exploded, and there's even a huge wave coming out of it. Think a "tsunami wannabe" as Jeff put it.

It rocked the "Wilcox Albatross" for a moment, and that's it. The "Superior" is no more. All the passengers are also no more. The sailor probably sacrificed himself. I think Captain Kittinger is on one of those helicopters.

So much for a 50% discount. So much for 50 years. If they existed for that long, then I'm surprised that they couldn't even bother TRAINING their crew. It's sad to think of the innocent passengers inside. Of course, I blame that scumbag Captain Kittinger.

All 37 of us were then led to our own cabins. We all just continued crying to sleep. Rodrick refused to talk to me. Heck, he wouldn't let me CONSOLE him.

"Greg, DON'T COME NEAR ME! Let me have my SPACE!"

While everybody else cried from this additional burden, beneath my sorrow, I'm excited for my fame that's gonna be TRULY coming my way.

And, to cap this day off, we all got treated to FINE Italian cuisine for dinner for FREE! It was the BEST FOOD I've ever tasted!

Wednesday, August 2

For the past week, every night, I've had nightmares where I was reliving the worst parts of the trip over and over again.

The night before we went aboard the "Superior", I dreamed that I was Blue Angel I's pilot. Let me tell you, it was the most gruesome of them all. Not only was I deformed and mangled as the jet careened, but I was also slowly burning away. I could do NOTHING at all. I was stuck in a dead man's body.

2 nights ago, I dreamed my family were tied to poles as they called out to me for help. I could only stand and watch as one by one, my family was shot to death, with all their heads breaking open.

Last night, I dreamed the "Wilcox Albatross" was capsizing. I was just wandering the corridors as I saw the water slowly rising as the ship slowly tilted in its horrendous torture, I began to panic until I woke up when the water is at chest level.

Each time, I violently awakened to a start before I quickly calmed down.

If Dad didn't suggest us to go to Oshkosh, then what would be different?

Would I still have been an arrogant kid? Would Rodrick still torture me? Would Manny still have gotten away with everything? Would Mom still have been overbearing? Would Dad still disagree with everything?

And most importantly: Would anybody not learn anything?

In hindsight, I think fate gave me the best. But I just couldn't forget the scenes of death. Scenes of bloodshed. Scenes of the deepest, darkest pits of reality of the Earth.

I kept thinking of the Holocaust. The camps did exist in WWII. Torture and mass killings did happen there. There's no use denying them, just like there's no use denying flat earthers and racists and whatnot. Such people exist.

This world isn't perfect like they always told us when we were all younger, but I'm slowly starting to get my bearings. I could only hope our ferry doesn't lose ITS bearings.

Thursday, August 3

Early this morning, we made it to Detroit without a hitch. We paid the damages for our totaled Expedition (which wasn't even OUR fault), and we took a cab to Detroit Metro Airport.

You see, Dad works as a captain for Northwest Airlines. Every few days he has to pilot somewhere. He's based at Boston Logan Airport, so that normally means he has to wake up at 6:00 in the morning before his flights to drive there.

However, since we're out of state Dad has to commute to work by plane back to Boston. Right before the trip, he had called in sick to work, and his next flight is in 2 days.

If you ask me, that's the dumbest idea invented by the Federal Aviation Administration. It just means flight hours wasted sitting on a jumpseat while other pilots get to steal the spotlight.

But then again, Dad might plunge this jetliner into Lake Erie.

Now, since Dad has to get to Boston ASAP, I'm not gonna argue my way out of it.

Rodrick also didn't, too, but because he wanted to cry for the entire flight. Like I said, he's now forever traumatized by Oshkosh. Like I said, no amount of consoling works. He'd rather get out of this plane, but couldn't.

Alright. There's nothing more I can say.

I'm gonna fall asleep praying this A320 doesn't crash.

Friday, August 4

Again, without a hitch, thank God.

We made it back home to 12 Surrey Street in another cab. Actually, Dad stayed at the airport hotel while Rodrick and I went home. He gave us his keys. I held it since I'm more responsible than Rodrick, and I can safely say I still have them.

This morning, I checked the basement to find Rodrick sitting on his bed holding a garden hose, a folded piece of paper, and his iPod.

I called out to him what's wrong, but he just told me this:

"Greg, follow me."

I followed him to the garage to see him fixing one end of the hose to his van's tailpipe. He climbed in, and asked me to climb in too.

I politely refused since I wasn't gonna follow my jerk of a brother's instructions.

I watched as he locked the door, opened the window, put the other end into his mouth, plugged in his headphones, played his favorite artists, and turned the ignition.

That's when I realized this: He's KILLING himself!

Now, I could call the hotline for Rodrick, but I didn't know the number. I only know that it ends with TALK. I've never had someone slowly killing himself like this. Believe me, I yanked the hose out and even opened the garage door.

Rodrick TOTALLY lost it.

"Greg, just LET ME BE! Or I'll run over you 'til your head BREAKS OPEN! Then I can do this in PEACE! You wanna go where Mom and Manny went, Greg?! AM I EVEN KIDDING?!"

Then, he calmed down and weakly said this.

"Alright, Greg. I know you must be crying, but the truth is, I've got to go. But please don't cry. We'll soon meet again on the other side."

I had no words. I just watched him close the garage door, duct-tape the hose back to the tailpipe, climb back in, and attempt it again. I was at my wits' end. I could do NOTHING.

I knew he was dead-serious. I, a 12-year-old, am totally no match against an 18-year-old like him. I'm 110 pounds and he was like 150. I'm 5'3" and he was 6' flat. I knew even if I call the hotline, it might be too late.

So, I could only watch through the open window as my last brother slowly left this world.

It only took about 5 minutes for the fumes to kill him, then he was gone. I then immediately turned off the ignition and removed the hose just so I could slap him. But he's cold and unresponsive.

He died peacefully listening to Metallica, Pantera, Rammstein, and all.

So now, I'm all alone.

Before this Deadly Wiscon-sin, I was the middle brother, then I became the little brother, and now, I've become the big brother. The only brother.

I unfolded the paper. It's his suicide note. Here's how went:

To whoever finds this,

I could no longer bear seeing such evils on this Earth anymore.

Flight 204, the Oshkosh disaster, and the ferry sinking have slowly but surely broken me. Nothing I encountered in my trip to Wisconsin in July isn't gruesome. I know my family went to the airshow in Oshkosh for 4 days before, but the disaster on the 28th erased all before it.

I've seen blood. I've seen gruesome injuries. I've seen dismembered pieces. I've seen exposed organs. I've seen faces forever frozen in agony. I've seen flames. I've seen reality. I've seen what it feels like to be in a battlefield in person.

I honestly don't know when I could ever recover, and to be honest, I probably never will. Not even practicing with Löded Diper plus therapy for one more year might make up for one week of snowballing pain. It's like years of war compressed into 1 single week, and today I'm absolutely sick of it.

I want all my belongings to be given to the lead singer William "Bill" Walter at 129 Burlington Street. I want to be cremated and my ashes be spread at sea by Cape Cod. It's a peaceful place, and I want undisturbed peace there. Nothing more.

To my band: Everything, no matter how good, has to end one way or another. Carry on without me. Find a better drummer. Farewell.

Rodrick Heffley, 8/04/2006

I sobbed so hard I could barely even talk with Dad on the phone.

All my burdens are gone, but what's the cost?

Friday, August 4, 6:22 p.m. EDT

Do you remember when I was gonna mail Captain Jeff Kinney my old journal?

Well, first thing tomorrow, I'm gonna personally bring it to him. I've looked his address up on Google Maps, and he's 3 blocks away, or about 2 miles and a half.

Even by skimming the journal, I quickly thought that what I wrote would be enough for Captain Kinney. It was relatable and somewhat funny at the same time.

I'm also gonna bring this one for good measure.

If Captain Kinney isn't home, then I'm going to Rowley's place. If he also isn't home, then that means I'm done with him. So, I'll just go live with Gramma until Dad comes home.

By the way, I've read the casualties list on "The Globe."

3 deaths plus 115 injuries on Midway 204, including all my family. The captain confessed he had a bad day thanks to the storm and its high winds, thus he landed way too hard and way too fast.

The Blue Angels killed 107, sadly including 25 children, and injured 643 more. As a result, the Pierced Heart has been retired for all future airshows. Apparently, a counseling center has been set up nearby, too late to go there now.

Out of the 1,203 on the "Superior", sadly only 51 survived, including 37 passengers including 20 injured and 14 crew members plus Captain Kittinger, who will be sentenced to life, and the 14 others will serve 10 years. It is the most tragic disaster above the Titanic.

P.S. I'm still sane and well, I solemnly promise.

Saturday, August 5

Well, I went and did it.

Sure enough, Jeff was home. He opened the door and asked me about it. I handed both of them because if the world's gonna misunderstand me, then at least they'll get to see what I've seen.

As you probably know, judging from the way I'm writing this, that he refused it.

He only wanted the first one since he wants to work "book-by-book", which means he doesn't want to work on 2 journals at once. To him, this isn't necessary, at least until he's done with the last one. But I believe this'll be necessary, eventually.

Anyway, he doesn't want to adopt me, so off to Rowley's I go!

Rowley's still not home. I'm finished with him, anyway.

I walked all the way to Gramma's, and she kindly let me in.

"Why, you poor sad thing! Why not come in and have a chat?"

I immediately told her all about my summer trip fiasco and even showed her the worst entries here to prove my point.

Now, I expected some old-lady nonsense, but she thought it through and simply told me that I need to get therapy tomorrow, since this is way beyond her. But not before she whimpered a bit at her daughter, my Mom's suicide.

She went to call the funeral home - the SAME one, mind you - to claim Rodrick's corpse, and also checked up if they've got Manny and Mom's bodies yet. They do.

And yes, I CAN stay with her until Dad gets back, I hope.

If he doesn't crash his plane, then he might get drunk. I hope he doesn't get drunk. Flying's like driving. My Grandpa once got a DUI 10 years before Dad was born. He got fined and got 3 years jail time.

But what about drunk flying? 300 more would be killed. That'd just be yet another form of suicide.

Sunday, August 6

Gramma took me to the therapist's office today. I briefly told the therapist Dr. Willis just about the same thing as Gramma.

He simply diagnosed me with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I should've figured that was coming. But basically, I'll have to spill all the beans out every Saturday for 5 weeks, beginning next week.

If you ask me, I think it's a fair solution.

Back when, when I was upset about something, like whether or not to confess to the Safety Patrol, I just told Mom, and I wouldn't have paid as much attention to the subject matter.

But this? This is some SERIOUS matter. Just jotting it down and a briefly talk it out doesn't work. No, I must go to Dr. Willis for therapy every week. That is, unless I tell him I'll be going out of state for one reason or another.

Tuesday, August 8

I called Dad today to check up on him. He told me he's at the Grand Canyon. I asked if he's planning to jump because he told me there's a jutting observation deck there. He said "no" with a rather cheerful voice.

"Son, I promise I won't jump. I think this trip will cheer me up, believe me."

Now that's a great improvement. I don't see any visible sorrow, and he doesn't sound drunk.

That call gave me a bright idea: If I could tag along with Dad, then I could might as well laugh away the pain.

But who knows how volatile surviving victims could be? Would he break his promise? I prayed to God he wouldn't. I can't afford losing my last member. The last dear person. Even though he suggested the trip in the first place, he's still my Dad.

Wednesday, August 9

Thank God Dad didn't plunge the plane.

I waited at the front lawn of our house for his car to come. An hour had passed, but I kept the benefit of the doubt. I started chewing on some Doritos. Two hours, three. I started to grow worried.

I thought about checking the mailbox, but I remembered it was only noon. Also, the USPS doesn't deliver on Sundays.

Sure enough, 10 minutes later, his car came.

When he came out, I ran up to him and told him how I was totally relieved to see him, how I have to go to therapy now, and how I want to tag along with him. I also told him to not drink whatsoever, to go to therapy with me, and to sell all of Rodrick and Manny's belongings in a garage sale since they're a waste of space.

He teared up a bit about Rodrick, then he agreed to take me, but he had to reconsider transportation and hotels and such. His job pays him well, and he doesn't mind his colleagues, so he doesn't mind booking a separate hotel.

However, he doesn't want to sell anything of theirs, at least for now. Dad just couldn't bear selling them. He finally saw some value in my brothers and Mom's lives. That's soon to be subject to change, though. I hope his next trip or two will be enough.

Saturday, August 12

Anyway, today was the first week of my therapy.

I explained him all the details of the AirVenture disaster in gruesome detail. Some fairly straightforward questioning. It's not worth it to mention all this again. I MOSTLY successfully managed to keep my composure.

“I saw... a BLOODBATH. Yes, a HORRIFYING BLOODBATH! With my own 2 eyes!”

“And what kind of bloodbath did you see, Mr. Heffley?”

“Well, Dr. Willis. There were dismembered parts.... There were arms and legs. Organs... you know, brains, intestines, HEARTS, and (cry) WHOLE BODIES! MANGLED! TORN! Covered in blood! Huge puddles of them!... If the bodies even had a face, it'd be of sheer AGONY!... (sob) I saw them all UP CLOSE, Doc! UP CLOSE!”

Dr. Willis told me to look at things differently: Oshkosh, the planes, the Blue Angels, you name it. He told me not everything has to be fixed to one thing. If I try and “reframe that thing”, then I might not feel so confined. I guess I'll give it a go in my next trip.

After my therapy's over, I called Dad again. Tomorrow he'll return to Boston with a stopover at Minneapolis. I could only hope for the best.

Thursday, August 17

I've only been through 1 therapy session, but I feel a TAD bit better.

Dad left me behind on another trip this past week, and today he's bound for Los Angeles, with a stop at Minneapolis. I was literally YANKED out of bed by him at 5:00 a.m.

I tiredly got prepared for the flight, then got to Boston Logan: the very beginning of my misery. I was about to have a panic attack when I thought it again: This airport leads ANYWHERE, NOT just Milwaukee.

On the way to our plane (an A320), we passed by a DC-9, I ALMOST had flashbacks of the ill-fated Mad Dog. Dad sensed it, because he confidently reassured me he's well enough to fly it, but it's still NOT our plane.

He even called it the “Wimpy 9'er” for its tiny size of the fleet. For the record, I'm smaller than like 95% of my entire class. If I were a plane, I'm gonna proudly bear that nickname forever.

But still, our plane's an A320. Once we took off, I once again felt laid back knowing that what Dad said is true. But once in a while I still worry if it plummets for some reason, or if we run into some storm.

So far, Dr. Willis' suggestion has been a success, maybe.

Speaking of which, Dad had already phoned Dr. Willis that I'll be on a vacation, and that he should push back my appointments by a week.

We arrived at Minneapolis, then switched to a Boeing 757 to LAX. Dad's a bit upset he doesn't get to fly a DC-10. He told me Northwest's gonna retire it early next year. But otherwise, it's without a hitch. After all, I've never been to California.

Friday, August 18

We made it to Los Angeles, and got a separate room at the Hyatt. First thing after breakfast, Dad took me up to the park below the approaching runway to kick this week off. After all, the best is for the last.

I stared up at the flow of planes landing, and wondered about their passengers.

They could've seen what I've seen. They could've known my family. They could've been my classmates. They could've been my relatives. They could've been families of those who died on flight 204, at Oshkosh, or on the ferry, relatives of those who committed suicide, who needed a vacation or to start anew here. They could be dang near ANYONE.

Actually, I snapped photos of every plane, then contemplated afterward. I know that most of the planes and airlines featured will be gone, sooner or later. Just like Rodrick, Mom, Manny, Blue Angel I, flight 204, and most of New Orleans right after Katrina.

Boy, I'm starting to value EVERYTHING. But am I just overthinking? I asked Dad, and he said: "My son isn't a lunatic."

So, am I really well after all? Or is Dad trying to make me feel better? I think it's the latter. He's not to the best, but well enough.

Saturday, August 19

We went to The Getty Center today. I just stood in front of every 19th-century painting, and either imagined myself in a scene as a distraction, or contemplated on how the people featured in the portraits got there in the first place.

Even without Manny, I'm still paranoid that some moron might screw this entire place up.

Wait. Am I supposed to feel good about Manny? No. That bloodshed undid all feelings of rejoice. In fact, I don't think I've often talked about losing him, not as much as Dr. Willis's therapy.

The thing to better my sanity is the great outdoors. I saw fountains of shallow ponds in the inner courtyard. The water's so calming if you somehow ignore the constant crowd.

I even took a walk around the beautiful gardens there for more peace. I glanced down at a pond with some beautiful bush sculpture. I took a deep breath and felt like all my troubles went away with my exhaling.

But, as you may know, I still am pretty shaken.

Sunday, August 20

You, like Dad, might be asking this:

"Greg, if there's Disneyland and Universal Studios around, why not go there?"

Well, I don't blame you. I'm simply not ready for the heights and motions of the roller coasters and all those shenanigans. They might make me vomit, just like whenever I was reminded of Oshkosh.

Instead, today, Dad and I decided to go to the La Brea Tar Pits.

Right off the bat, it's pretty much a FILLER attraction: You go there to see a bunch of fossils and some play explaining the history of the area and stuff like that.

This whole thing might sound good if this is a FIELD trip, and NOT my silent reading of placards. I'm not even sure if I took even an OUNCE of the info.

"...The tar pits themselves are so sticky, once an animal gets in, it can never get out..."

But my mind kept puzzledly thinking: "What on earth am I even reading?!"

The only interesting things are the atrium and the tar pits themselves. They've got the rotten egg smell that I wish to never smell again, particularly ever since I took the "Superior". At first, I was hyperventilating.

Dad apparently shared my mind, but he still kept his composure. He told me that this smell's NOT exclusive to the ferry. What I smelled back there was a GAS LEAK. That means the explosion was a GAS EXPLOSION.

50 years of service, but Pan-Laker Lines STILL didn't know how to maintain a cruise ferry? That's what I call sheer LAZINESS.

Monday, August 21

Tomorrow Dad will fly back to Boston. For some strange (or not strange, really) reason I was even more burned out than before the Deadly Wisconsin.

By the way, if or when Jeff Kinney wants this, then this should be the title.

But today, we went to the Santa Monica Pier, what Dad thinks is the "Creme de la Creme" of the trip. In my opinion, it's the SECOND worthwhile place, behind The Getty Center.

First of all, there's a whole ARCADE. Playland speaks for itself. I've played a whole ton of games I just can't be bothered remembering.

I reclaimed a TAD BIT of my childhood innocence playing a few arcade games here and there, but it's just not enough. This past month I BARELY played video games. The fallout's just too much.

Then there's the ferris wheel, the West Coaster, and the pirate ship thing. I guess they would be much more fun if I hadn't gone to Wisconsin. Now, I only mention them because I went on them. That's all.

Basically, a most worthwhile part here is hearing the sounds of the Pacific, and breathing actual ocean air. I was trying to relieve myself of the fallout.

As my therapist said, "Try to look at elements of your trauma differently. Try to reframe it - think what's different about that thing involved, and you, my friend, will surely feel better about it."

Well, the Pacific isn't the trauma. L.A. isn't. It's Lake Michigan. Jetliners are almost not part of it. It's just JETS. I can't go back to my Hell. School's starting in less than 2 weeks, anyway.

Saturday, August 26

So, I'm back home at Plainville, and I'm back from another therapy session. Guess what I've got in the mail?

Yep, my old journal, totally unvandalized, I promise, and a letter from Jeff Kinney. I opened it, and my heart almost skipped a beat.

"My dear Greg Heffley,

Recently, I have presented your original journal to my publisher Charles Kochman. He absolutely loved it, since it is such a novel novel - get it? He made an offer to publish and kickstart my dreams, all thanks to you!

But anyway, I am done scanning it for reference, and I am now starting to improvise over it for Charles. I can proudly say that your journal has met my and Charles's two conditions of being relatable to a typical middle schooler's life, as well as humor similar to my old cartoonist days, even in your delivered journal.

Once it will be published somewhere next year, you will see minimal edits, including the minor editing of certain jokes and entries, and the removal of exact dates to just days of the week for continued relatability, etc. Otherwise, it will virtually be no more different to what you have delivered.

As soon as your journal, titled *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* reaches #1 in bestsellers, I will quit my job as captain for Wilcox Seaways and sit back and relax as I get more and more sales, and therefore piles upon piles of money for both you and me. Half for you, and the other half for me. It's a fair deal, literally!

Greg, I am currently as excited as you are to see the cash rolling in from the sales and reception we will soon receive.

With best regards,

Jeffrey Kinney."

Now, all I've gotta do is to keep my fingers crossed until next year! Then all the money and autographs will REALLY begin to roll in!

Sunday, August 27

Today was the funeral for Manny, Mom, and Rodrick. Practically my entire living family showed up.

If I were still my old self, I wouldn't have shown up at all. But now, thanks to my experiences, I couldn't help but shed a million tears to such unfortunate souls, all indirectly thanks to Dad.

Except, what's the point of having a grudge? It's DEFINITELY the Blue Angels' fault! My family just happened to be there.

I'll bet Mom's happy since she thinks I "respected" her for once, and don't get me wrong: I've forgiven her, mostly. All she wanted was for the best of me, even though I still felt she was a bit too overbearing.

Rodrick, I now realized that all he did was to pull childish pranks on me.

Manny, just no. He's a brat in and of himself. Nothing more.

SEPTEMBER 2006

Tuesday, September 6

Today was the first day of 8th grade. First of all, the first second I got to school, I honestly was confused why everybody was screaming and running and all that.

But then it hit me: I still have the Cheese Touch from last year. Even after 3 whole months, those kids STILL remember me. So, at homeroom, I passed the Cheese Touch to this 6th grader Jeremy Pindle.

As I slapped him, I said: "Welcome to our school, Jeremy!"

Now, guess who I bumped into at lunch?

Rowley Jefferson.

He was confused on why I haven't showed up at his house AT ALL recently, and also asked me for the \$100. I don't blame him, but I'm not gonna just fess up right then.

"Oh, Rowley. I just need a little break alone. That \$100 is a mistake. You can brag however you want for free. But, please, mind if you just let me have my space?"

Rowley didn't question me any further. How naive he is. He went on bragging about his trip to the ENTIRE continent of South America. Believe me, I couldn't be bothered listening to one word of that. I still have TONS of healing to do.

When he was done, I told him to go away and never come back as I myself walked away.

"Rowley, I'm sorry to say this, but we're FINISHED. No more. Goodbye. Don't ask me any questions, just GO AWAY. Don't come back to me EVER AGAIN. Go do your own Zoo-Wee Mama thing, 'cuz I'm not gonna watch over you 24/7 and beat you to follow me EVERY day until I'm absolutely broken. Farewell forever."

And so, that's how my friendship with Rowley OFFICIALLY ended.

And do you wanna know what else is ending today?

My journaling.

On my last therapy visit, Dr. Willis told me to journal here no longer. He doesn't want me having to remind myself of my pain every time I open this, and thought it might be best to shelf this until I fully recover.

Guess this will be my last entry. Goodbye, boys.