





Flushed with embarrassment, I stood there awkwardly, the plumber delightedly pointing out to Jackie my evident shortcomings. That's the long and the short of it. In plumbing parlance, 'shrinkage' equals 'leakage'; a shrunken flapper does not completely cover the – *and I am going to use a technical term here* – hole. The result is that your tank water simply will not – *another technical term* – hold water, and the fill valve keeps opening and trying to top up the tank. The scientific expression for this is that "the toilet is running", although where it is headed, no one knows. In summary, *Shrinkus cum Leakus Magnum Problematicus est*. The only foolproof solution is to replace all of your toilet flappers, about every two years. So plunge your arm down into the murky water, grab that old flapper by the horns and swap it out for a new one. Or call the plumber.

## HURRICANE SEASON



At this time of year, I usually blather on about the hurricane season and all the dire storms that have been forecast for us. Experts seem to agree that we are overdue for a Big One, although they forget that prior to *Charlie* in 2004 and *Wilma* in 2005, our last dalliance was with *Donna* in 1960. Anyway, they predict about 9 hurricanes (*the average is 5.9*), 16 named storms (*the average is 9.6*), 80 named storm days (*the average is 49.1*), 35 hurricane days (*the average is 24.5*), 5 major (*Category 3-4-5*)



hurricanes (*the average is 2.3*) and also 10 major hurricane days (*the average is 5.0*). Not sure if there is room in there for one sunny day. Meanwhile, locals are getting in the usual emergency supplies, and hauling out *Donna*-era signs like the one shown above.

## ORLANDO AREA DIVERSIONS



Gentlemen, don't hate me, but I took Jackie on a surprise weekend of eclectic delights in April, including a Lady Gaga concert, the Epcot International Flower & Garden Festival, the movie *Atlas Shrugged* and an aerial zipline tour. Look, I know some of you are going to tune out right here, but **LADY GAGA** puts on a good show, and my hearing should be coming back any day now. Her message is simple: be yourself – even though most of her fans are trying hard to be



*her*. But not my Jackie. Okay, enough about The Gaga. The **EPCOT INTERNATIONAL FLOWER & GARDEN FESTIVAL** was magnificent and this year, it ran from March 2 to May 15. While the grounds at Epcot are always beautiful, the Flower and Garden Festival takes them to the next level. The 2011 theme was *Where Epcot Springs to Life* with 100 huge topiaries featuring Disney characters. The main entrance had a tribute to the Disney-



Pixar movie, *Toy Story 3*. Over at the France Pavilion, there was a lift-and-sniff Fragrance Garden focusing on some of the flowers used in making the Guerlain line of perfumes. Other showcases of note included the Bonsai Collection at the Japanese Pavilion, the Norway Troll Trek at the Norway Pavilion, and the English Tea Garden at the United Kingdom pavilion. To see it all, you need to plan on two full days at Epcot. Florida residents get a discount on Disney Passes.



Next, it was off to nearby St. Cloud for our **FLORIDA ECOSAFARIS ZIPLINE TOUR**. Since Florida is flat as a pool table, you are forgiven for thinking that Fentiman has been out in the sun too long *sans chapeau*. However, it really is a full-on aerial zipline operation. To overcome the 'flat' problem, they use climbing towers with platforms on top, carefully spaced along the course, so that you are always ziplining down a gradient. We



started with a ride on a swamp buggy and then a short hike through the pine forest, after which we harnessed-up and listened to a briefing. Having climbed the first tower as it swayed slightly to and fro, our group huddled on the small platform sixty feet up. It was



time to zip along the wire at 25 mph. It's a breathtaking aerial nature tour for thrill-seekers, as you fly through pine flatwoods and over forested wetlands, home to native Florida wildlife including alligators, black bears, white-tail deer and the endangered Florida panther. There are seven long stretches of high-tension steel cable between the platforms, plus two sky-bridges passing over a slough (a

type of forested wetland). The final zip brings you to ground level near the wildlife interaction area which features a panther-hybrid, alligators, hawks, snakes and various other animals and birds. Spend some time with them and then catch the next swamp buggy back to the visitor center with its snack bar/restaurant and small gift shop. Advance reservations are required. Tel: (866) 85-4EVER or (407) 957-9794. The address is 4755 N. Kenansville Road, St. Cloud, FL 34773. [www.FloridaEcoSafaris.com](http://www.FloridaEcoSafaris.com).

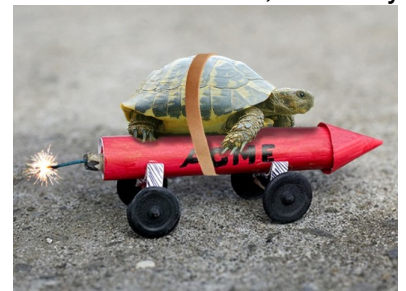


### HOW TO HELP A TURTLE CROSS THE ROAD



Beats me why they do it. Especially when they just sit there (can turtles 'sit'?), half-way across the road. Most turtles encountered on roads are females, and they often move from one body of water to another during the May/June nesting season. Conventional wisdom is that the turtle knows where it's going – not necessarily towards water – and you should help it along in the direction in which it is headed. Never take it back to where it came from, because it will turn

around and cross the road again. Park your car safely, turn on your blinking hazard lights and approach the turtle from the rear. For many species, you can grasp the shell on each side, half-way between the fore leg and the rear leg, lifting the turtle horizontally but holding it off to the side of your body so that if it does its business (wouldn't you, if you were suddenly whisked into the air?), you will be out of the line of fire. Unfortunately, some species have such long claws that if they start scrabbling with their legs in mid-air (yes, they are trying to fly), one or more sharp claws may strike your hand/s: ouch, been there, done that. Never lift a turtle by its tail, although if you have to – if it is a larger turtle and/or it has long sharp claws - you can lift it by its rear legs. Hold away from your body, because with this kind of humiliation, it is almost certainly lining up for a blind shot at your face! Wash your hands afterwards, or carry anti-bacterial gel in your car.



**LA SCALA WEBSITE & WEB FORUM** – Don't forget to frequent and utilize the web forum at [www.LaScalaAtTheColony.com/smf](http://www.LaScalaAtTheColony.com/smf) and also consult the website at [www.LaScalaAtTheColony.com](http://www.LaScalaAtTheColony.com).

Enjoy the summer.....

Andrew

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