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# Triangle

Here we go, another movie review – have you seen or even heard of a movie called Triangle (2009)?Â  It’s not a mainstream movie; it only got about 5,000 votes on imdb.com  
But my husband and I watched it the other night, and we both really enjoyed it – so much that I found it worthy of a little blog post.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/03/triangle-movie-poster.jpg)

So where do I start…Â  because as a reviewer on imdb.com so eloquently said:

How to talk about “Triangle” without giving anything away? It’s a puzzle equal to that which the movie presents its audience because this isn’t your standard horror movie.

I think that is very true about this movie – it’s one of those that is a puzzle all the way through, and while many of these types of movies end up disappointing me in the end, Triangle is the exception.Â  It’s a movie where I could see the viewer getting more and more out of it each time he or she watches it, and I will definitely try watching it again.Â  If you’re interested in a real puzzle of a movie, check out Triangle – but **don’t** read too much on imdb.com about it first.Â  And especially, **DO NOT** watch the trailer.Â  It’s better to watch it going in cold; knowing almost nothing about it, which is why I didn’t say much in this “review”.Â  I will only say that I recommend it as a very different type of movie-watching experience.Â  After you’ve seen it, you will want to read as many discussion boards about Triangle as you can; it’s really interesting to ponder the…Â  well, just see it, then we can talk 

And one more interesting thing about Triangle – as I was reading the discussion boards, I came across comparisons between Triangle and an old poem called [The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner" \t "_blank).Â  It seemed very strange to me that I had completely forgotten that I read The Rime of the Ancient Mariner way back when in school until I was reading about it the other day, which is when details of its plot flashed in my mind like dÃ©jÃ  vu – an interesting thing to happen, considering the themes of the movie Triangle…

### Comments

**derek**You never know! :D  
**taylhis**@derek - interesting... wonder if the teacher would have counted that for class? :)  
**derek**I'll keep my eyes open for it, thanks. As for Rime of the Ancient Mariner, I never read it, but rather I was introduced to in in a slightly different way: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fy7B5pM44A>  
**Mysmichelle**sorry accidentally hit submit, anyway my father used to quote the water water everywhere and not a drop to drink........for EVERYTHING ha!! I don't watch horror movies but I'll tell my daughter about this one  
**Mysmichelle**Water Water everywhere and all the boards did shrink  
**taylhis**@Jamiahsh - have you heard of Melissa George? I hadn't... Apparently she's from Grey's Anatomy and two episodes of Friends - I don't remember her, but one of the episodes is called, "The One with Phoebe's Rats" - might have to re-visit that one now that we have pet rats x 4...  
**jamiahsh**Sounds good! I'll check it out! Your recommendations have yet to fail me ;). Melissa George?  
**Hitch (2005) .[DvDRip] - Warez Download**[...] Triangle | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# The New One

Last week, my daughters were playing outside when I heard a bunch of shouting.Â  Since I was heading out anyway – just had to put on the little guy’s shoes – I brought him out barefoot and began to work on the shoes outside.Â  That’s when I realized that all of the shouting was because my daughter had found her friend from Kindergarten, but since neither of them were allowed to cross the street, they had been shouting across the street to each other.Â  Now that mom was outside, I took my daughter across the street to play with her friend, and her mom came out – which is when we realized a church friend is also our neighbor!Â  So I took the kids for a walk, and we set up a play date for later inÂ  the week.Â  After the play date, my daughter was telling us about her friend and what she said was so cute – “My friend Chloe is moving to Mexico –Â  the new one.”Â  Chloe did indeed say that she is moving to New Mexico, but it’s not really wise to believe rumors started by 6-year-olds.Â  Until her mom says something to us, we will continue to enjoy Sammie having a friend just a block away, even if eventually she has to move to “Mexico – the new one”.Â  

### Comments

**kloe**Oh, that is so cute! I just had to see your article with the same title, and very well worth it!  
**taylhis**@mysmichelle - thanks! I was beginning to wonder about you... ;)  
**Mysmichelle**That's adorable really.  
**justj**From the mouths of small children. :) No coaching required.  
**taylhis**Maybe it's based upon the # of letters? I wouldn't mind of the too-short comment limitations were lifted altogether... ;) Unless that would be inviting more spam, that is!  
**jamiahsh**@ Mary... my two word comment was. Something must have changed?  
**mary911**Ok, I REALLY love it! :) (Is that long enough?)  
**derek**That is one cute story. :)  
**jamiahsh**That's adorable!

# Night Of The Hunter

We recently came upon an old horror movie (1955) called [Night of the Hunter](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048424/" \t "_blank).Â  And if you’ve noticed, I don’t really write movie reviews anymore – I watch a lot of movies and there is too much other stuff going on in my life…Â  but Night of the Hunter is surprisingly intriguing for a black-and-white horror flick, so I want to recommend it.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/03/night-of-the-hunter.jpg)

In Night of the Hunter, a little kid named Johnny is left with an incredibly adult responsibility when his father is arrested for robbing a bank and killed in prison – Johnny must now take care of his little sister Pearl and hide the stolen money – never to tell anyone where it is.Â  Johnny’s father talks in his sleep in prison, and his insane cellmate learns of the money and the kids.Â  The cellmate, played by Robert Mitchum, dons the personality of a preacher and manages to charm the childrens’ mother into making him their new stepfather, even though he is only interested in the hidden treasure.Â  What follows is a riveting cat-and-mouse game between the children and the bad guy, and while old-fashioned, the movie managed to become quite an intriguing horror / suspense film.Â  I would share the trailer since they have it on youtube, but apparently the producers were attempting to attract a different type of audience as the trailer plays up the *very few* sexual aspects of the film – which really isn’t representative of the film at all; the trailer completely misrepresents the film and that’s why I’m not going to show it.Â  There was good acting, great directing, and talented camera shots and cinematography that really helped to heighten the suspense.Â  Some of the characters are incredibly old-fashioned (a friend of the childrens’ mother tells her that she “can’t raise those children without a man”, suggesting that she find a man, ANY man to help her – this idea is completely irrelevant in today’s society where single moms are commonplace), but it’s easy and kind of fun to transport yourself back in time in order to sympathize and begin to understand the plight of these characters.Â  The movie is set in the Depression era; a time when kids were often more of a financial burden than their parents could handle.Â  In many cases, it was thought to be best for them if they were left to take care of themselves, often before they were teenagers.Â  This aspect of the movie also explains Johnny’s determination to take care of his little sister, as well as to explain other events in the movie that are best to be left unsaid here – I certainly don’t want to spoil anything.Â  Overall, Night of the Hunter is a riveting, classic horror movie experience that effectively transcends the decades-long gap between its release and modern horror movies – which all too often rely on blood, violence and gore to entertain.

After watching the movie, I looked up the actors on imdb.com, and I was surprised to learn that young Johnny is played by Peter Graves – a popular actor best known to me as Capt. Clarence Oveur in the Airplane! movies.Â  It was quite novel to see him in a movie as a kid when I was familiar with his later-in-life acting roles…Â  And I was also surprised to see that the childrens’ mother was portrayed by the late Shelley Winters, an actress that I knew best as Roseanne’s Nana Mary on the 90’s sitcom Roseanne – no wonder I didn’t recognize her nearly 40 years earlier!

And a final note – Night of the Hunter is based on a novel, one I will have to add to my ‘books to read’ list…Â  er, make that my ‘books to read if I ever finish the Harry Potter series’ list.Â  

### Comments

**taylhis**REALLY... Quite interesting and I'm glad you pointed it out. Here I was thinking that I could see the resemblance, haha! Yes of course, if only I had done the math... movie was made about 55 years ago, and Peter Graves was 83ish when he passed away recently, so yeah, being an 8 or even 10 year old boy in that movie didn't make much sense. Guess I had a momentary lapse and thought (at one point only) the movie was filmed when it was set - in the '30's. Thanks again for pointing that out - glad you did, don't be sorry!  
**jamiahsh**Sorry to point this out t, but Mr. Graves played Ben (the children's father who was hanged). It was on TCM last night and it was very enjoyable. I thought Johnny looked a bit too young to be Graves.  
**jamiahsh**hmm... answered my own question.. fancy that ;)  
**jamiahsh**must have been recent?  
**taylhis**I am sad to say that I just read a [headline about the passing of Mr. Peter Graves](http://www.cnn.com/2010/SHOWBIZ/TV/03/14/obit.peter.graves/index.html?hpt=T1). He was 83. His talent spanned decades, and he will be missed.  
**HP CTO explains release slate earlier - Tech Willow**[...] Night Of The Hunter | My Food Chain Gang HP CTO explains why they didnt release a slate earlier was posted on Saturday, March 13th, 2010 at 3:04 am. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site. [...]  
**jamiahsh**AH, Peter Graves. Mr. Jim Phelps of the original Mission:Impossible tv series ok and Airplane, too ;) They had to recast the role for the movie for reasons you have to watch the movie for. I know I have seen Night of the Hunter before... time to revisit it.  
**derek**My library has this one- I think I'll pick it up sometime. Thanks for the review!

# Crazy Prices!

We live a little over an hour outside of Toledo, Ohio, so it’s the ‘big city’ we visit for extra shopping, better restaurants, and of course, the zoo.Â  We’ve discovered a little cafe just north of the Ohio toll road called [Nick’s Cafe](http://maps.google.com/maps/place?oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1&ie=UTF-8&q=nicks+cafe+ohio&fb=1&gl=us&hq=nicks+cafe&hnear=ohio&cid=11065164521294360545" \t "_blank), and they have GREAT food (including Greek selections – YUM!!) that comes in HUGE portions at very reasonable prices.Â  Just thought I’d give them a plug since the place is never hopping when we’re in the there and I would HATE to see them go out of business…Â  Anyway, next to Nick’s (well, there is an abandoned honky-tonk bar between them called Bootleggers) is an old Frank’s Nursery and Crafts building that recently opened up as something called Crazy Prices.Â  The first time we noticed it, we were too tired to check it out, but last week we had enough energy left toÂ  go in, and it’s awesome!Â  They have a variety of wares, from groceries and household items to furniture and clothing, all at discounted prices.Â  Like any store like this, some things you have toÂ  be careful about since there might not be much of a discount, but when we went, they had a special sale – 50% off ALL grocery items!!Â  We ended up with about 4-64 oz. bottles of juice for the kids, lots of snacks and granola bars for school lunches, and a whole bunch of other stuff for around $21!Â  Plus, they give each kid a little squirt gun as a prize for “being good and letting mom and dad shop”, and they also give you a wooden token for each $5 spent – the token is good for $5 off your next purchase of $10 or more!Â  We will definitely be back!Â  There is also a location in Bowling Green, and [if you go to their website](http://crazyprices4you.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1" \t "_blank), they don’t mention the Toledo location but it’s there on South Reynolds, just north of the tollway.Â  Better yet, we learned that this is a Christian organization!Â  Their mission statement:Â  *The Vision of Crazy Prices is to see a chain of discount retail stores providing income to an ever-growing list of organizations that are supporting young people, many of whom are hungryÂ  andÂ  hurting, emotionally, physically and spiritually.*

If you are in either the Bowling Green or Toledo Ohio areas and you like clearance shopping (my husband can’t get enough – we spent over an hour here last weekend and he wants to go back this weekend – no complaints out of me, I like to clearance shop too AND this gets me yet another trip to the zoo!!), check out Crazy Prices!

### Comments

**JR**Bowling Green location is now closed.  
**jamiahsh**And Nick's is excellent. Just make sure you have an appetite. Beware the full pound burger!  
**derek**Another place for us to go next time I'm over there. :)  
**taylhis**@angel\_of\_night - thanks for commenting on my blog! And I agree - these two places are indeed jewels of Toledo. If you know of any others, feel free to leave them in the comments!  
**Angel\_of\_night**My husband and I LOVE Crazy Prices/Nick's!!!! It is so nice to find other people that know about the small jewel's of Toledo.

# Smurfingly Insider Info

It’s no secret that there is a big screen version in the works of the popular little blue 80’s tv characters known as The Smurfs.Â  I haven’t heard much buzz about this, just enough to know that it’s in development.Â  IÂ  don’t know if it’s going to be live action, CGI-enhanced, or 3D (though I would guess that withÂ  the growing popularity of 3D that this might not be a bad idea).Â  I do know that the main roles are rumored to have been cast, and this is the news that shocked me and prompted this post –[Quentin Tarantino as Brainy Smurf](http://www.imdb.com/news/ni1757812/" \t "_blank)?!?Â  If this movie is going to be live action, this is going to be interesting…Â  my money is going on Tarantino doing the voice-over for the character, not actually being made up as Brainy Smurf and doing the acting.Â  Although perhaps the actors will film the movie and then be “drawn”Â  over, ala Avatar.Â  But however they do it, I will surely be checking it out as I was a huge fan of The Smurf’s cartoon in the 80’s – I even had a Smurf’s record!Â  Who can forget the toothbrush song?!?Â  I listened to this over and over as a kid and was pleased to find it on youtube.Â  (I would like to apologize to my friend Carol in advance – DO NOT click the video, Carol!)Â  Oh, and by the way, they’ve slated Katy Perry as Smurfette, and Jonathan Winters as Papa Smurf.Â  No word on Gargamel yet, although Neil Patrick Harris apparently has a role as a “live” character who helps the smurfs (Johan or Peewit?).Â  And Alan Cumming is Gutsy Smurf – who the heck is Gutsy Smurf?Â  Is this going to be a parody movie of the Smurfs, much like the Brady Bunch movies (which actually did a great job of hilariously spoofing the 70’s tv show)?Â  Staying tuned!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**taylhis**@derek - link worked, but sorry to say that the game looked less than riveting ;) I'm sure many of the games I enjoyed as a kid would look the same way now too though... Superman and E.T. on the Atari 2600 were two of my faves! @jamiahsh - yes, Hogatha was a witch - I remember the episode when she turned herself into a female Smurf. And the ogre's name was Bigmouth - he was friendly but not too bright. Clockwork Smurf was a favorite too, but he wasn't a real Smurf; he was more like a robot created by Handy Smurf to do the Smurfs' dirty work. I am excited to see this movie; I hope it stays true to the tv show!  
**derek**Okay, dunno why that link got cut. This should work: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LurAH-KoELc>  
**derek**Oh, and I remember playing Smurfs on the Colecovision too: [http://www.youtube.com/results?search...](http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=smurfs+colecovision&search=Search)  
**jamiahsh**I don't recall a Gutsy Smurf, either but there were 100 of the blue buggers. Let's see there was also Homnibus the wizard, Hogatha the witch (i think she was a witch) that were human characters. I think there was a giant but can't remember his name.  
**derek**I think I watched one or two episodes, but as I was approaching my teenage years when the TV 'toon came out, I was never really into the Smurfs. I do remember a worker at my freshman band camp subtitling blue moon ice cream as "naked smurf". :D Interesting- I went to Wikipedia to learn the year when the series came out (1981) and found out that the Smurfs are a Belgian creation from over 50 years ago (1958). I never knew that. Also, the movie you mentioned sounds like part 1 of a trilogy if you can believe it!  
**taylhis**If you sing a song like that at work, your co-worker might think you're getting a little loopy... ;) I didn't care much for the video, but I loved the memory of the song - it was one of my favorites when I was about Sammie's age. Whoever made that video seems to have WAY too much time on their hands!  
**mary911**Hm....if I end up singing that song all night, I know who to blame! The video was disturbing, but the tune was catchy. I had NEVER heard it before....

# Newseum - Haven For News Junkies!!

If you are a news junkie like me, then you will love this website – there are maps of the whole world, broken down into sections.Â  You click on dots on the map, and you can see the front page of the newspaper for that region.Â  In many cases, you can get the pdf file of the entire newspaper!Â  The site is updated every day, so you can see current headlines.Â  I really like to read news from all over the country, especially places where I use to live, like Chicagoland, Lincoln Nebraska, and Rockford Illinois.Â  And it’s really interesting to see headlines from the entire world!Â  (even though I can only read the ones in English!)

[Here is a link to the United States headlines map – enjoy!](http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/flash/" \t "_blank) Follow links on the site to access news taking place on the entire planet!

### Comments

**derek**News...overload...head...asplode... Seriously, too much news for me. I have my home set to [Worthy News](http://www.worthynews.com/total-news.php) and I never even read that! But thanks just the same.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, sound like a place you could get lost in and not come out for hours!  
**Carol**I like it ..I think I will try it out at "work" and see what they think! Very cool!  
**justj**Looks like that could be a fun site. I may have to explore a bit.

# Tending To Our Flowers

As I’ve mentioned before, I belong to a Christian moms’ group called MOPs (Mothers Of Preschoolers), and I enjoy our monthly meetings immensely.Â  Every month, we receive a handout with a little essay that contains advice or words of wisdom from one mom to the rest of us.Â  I found this month’s article beautiful and thought-provoking, and things like this help motivate me and give me strength to get through some of those really tough days of being a mom.Â  Hope you like it!

Tending to Our Flowers

by Katherine Craddock

So it is with all of our children – their glory is like the flowers of the field.Â  For each generation, God has prepared an entire garden of flowers.Â  Some, like tiny crocuses, tulips, and hyacinths, bloom early in their lives.Â  Their soft beauty, strong resilience, and beautiful fragrance give us a reminder of hope and resurrection – then sweetly melt away.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/03/tulips.jpg)

Other children burst forth with wild, exuberant colors in their elementary and teen years.Â  Some will blossom and bear fruit later, in the middle of their lives.Â  Other cut flowers will fill our homes with color and fragrance and life until they are suddenly gone.

There are loud, attractive summer sun flowers like echinacea, Russian sage, daisies, and black-eyed Susans.Â  There are thorny briers that burst into rose blooms, and quieter shade plants like hosta and hydrangea who bring beauty and peace to the darkness.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/03/hydrangea.jpg)

And last of all, there are the plants that have been patiently and steadily growing all along, looking like nothing much.Â  Entire seasons of life can pass before these flowers find their voice.Â  But when they do, the asters and sedums, chrysanthemums and lilies remind us of the beauty that was and is to come.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/03/sedums.jpg)

Who can say which has more beauty or value, the crocus or the rose?Â  Each, when lovingly tended, is unique in its own strength and has no need to be compared.

So whether your daughter walks at 9 months or 19 months; whether your wild son behaves as early as Preschool or not until after college, be encouraged that every child – “gifted”, “disabled”, or “normal”, will bloom with great beauty in the Gardeners’ time.

*“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.” – Isaiah 40:6*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Beautiful and oh, so true.  
**taylhis**I figured that teachers and people who work around kids would also like it.  
**Phyllis Beyer**What a lovely essay! Thank you for sharing it.

# Ah, The 80's...

Fellow Tangenteers posted youtube.com videos recently sharing some of their favorite music – that made me think about a country artist from the 80’s I used to enjoy named [Sylvia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sylvia_%28singer%29" \t "_blank).Â  She’s come out with recent material, but my favorites of hers were from the early 80’s.Â  I was able to find a few of her songs and still enjoy her beautiful voice as an adult (however cheesily 80’s some of the lyrics might be), but I’m still looking for the following songs by Sylvia:

So Complete, The Mill Song (Everybody’s Got a Dream), Who’s Kidding Who, Tonight I’m Gettin’ Friendly With The Blues, Gone But Not Forgotten, and Jason.

I was able to find two Sylvia videos on youtube.com –Â  dig the “super-cool” video and sound effects in Snapshot and the totally 80’s bopping in “Nobody”.Â  Does anyone else remember Sylvia?Â  I was thinking Mary might even have a cassette tape I can borrow ðŸ˜‰

Snapshot – 1983:

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

Nobody – 1982:

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**taylhis**@Carol - Sylvia came out with an album in 2001 followed by a Christmas album in 2002. I am only familiar with her two early 80's albums - Snapshot and Just Sylvia; I'm not quite sure what her recent sound is like; there were some other albums in the 90's. As of late, I seem to be reading that she is a life coach. I have heard of Loretta Lynn and Crystal Gayle, and I enjoy their music, but I had NO idea they are sisters!! Thanks for sharing!  
**Carol**I loved Sylvia - has she come back recently? I remember Nobody was what girls would request off the college station when they broke up with boyfriends over cheating! I also like Loretta Lynn's sister Crystal Gail who came out about that time too I think. Still a big fan of John Denver? I also still like my Johnny Cash so family(hint, hint) you could get me the last C.D. that just came out for my birthday. That gives you 4 months to save your nickels and dimes!!!! Thanks for bringing up memories!  
**taylhis**@derek - I chose the two songs that were available on youtube.com Because of that, I think these were the two "crossover" hits for Sylvia. Two people who are not fans of classic country have told me that they remember these songs from the 80s. I wish I could find the Sylvia songs I really enjoyed - they were much less cheesy.  
**derek**Her voice seems country, but the instruments and style... Did you just pick the two non-country songs from her. ;) I'll have to admit I've never heard of her (or heard either of these songs) before.  
**justj**Yes, I remember her, and the hair too. Those styles were very popular in the 80's  
**mary911**I found the "Snapshot" video quite disturbing....Not sure if it was the two doo wop boys in the background, the hair, or the fact that it has PSYCHO written all over it.... ;) On the other hand, "Nobody" is a classic! I was in 6th grade I believe when that came out and my girlfriends and I thought we were super cool running around the playground giving performances of that song. I still know every word!!!

# THAT Time Of Year!!

The list of Academy Country Music Award nominees was announced today!Â  And while I’m not entirely in agreement with some of them, that still does not dampen my excitement for the actual awards show – now held in April, which is even earlier than its past May ceremonies.Â  I’m going to wait to give my picks for winners until we get closer to the show – I need some more time to listen to the artists, their songs, and the buzz surrounding them on country radio.Â  But I can say that I’m not a big fan of Lady Antebellum, a group who leads the pack in number of nominations.Â  Uh, oh…Â  perhaps country music is leaving me behind since I strongly prefer classic country and those modern artists who are seemingly fading into the background such as Alan Jackson, Garth Brooks, Martina McBride, Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, George Strait, Reba McEntire, Brooks and Dunn, and Rascal Flatts…Â  I do like Carrie Underwood, but I’m not so crazy for Taylor Swift (cute name though!).Â  All that being said, I still enjoy the annual extravaganza immensely; especially the live performances.Â  I am especially excited that unlike the ACM awards autumn counterpart, the CMA awards which are held on Wednesday nights, the spring ACM awards show is held on Sunday evenings – which means that I don’t have to ditch my youth group students, haha!Â  Here’s the list of nominees; we will find out who wins on April 18, 2010!  
Entertainer of the Year:  
â€¢ Kenny Chesney â€¢ Toby Keith â€¢ Brad Paisley â€¢ George Strait â€¢ Taylor Swift â€¢ Carrie Underwood â€¢ Keith Urban â€¢ Zac Brown Band

Top Male Vocalist:  
â€¢ Kenny Chesney â€¢ Brad Paisley â€¢ Darius Rucker â€¢ George Strait â€¢ Keith Urban

Top Female Vocalist:  
â€¢ Miranda Lambert â€¢ Reba McEntire â€¢ Taylor Swift â€¢ Carrie Underwood â€¢ Lee Ann Womack

Top Vocal Group:  
â€¢ Lady Antebellum â€¢ Little Big Town â€¢ Randy Rogers Band â€¢ Rascal Flatts â€¢ Zac Brown Band

Top Vocal Duo:  
â€¢ Brooks & Dunn â€¢ Joey + Rory â€¢ Montgomery Gentry â€¢ Steel Magnolia â€¢ Sugarland

Top New Solo Vocalist:  
â€¢ Luke Bryan â€¢ Jamey Johnson â€¢ Chris Young

Top New Vocal Duo:  
â€¢ Bomshel â€¢ Joey + Rory â€¢ Steel Magnolia

Top new Vocal Group:  
â€¢ Eli Young Band â€¢ Gloriana â€¢ The Lost Trailers

Album of the Year:  
â€¢ “American Saturday Night” – Brad Paisley â€¢ “Lady Antebellum” – Lady Antebellum â€¢ “Play On” – Carrie Underwood â€¢ “Revolution” – Miranda Lambert â€¢ “The Foundation” – Zac Brown Band

Single Record:  
â€¢ “Need You Now” – Lady Antebellum â€¢ “People Are Crazy” – Billy Currington â€¢ “Red Light” – David Nail â€¢ “Toes” – Zac Brown Band â€¢ “White Liar” – Miranda Lambert

Song:  
â€¢ “Cowboy Casanova” – Carrie Underwood â€¢ “Need You Now” – Lady Antebellum â€¢ “People Are Crazy” – Billy Currington â€¢ “White Liar” – Miranda Lambert â€¢ “You Belong With Me” – Taylor Swift

Video:  
â€¢ “Boots On” — Randy Houser â€¢ “Need You Now” — Lady Antebellum â€¢ “Welcome To The Future” — Brad Paisley â€¢ “White Liar” — Miranda Lambert â€¢ “You Belong With Me” — Taylor Swift

Vocal Event:  
â€¢ “Hillbilly Bone” – Blake Shelton featuring Trace Adkins â€¢ “Honky Tonk Stomp” – Brooks & Dunn featuring Billy Gibbons â€¢ “I Told You So” – Carrie Underwood featuring Randy Travis â€¢ “I’m Alive” – Kenny Chesney with Dave Matthews â€¢ “Seeing Stars” – Jack Ingram featuring Patty Griffin

### Comments

**Stevia :**i love Taylor Swift and her Tim McGraw album. it is full of very beautiful songs"''  
**Anxiety Depression**Tim McGraw is one of the best albums of Taylor Swift, love yah taylor~\*-  
**jamiahsh**Greetings, Mr. President Jackson ;)  
**Chanell Mank**who is carrie underwood marrying? he's a pretty lucky guy!  
**Andrew Jackson**i love the Tim McGraw album of Taylor Swift, nice songs, nice album`\*"  
**Liam Martin**I love Taylor Swift and Tim McGraw album, Taylor has great song and she is pretty too.'~.  
**jamiahsh**Hmm... I give Miss Swift 2 years before she attempts to "grow up." Anyone named Jamey is worthy of a vote or two.... even if he can't spell ;)  
**derek**Erm.... No comment from this country non-fan. ;)  
**taylhis**@justin - I see what you're saying. I think she's country in a sense, but her music, persona, and style seem to be targeting the tween-teen set - junior country, I guess... I would agree with you about her being more pop alternative, but only because I'm not into pop really - I wouldn't mind if she left some country awards for the artists I like :) I would hesitate to say she is MORE pop/alternative than country just because I think pop is much more risque and edgy these days - Swift has a gentle sound and squeaky clean image (how long do we give that to change, ala Spears, Cyrus, etc.?) She is talented; she can write and sing, though I've heard many better voices and to me her songs all sound the same. I am hoping she won't clean up at the ACMs, but it doesn't look good...  
**Justin**Call me crazy... but I don't really consider Taylor Swift country... more Pop/Alternative.

# When Stars Collide Over Warrenville

As I’ve mentioned, I read the suburban Chicago newspaper online.Â  Today a headline about the town where I grew up caught my eye – a kid filmed a short little youtube.com movie in Warrenville, Illinois.Â  I couldn’t care less about the battle between fans of Star Wars and Star Trek, but I know there are some tangents.org readers who are fans of one or both of the franchises – thought they might enjoy this little video.Â  It’s a creative idea, really – what would happen if the introductory words at the beginning of the Star Wars movies fell to Earth?Â  For its small budget (around $100) and the small amount of time invested, the special effects aren’t bad either…

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

If you’d like more info about the kid or the video, [here is a link to the original article](http://dailyherald.com/story/?id=362789" \t "_blank).

### Comments

**derek**I mean, "indeed it is." For some reason your words changed themselves in my head to "link should work now." Oops.  
**derek**Indeed it does.  
**taylhis**@derek - thanks for the heads up - link should be fixed now.  
**derek**Hilarious! I saw from one of the youtube comments where you learned of this video, so I had to go out to my driveway and retrieve the paper... Oh, your final link doesn't work, BTW. I would guess that it is supposed to go to the Daily Herald article.

# A BIG Scare, But Thankfully, Just a Scare

Last week for date night, we saw Shutter Island – not much to say about that; it was disappointing.Â  We then went out to eat, and my husband mentioned that his fingers were tingling.Â  At the same time, I noticed that he was slurring his words – uh,oh.Â  Although he is only in his mid-30’s, I was sure that he had had a stroke; I know those are two of the warning signs.Â  He did not want to go to the hospital, so I agreed that we would drive home, pick up the kids, and I would look up these symptoms on the internet to see if he should indeed get to the hospital.Â  When I looked it up, the info was scarier than I originally thought.Â  It said yes, these are indeed symptoms of a stroke, and a person needs only to exhibit ONE of them, not all.Â  It also said that people who have strokes often refuse to get medical treatment, and their loved ones must INSIST that they seek medical treatment – so I made Hubby go to the ER while I put the kids to bed.Â  Well, before you panic, let me say that the stroke tests all came back negative.Â  Turns out that his arm had gone numb during the movie because it was a long movie and he was giving me backrubs (AWW!), and his “lazy tongue” was a result of his visit to the dentist in the morning – he doesn’t like novacaine, so when the dentist re-did one of his fillings, he sprayed some kind of numbing spray which got into my husband’s bloodstream and caused him to feel it 9 hours later.Â  PHEW!!!Â  It was a wasted night at the ER, but I’m so glad that he went because otherwise I would STILL be wondering and panicking that he had had a stroke.Â  And besides, it made for a really funny story to tell later…Â  people really seem to like the irony of the directions on the internet:Â  “Expect the person to protest â€” denial is common. Don’t take “no” for an answer.Â  Insist on taking prompt action.”Â  Well, insist I did, and as a result, poor Hubby spent the end of date night in the ER!

### Comments

**taylhis**@justj - don't scare yourself or let me scare you. One of the nagging factors whenever we have a health scare like this is the fact that we have no idea about Hubby's genetic family history due to his adoption. You might say that you have history of certain health problems in your family history, but you also know what to look for. And you take good care of yourself, and have lots of family and friends who love you - don't worry, we would notice if you went MIA. Would you like one of those Life Alert thingys for Christmas next year? Joking...  
**derek**No, strokes are definitely not something to mess around with. I'm glad it turned out to be something more benign.  
**mary911**Ditto ditto on the "Thankfully it was just a scare." However, I think I know an alternative reason for the tingling....it's called "LACK OF BLOGGING!!!" Please pass this along to your hubby.... ;) P.S. It was nice seeing all of you Friday night....however short the visit was. :)  
**justj**Yes, thankfully it was just a scare. Those symptoms scare me a lot. I'm always looking out for things like that with me. Living by myself, I have to be able to call someone before it gets too far. I guess I shouldn't have read this, now I'm scaring myself.... :(  
**taylhis**@Phyllis Beyer - I suppose we should have gone immediately to the hospital, although it was getting late, and we were an hour away from home and across state lines, so we wanted to get the kids home for bed. Plus we weren't sure about health insurance in another state... better safe than sorry, like you say, but in this case, it was nothing, and I think Chris' instincts told him as much.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Better safe than sorry. Next time, just make him go before you spend time looking at the internet.  
**jamiahsh**Sorry that your date night ended so but from past experience with strokes, I'm so glad that you forced him to go! Definitely nothing to take lightly until you can safely say so.

# I've Always Been Crazy, But It's Kept Me From Going Insane

I had to borrow the title of this blog post from one of my favorite Waylon Jennings tunes because I talk to animals, and some people would say that makes me crazy.Â  Crazier yet is when the animals talk back to me…

As it is always tremendous fun for me, yesterday’s visit to the zoo did not disappoint.Â  And while we made our way to the exit near closing time, I was turning over in my head the questions I ask myself and my co-visitors after every zoo trip:Â  what was your favorite animal that you saw today and why?Â  I was having a hard time deciding; everything was great, but nothing stood out as being extraordinary…Â  until my chat with the cheetah.Â  He was looking directly at me, and I said, “Hi Cheetah!” and he said, “Mew.”Â  I couldn’t believe it, so I said it again, to which he gave me another, “Mew.”Â  Now I didn’t realize that cheetahs meow and sound just like your average housecat, but upon much research when IÂ  got home, this is one thing I learned about an animal that never fascinated me as much as others until it talked to me.Â  From now on, I will always stop by the cheetahs to say “hi” because I think we are now buddies.Â  I also found a cute little video of cheetahs meowing, much like my new friend at the Toledo Zoo!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**justj**In all my trips to the various zoos I've been to, I've only heard the cheetahs a couple times. It is great to have the animals react to things you do. I used to have a red jacket that would get the rattlesnake going whenever I wore it. I've been told I had the animals react in other ways, but that may be for a blog of my own.  
**derek**Well that's something- one sure doesn't expect \*that\* sound from a cat that size. :o  
**jamiahsh**That is awesome! Glad you made a friend.

# The Great Zoo Debate

This is a sad post for me to write – a veteran trainer, Dawn Brancheau, was killed yesterday by an Orca whale at Sea World in Orlando, Florida.Â  Reports of the incident have been conflicting, but it seems that the trainer was pulled into the tank when the giant sea mammal grabbed her ponytail.Â  She subsequently drowned.Â  Unmistakably, this is a tragedy – pure and simple.

But it also re-awakens the great zoo debate – should humans be able to keep wild animals in zoos?Â  As they say, you can take an animal out of the wild, but you can’t take the wild out of the animal, and tragedies such as yesterday’s incident at Sea World prove this.Â  It is also apparent that no matter how many precautions are taken to avoid tragedy, an accident can always occur.Â  However, I love zoos, and I strongly and truly believe that the conservation education and money raised by zoos has been and will continue to be detrimental in helping certain species survive and bounce back from the brink of extinction.Â  Many other people disagree, and tragedies such as this and the fatal Siberian tiger mauling at the San Francisco Zoo in 2007 always add fervor to the great zoo debate, which is depicted in this video from Good Morning America and features zoo advocate Jack Hanna debating with the Vice President of an anti-zoo organization, Born Free:

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

In my opinion, they did not let Mr. Hanna have an equal part in the debate.Â  He has some good points, and it’s very difficult to say where the status of certain endangered species would be right now if it were not for the conservation efforts of zoos and wildlife parks – no one knows what **could** or **would** have been either way, so how can that be a part of the debate?Â  As Mr. Roberts points out, the number of tigers has greatly dwindled over the past century.Â  But one can also point out that no one knows for sure if it would have been worse had zoos not been educating the public about tigers or if they had not been learning how to breed them in captivity to continue the species.

The bottom line is, in my opinion, (and this is MY blog, so I get the bottom line) zoos and aquariums have taken great strides forward for the preservation of many animal species.Â  I believe their work and conservation efforts are **invaluable** to conservation (not to mention how many thousands of jobs zoos, aquariums, wildlife parks, and conservation programs bring to societies in hundreds of countries); in fact, AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums have funded more than 3,700 conservation projects in more than 100 countries and spend nearly $70 million on conservation initiatives annually.Â  Remember my post about the [Kihansi Spray Toad](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/01/24/my-favorite-amphibian/" \t "_blank)?Â  This is just **one** example of a creature that would be completely extinct (it is believed to be extinct in the wild but still exists in just two zoos in the world) if it weren’t for the efforts of zoos trying to save it.

Obviously what happened in Orlando is a tragedy of great proportion.Â  And I’m not trying to undermine it, but Dawn’s friends, family, and colleagues are all stating that she was aware of the inherent risks of her job and that she would want nothing but for her work to go on despite what happened.Â  Perhaps changes need to be made; maybe certain species of animal require bigger and better habitats and different types of interaction and stimulation – the modern zoo world is relatively new, and experts are still learning.Â  But I think their hard work is invaluable to the world, and I hope that someday, all of this is just as obvious to the nay-sayers as it is to us zoo-lovers.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/niagara-falls-6-04-032.jpg)

Kind of puts this into perspective now... I wonder if Marineland in Niagara Falls Canada still allows this after recent tragedies involving the killer whale?

### Comments

**taylhis**@derek - thanks for the link; that was an interesting article; especially the part about how the same company built the huge skyscraper that had elevator problems. I was wondering if the aquarium felt the financial crunch in Dubai, and I think this pretty much answers that.  
**derek**Speaking of aquariums- did you read about the one in the Dubai Mall? 33,000 sea creatures (including 400 sharks and stingrays! 8O ) in one 2Â½ million gallon tank that [sprang a massive leak](http://www.kansascity.com/2010/02/27/1778403/soak-the-rich-leak-at-dubai-aquarium.html)!  
**taylhis**@justj - thank you for citing these great examples of saved species. I think the number of animal species (including invertebrates and even plant species) that have benefited greatly from human intervention is too numerous to mention...  
**justj**And as far as zoos helping conserve animals in the wild, we can thank the zoos for the return of the North American Timber Wolf. Public education about the benefit of these animals helped get them off the endangered list. Education is the key and Zoos help provide that education. And of course the Los Angeles Zoo and San Diego Wild animal park with the work they are doing to re-introduce the California Condor back into the wild. Where would we be without zoos?  
**jamiahsh**Beautiful post! I can't imagine anyone in Dawn's position ever signing up for such a job without first weighing the inherent risk to not only herslef but to the animals as well.

# The Return Of Captain EO

This one is for fellow Disney fanatics – I just read an article about the return to Disneyland of the 17-minute Michael Jackson 3D video, [Captain EO](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_EO" \t "_blank).Â  I never got to see Captain EO; my first time to Disney World was in 1992, and the attraction was either broken down during that visit or we just weren’t interested in seeing it; I don’t remember.Â  By the time I grew up, started my family and began our traditional Disney World vacations, Captain EO was long gone and replaced by the 3D interactive attraction Honey, I Shrunk the Audience.

Captain EO replaced Honey, I Shrunk the Audience at Disneyland in Anaheim, California and opened today.Â  The futuristic short film stars Michael Jackson and Anjelica Huston; it cost about $30 million to make and also boasts theÂ  creative team of director Francis Ford Copolla and executive producer George Lucas.Â  When it was shown at the Disney theme parks in the 80’s and 90’s, it was the most expensive film ever made (costing $1.76 million **per minute**!).Â  As of its opening today at 10am, there were many fans lined up to see it.Â  No word on whether Captain EO will return to Epcot in Disney World, Orlando Florida, but if it does, I might like to check it out, despite how much I will miss the always fun Honey, I Shrunk the Audience.

**What's your opinion of the return of Captain EO? Go ahead and check as many boxes as you want!**

* I can't wait to see it again!
* I would not see it again!
* Leave it to Disney to capitalize on the death of a music icon
* I'm excited to check it out for the first time
* I don't care
* Nothing should ever replace Honey I Shrunk the Audience
* No I will never see it. Michael Jackson scares me.

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**derek**"I don't care" was probably the closest, but really I might be interested (not excited) in seeing it for the first time though realistically I probably never will. He don't scare me!  
**jamiahsh**I saw EO at EPCOT. I don't remember being blown away. But I find it odd to say the least and they better not replace Honey I shrunk the Audience. Although...  
**justj**Thank you, that gave me a chuckle.  
**taylhis**@justj - I added the poll answer per your suggestion and took the liberty of changing your vote. Thanks for the idea - I knew I was forgetting something!  
**justj**I voted I don't care, because I was never interested in anything Michael Jackson did. Some of his songs were OK, but I was never a fan. In honor of a movie that kind of reflects occasional morbid sense of humor, you need a poll response of "No, I will never see it. Michael Jackson scares me...." (Points, and a small share of my lottery winnings from tonight's drawing, if anyone knows the movie I am thinking of.) ;)

# Year One

Because I was born and raised in the Chicago area, I still peruse the online suburban newspaper; I guess it’s to get my news “fix” because let’s face it – good news is boring.Â  The more serious or tragic the news, the more interesting it is, and my local daily newspaper just doesn’t do it for me – I mean, local news is interesting, but not in the same way.Â  So lately as I’ve been reading Chicago news, I couldn’t help but notice these all over the place:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/cubs.jpg)

So what is the deal?Â  What is Year 1?Â  It’s no secret that the Chicago Cubs are under the new management team of the Ricketts family this year, so I’m sure it has something toÂ  do with that.Â  And it’s an unfortunate reality that the Chicago Cubs are also the team in baseball to have been without a World Series title the longest…Â  so I guess management figures that maybe if they just reset time altogether and start from the beginning, the Cubs might have a shot this year.Â  Two or three months from now, we will have a clearer outlook as to how the “new” team can really play.Â  But what if the Cubs go nowhere this year, and we fans find ourselves chanting our infamous October mantra, “Maybe next year…” – what then?Â  Will 2011 be Year 2?Â  Let’s hope we don’t have to find out.Â  GO CUBBIES!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**justj, hopefully a good trade off for the left fielder the tigers just acquired ;)  
**justj**jamiahsh, the Yanks now have a decent Center Fielder. I think his hitting may improve when he isn't considered the sparkplug of the team.  
**jamiahsh**@ justj... I see the Tigers may be getting one the Bombers let get away. :(  
**justj**Year 1 and go Cubs. I'm not sure what it is all about, except for the change in ownership. Not knowing their history, how long were they owned by the previous management? @jamiahsh -- I'm thinking a Tiger's/Cubs Series myself, but you know me, I'll take anybody but the Yankees... ;)  
**jamiahsh**And I don't ever remember the "Home State" rule. I only cheer for the Buckeyes! and my professional teams are not Ohio based but I'll try to limit those to my own blog :D  
**jamiahsh**@ Mare... I think The VPs are EXTRAORDINARY! The minute I introduced myself at St. Louis, I knew that I had found another great group! And the TREMENDOUS thing is that it only got better. And we got at least 2 new game night friends in the bargain. I think the new board will only make it more extraordinary ;)  
**taylhis**@derek - Year One (the movie) is a comedic parody, whereas 10,000 BC was more of an action movie. I saw the latter and not the former, so I can't really compare... although I wasn't crazy about the one I saw and have no desire to see Year One. I have been a die-hard Cubs fan for as long as I can remember (had my choice of birthday cakes as a kid and I chose a Cubs cake for my 7th), so I wouldn't dream of switching teams at this juncture or ever. When we moved to OH, I adopted Detroit as my backup team, just so I can still follow baseball in the years when the Cubs get knocked out of the post-season. I don't really follow the philosophy of rooting for an Ohio team, not a big fan of the Reds nor the Indians, and when considering mileage, they're both about as far away as Chicago anyway... GO CUBS!!! (all this commenting and that hasn't been said for awhile -CAN'T WAIT!!!)  
**derek**Well, I hope your theatre group thrives again soon, Mary911. Year One- is that anything like that horrible 10,000 BC movie? And as for the topic, you've always been far more of a Cubs fan than moi, so even if you're in Ohio now you still know more than I could about any Cubs topic. In short (too late) if you don't know, I certainly don't. ;)  
**taylhis**@Mary911 - that DOES make more sense, although I don't really have 101 years to be patient ;) Good luck to your theater group!!  
**mary911**I meant, just be patient. I like the slogan. I guess I can relate. For instance....the last several years our theatre group has been going downhill. Quality of shows have stunk, a board that just really didn't care, unorganized (Lord, I could write a book!), and noone has wanted to come see our shows anymore.... This year is what I consider our "Year One." We have a new enthusiastic board, we are rebuilding and "starting from scratch." It's going to take some time, but I know we'll get to a place where we are doing well, and people will start coming back to us. We have some of the same people as before, just a different attitude. And really, if you've stuck by their side for a 101 years, what's another 101???? ;) I don't know if I made things any clearer or not, but I liked it. ;) I think if I ever started liking baseball....I'd probably like the Indians. I try to cheer on Ohio teams first. I think it's a rule to do that.....or not. ;)  
**taylhis**@mary911 - It was VERY interesting to read your perspective coming from an admitted non-fan of baseball, however, I have to admit that your comment confused me... are you saying that the "Year One" marketing slogan is management telling fans to expect an inexperienced team? Or are you referencing the fact that (and I'm admitting this to my chagrin) us Cubs fans have been patient with our "newborn" for 101 years, so hey, let's start the count over and liken it to a baby... I don't know, my brain is fried - I just spent over 2 hrs trying to decipher lightning-quick profanity to try to understand what the heck was going on in the movie, The Departed - and for nothing, it stunk. But either way, as always, I'm very excited to see what the team has in store for us this season, especially with the new family-style (vs. the former corporate) management team. And hey, if you want to watch a game, you know where they'll be on!! Though it's rare that I ever actually get to sit and watch a game from start to finish with all the kiddies around... can't wait to try!!  
**jamiahsh**@ Taylhis... I see the movie's screenplay was co-written by one of the scribes on The Office... not one of his better offerings, I'm sure.  
**mary911**Not knowing a thing about baseball makes me think this: Think about your son's first year....He was brand new, needed lots of attention, and he had to learn a lot. He learned how to walk, but be was a little awkward at it at first....not the best. I would look at it as though the Cubs are a newborn. They're not going to be very good at first because they are learning....you, the fans, have to be the patient parents. As your infant grows, they become stronger and better at what they do. I like it. Kinda makes me want to (gulp) watch a game. OR, maybe I just woke up and feeling all wishy washy inside and have no clue what I'm talking about..... ;)  
**taylhis**Yes, that briefly entered my mind too, but I "missed" that one also. It starred Jack Black (not a big fan of his) and Michael Cera, and surprisingly, it was directed by Harold Ramis, who I thought had a bit more integrity than to be involved with such a disaster - 5.1 on imdb http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1045778/  
**jamiahsh**Wasn't there a horrible movie spoof out a few years ago entitled Year One? If there was, I missed it.  
**jamiahsh**Cubbies/Yankees Series! I would imagine that the new slogan has a lot to do with the new management.

# Brown Hogs

Everybody knows that kids say the darndest things – there was even a tv show or two about the subject.Â  If you go back and watch the Art Linkletter version, you can see him coaching the kids and moving his lips for the kids to see what they were supposed to say.Â  I don’t know why they had to do that; kids come up with enough cute stuff on their own.Â  The reason I decided to write this post is because it came to my attention that my 3-year-old daughter Disney calls groundhogs “brown hogs”.Â  Just a cute little tidbit I wanted to share, and hey, she’s got a point – the critters **are** brown!Â  Makes sense to me!Â  

### Comments

**derek**I know the kids I have worked with have said interesting things too, but I couldn't quote a single line for some reason. I watched the Bill Cosby "Kids Say..." once upon a time.  
**jamiahsh**@ Taylhis... So NOT a terrible mother! And you and your hubby are the BEST and creating memorable, life-long memories for all four of them :D  
**taylhis**@jamiahsh - HAHAHAHA! I wish! I wonder when you'd think I'd have time to put together ONE scrapbook / baby book, let alone 4... But I'm not too terrible - I do save all their important stuff, they each have a box or two, and I figure they can do the dirty work when they get older and put everything into scrapbooks or baby books if they want. It seems so wrong to make kids do their own baby books, but I would drive myself crazy if I took the time to do it... like I said, I do keep everything and I also have school memory books for the kids who are in school - so I'm not THAT bad of a parent ;) I tell myself it's better to take the time to MAKE memories for my kids rather than taking the time to RECORD the memories, and that makes me feel a little better... And I have the blog to show them, of course!  
**jamiahsh**Adorable! Just look at all the cute things you will have to share with the kids as they grow! Better than a scrapbook (although, I'm sure you have one for each of them, too)  
**mary911**That's one of the many things that make her so cute!!!!

# Homework

Maybe I’m becoming more simple-minded as I get older, or perhaps it’s the fact that I spend my days with children.Â  For whichever reason, I’ve found myself more amused by simple things lately, most notably email forwards.Â  Here is another one that made me laugh out loud.Â  I don’t know; I found it funny, but I did read it at the end of a very long day…

My husband informed me it was fake, but it’s more fun of course if you believe that some version of this actually happened.Â  Either way, the author gets points for creativity in my book – and maybe my husband was just upset that he didn’t get what the drawing was supposed to be in the first place ðŸ˜‰

*A first grade girl handed in the drawing below for a homework assignment:*

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/homework.jpg)

*After it was graded and the child brought it home, she returned to school the next day with the following note:***Dear Ms. Davis,  
I want to be very clear on my child’s illustration. It is NOT of me on a dance pole on a stage in a strip joint. I work at Home Depot and had commented to my daughter how much money we made in the recent snowstorm. This drawing is of me selling a snow shovel.  
Mrs. Harrington**

### Comments

**mary911**Ok, I thought it was funny!!!!!  
**jamiahsh**LOL!!! Hilarious!  
**Justin**hahahaha oh man that is SO funny! hahahha

# Polly DOES Want A Cracker

I used to think that parrots had a secret pact to make fun of the many asinine humans who idiotically blurt, “Polly want a cracker?”Â  every time they spot one of the beautiful birds.Â  I’m not sure from where the custom originated, but I always thought it was a stupid, albeit irresistible, thing to say to a bird.Â  But that sentiment changed last week when I actually offered our Scarlet Macaw a saltine cracker – he acted like it was the best thing he ever ate!Â  He even learned the word “cracker” and was uttering it by the end of the day.Â  And come to think of it, they have a Scarlet Macaw at a local pet store, and one of her favorite words is also “cracker”.Â  So next time you see a big bird and you feel the temptation to say, “Polly want a cracker?”Â  be prepared to fulfill what that bird probably considers a promise!

Just for fun, here is the earliest known reference to “Polly want a cracker” from 1937 – I dig how the mom parrot is a housewife complete with apron – clearly before the feminist movement ðŸ˜‰

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**Polly want a cracker?**[...] Polly DOES Want A Cracker | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**derek**Don't they sell salt-free crackers? Saltlesstines. :P Entertaining. When was the first 'toon with the Looney Tunes characters we know and love? This could predate Bugs and the gang. Then again, maybe not. Just checked Wikipedia and Porky Pig was the first 'Tunes icon to show himself in 1934, followed by Daffy Duck in 1937 and Bugs Bunny in 1940. So it predates most of the characters but not all.  
**taylhis**@jamiahsh - tried what, giving Squawky a cracker? No, I don't think I've tried it before. And I forgot to add, before animal care fanatics get on my case - the crackers are a TREAT for him, and I rub the salt off before I give it.  
**jamiahsh**Yep... I remember that, too. Interesting... have you tried it before?  
**mary911**I actually remember that quite well! (Not the original, of course...but we watched the reruns all of the time!) Interesting discovery about the cracker! I will be sure to bring a few saltines with me on the next visit so I can share!!! :)

# Potty Training Celebration!

Ok, I know it might seem weird, especially to those of you who aren’t parents.Â  But in my family, we are celebrating a major milestone – 3-year-old Disney is officially potty-trained!!!Â  In lieu of this triumphant moment (congrats to Disney but let’s face it, one of the best parts about this is that we only have to buy and change diapers now for ONE instead of TWO!), I thought I’d share a cute potty-training-themed email forward, here goes, and again, forgive me if you are not on the same page with me – potty-training kids is a big deal, and this is our THIRD success story!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/potty.jpg)

THE POTTY  
A LITTLE THREE YEAR OLD BOY IS SITTING ON THE TOILET. HIS MOTHER THINKS HE HAS BEEN IN THERE TOO LONG, SO SHE GOES IN TO SEE WHAT’S UP.  
THE LITTLE BOY IS SITTING ON THE TOILET READING A BOOK. BUT ABOUT EVERY 10 SECONDS OR SO HE PUTS THE BOOK DOWN, GRIPS ONTO TO THE TOILET SEAT WITH HIS LEFT HAND AND HITS HIMSELF ON TOP OF THE HEAD WITH HIS RIGHT HAND.

HIS MOTHER SAYS: “BILLY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU’VE BEEN IN HERE FOR A WHILE..

BILLY SAYS: “I’M FINE, MOMMY.. I JUST HAVEN’T GONE ‘DOODY’ YET.”

MOTHER SAYS: “OK, YOU CAN STAY HERE A FEW MORE MINUTES.Â  BUT BILLY,Â  WHYÂ  AREÂ  YOUÂ  HITTINGÂ  YOURSELFÂ  ONÂ  THEÂ  HEAD?”

BILLY SAYS: “WORKS FOR KETCHUP.”

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/ketchup.jpg)

### Comments

**josh**Very funny.Man billy you are one funny 3 year old sitting on the potty that long to go pee and poopy.  
**derek**Err- congrats Disney. Next post now... Oh yes, funny story at the end. :)  
**Mysmichelle**Three cheers for Disney. (Darn tootin' its a big deal!!)  
**jamiahsh**Cute. HOORAY for Disney and for the rest. Three down... one to go!  
**justj**Ok, I stopped laughing and can now respond. I can just imagine some kid saying that. And then somewhere in the back of my head, I wondered if it would work. Then I started laughing.

# Death, Murder, Love, and FUN!

Maybe you’ve noticed that at some point this winter, I began to blog less…Â  I no longer write reviews about every movie, tv show or play I see – it mostly has to do with the fact that there just isn’t time for me to sit at my computer uninterrupted long enough to do that – well, not if I want my toddling, climbing 18-month-old to stay safe anyway.Â  But this Valentine’s Day weekend of 2010 saw me venturing to two local plays, both involving fellow tangenteers, so I figured I could let Hubby hold downÂ  the fort long enough for me to write a quick little blurb.

First of all, let me say how thankful I am for my babysitter who worked overtime this weekend – she usually doesn’t do weekends, and without her, we couldn’t have afforded to support our friends at either show.Â  Friday night’s selection was Dearly Departed, a southern comedy about a crazy family coming together for the funeral of the patriarch.Â  The show was hilarious, and my friend [justj](http://justj.tangents.org/archives/988" \t "_blank) was very memorable as a fire n’ brimstone type southern preacher.Â  I have to say that my favorite part of the show was his other character however, a wheelchair bound man named Norval who is depicted as practically a houseplant by his caregiver wife when she describes how she cares for him – which pills, what he can and can’t eat, that sort of thing.Â  But on stage, Norval was anything but a houseplant, and justj depicted him with just the right amount of humor – not over the top, but not comatose either – I felt that achieving this perfect balance was much more difficult than it looked.Â  It should come as no surprise that I absolutely LOVED the music in the show, and it was amusing for me to think about how much that must have irked the director (who had left a party we threw one time because there was ‘too much country music’ – even though the only country song I played was Travis Tritt’s remake of the Eagle’s classic Takin’ It Easy, which I didn’t even consider country, but apparently some would beg to differ) – haha.Â  I need to find out what that Elvis song was in the second act; it was wonderful.

Saturday night we tried out a murder mystery dinner theater starring [Jamiahsh](http://jamiahsh.tangents.org/2010/02/13/what-a-difference-a-night-makes/" \t "_blank), and we had a blast!Â  We rounded up some friends, and when all was said and done, we had a somewhat rowdy table of 8 with whom to enjoy the show.Â  Without having to draw any sort of diagrams or assemble any calculative theories like someone at our table who shall remain nameless ðŸ˜‰Â  I guessed the murderer correctly and was entered into the drawing to win a prize – a free one hour massage!Â  But I tore my ballot wrong, and my friend who was also the director felt it would have been obvious if she had chosen my idiotic-looking ballot to win the prize.Â  I agree with her; it was my own fault, and I’m happy that another patron’s experience was even more enhanced by his free massage.Â  Besides, my hubby gives THE BEST massages, and they’re always free!Â  But we had a super time at the dinner theater, the food was good, and Jamiahsh was wonderful as the bumbling FBI agent who was trying to crack the case.Â  I loved the relaxed atmosphere of the show with members of the cast joining us for dinner and chatting casually – although too casually at times, because several members of the cast came out of character at times asking us if our questions were for their characters or for them “in real life” – oops.Â  But of course ours truly Jamiahsh remained in character and professional at all times!

So bravo to many jobs well done on this weekend of community theater!Â  Knowing that my days of keeping my kids out so late are numbered (especially judging by the way they screamed on the way home), I am thankful for every show I get to experience!

And wrapping up the weekend, of course, is Valentine’s Day, and that’s where the love comes in – hopefully the kids will fall asleep before Hubby and I crash so that we can snuggle and watch a scary movie – who needs chick flicks on Valentine’s Day?!?Â  Hope you had a wonderful weekend!

### Comments

**justj**Taylhis, Great to see you at our little show. I'm sorry I could not make jamiahsh's show. Sounds like it was a lot of fun. Scheduling of that production kind of prevented me from going. Too bad. As to having your kids out late. I'm sure if we put our heads together, there are a number in our little group that would watch your children at your house, so you could get to a play or two. I could be easily bribed to pick up one in Ft Wayne for the weekend...  
**jamiahsh**@ Justin, surely there is an outlet near you.  
**Justin**sounds like a good show - i haven't been to live theater in too long.  
**jamiahsh**If I remember correctly the Elvis song was "Put Your Hand in the Hand" if it doesn't my apologies  
**taylhis**@mary911 - I agree, chick flicks have their place. Not usually my favorite genre, so why make hubby suffer through them? I do enjoy the OCCASIONAL chick flick...  
**jamiahsh**And yes, Guido and Honey's table ROCKED Saturday night!  
**jamiahsh**It was funny that for the final performance the winner of the booby prize was my Dad who announced his name "Smith. Joe." A free haircut and anyone who knows my family knows why that is useless. Mom said that she might use it :D Anyone who announces his last name first and first name last is worthy of it. After no one guessed the identity of the killer and the why... the names of the audience members were put in a drawing and my mother won a gift certificate to the restaurant. I am totally innocent in both instances... mere coincidence.  
**mary911**What's this YUCK stuff!?! Chick flicks have their place. My favorite of all time chick flick, since we're on the subject, is LOVE ACTUALLY. It has a great story....so if you ever get a chance, watch it. You won't be disappointed. I, too, had a great theatrical weekend. I'll be blogging about it shortly!!! And Happy Valentine's Day to all of you too.....<3  
**jamiahsh**Chick flicks... yuck! I LOVE YOU GUYS! Happy Valentine's Day to you both!

# Cutest Puppy In The World

After almost a week of having our new puppy, I finally got him to hold still long enough for some adorable pictures – enjoy!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/Gizmo-Feb-2010-002.jpg)

Gizmo will follow me up the stairs, but then he gets overwhelmed and can't go up or down! My 19-month-old son gave him a hug to comfort him; how cute is that?!?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/Gizmo-Feb-2010-009.jpg)

This is Gizmo and my daughter Disney - our friend gave us a cute little blue sweater for him, so now he doesn't shiver quite so much when he goes outside!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/Gizmo-Feb-12-2010.jpg)

He wants so badly to be able to jump up on the couch, but he's not big enough yet. Won't be long; we can notice that he is growing bigger EVERY single day!!

### Comments

**Mysmichelle**Awww don't know which is cuter the kids or the puppy. The puppy definately seems attentive and alert. He'll be a good one.  
**derek**Just remember- keep him away from bright light, don't get him wet, and never, ever feed him after midnight. :D Sorry if someone already posted a comment like this- I have some catching up to do on your blog (and others). Cute pix, BTW.  
**taylhis**He is really snuggly! And he is a good listener for a puppy too! Just an overall wonderful pup - I'm so glad we found him :)  
**Carol**Cutie patootie - he seems like a well tempered pup.  
**mary911**I hope he stays cuddly like he was Sunday night. I sure didn't want to put him down.....I wish my cat liked to cuddle....but she's a snob.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, the sweater makes the man... or puppy. Very cute, so I take it Gizmo is the moniker. And Beebs is cute... giving him a hug... awwwww. Little Gizmo will be jumping around on the table, etc. in no time.  
**Justin**ha, i like the one in the sweater!

# The Kindness Of Strangers

I came across a couple of instances of good citizenship lately, so I thought I’d share.Â  I would write aÂ  letter to the local newspaper, but I don’t think they’d print it – they didn’t print the last one I wrote them about the wonderful person whoÂ  found my lost wallet and turned it in to the police station – intact!Â  I guess the newspaper is only interested in printing letters where someone has an issue or is complaining about something…

So the other day, we were stopped at a stoplight, and it turned green – but the car in front of us was not moving, and that’s when I noticed that he had his hazard lights on.Â  The guy behind me was too close for me to back up, so I was stuck.Â  I saw the guy behind me throw his hands up in frustration, and I’m thinking, oh great, here comes the blaring horn and obscenities (I’m from Chicago – sadly, that is what most people there would do).Â  My husband gets out of our car to see if he can help push the stalled car, and off they go.Â  The next thing I know, there are two other men helping push it (they had been on the corner holding signs advertising a sale at the shopping center).Â  Then, the guy behind me – the one who I thought was p-o-ed – gets out of his car to see if *he* can help!!Â  What an amazing example of people being thoughtful and going above and beyond!Â  I’ve both lived in and visited plenty of cities where I saw (or I was) a stalled car.Â  But in all of these instances, never have I seen **4 people** come out to help the stranded driver.Â  I’ve seen cars speeding angrily around the stalled vehicle, people honking, making obscene gestures, yelling obscenities, or simply ignoring the person in need.Â  I feel very lucky that I was able to witness such selflessness; people disregarding whatever their own plans may have been for that day – people willing to sacrifice being on time to their obligations just to help another in need.Â  How refreshing!

And something else happened this week – I’m sure you know about the big snowstorm by now.Â  We got about 8 inches of snow that came down in less than 12 hours.Â  I was sitting in my living room, watching it come down, and I was trying to shovel when I could – I couldn’t bear the thought of my husband having to come home from work with a walkway full of 8 inches of snow toÂ  shovel.Â  But I have 4 little kids, and we had just gotten a new puppy, so my efforts to shovel away the snow as it fell were in vain – I just couldn’t keep up.Â  So I’m playing with my kids in the living room, watching the snow fall, when we see someone clearing our walkway for us with a snowblower!Â  I thought that it must be a neighbor; someone who has a snowblower and was kind enough to take pity on those of us who only have shovels.Â  I told the kids to watch the man and see which house he went into so I could later drop off a thank you note.Â  But instead of walking into a house, he packed up his snowblower in a red truckÂ  and drove away!Â  I didn’t recognize the man nor his truck, but I don’t think he was just roaming town snowblowing everywhere he went – he purposefully cleared **our** walkway!Â  I doubt he reads my blog, but if he does, then I’d like to tell him a big THANK YOU!Â  And for the rest of you – never underestimate the power of a kind word or deed!Â  I have a wall hanging with that saying on it in my bathroom, and it means even more to me now!

### Comments

**taylhis**@derek - good point; I forgot to mention fear of carjacking as a valid reason why people pretend not to see those who are stranded when their cars break down. If I lived in your area and I had my kids in the car, I would probably have to think twice about helping someone too - that's sad.  
**derek**Sadly, some of us in this area are afraid of getting our cars jacked if we stop and help someone. :( There are many times I feel like a goat instead of a sheep... Praise God for the hearts in C and the other four mentioned. :)  
**taylhis**@Carol - I too love small town life here... and I don't think people think that others CHOOSE to have car probs. The problem is, they DON'T think about others at all - only about how the stalled car gets in the way of THEIR agenda.  
**Carol**I love life in our small town - I am very grateful for those who stop to offer help. Whenever I can , I try to be that person. I never understand people who make it more miserable for people in trouble by shouting or waving the finger. Do they think people choose to have a car stall or a tire blow? Bravo to you , your husband and all the other unsung heroes!  
**jamiahsh**I had no doubt that your hubby was involved in the assis. He is MY HERO!  
**taylhis**@Beth - Sorry for the confusion - I better go back and rewrite this when I get the time; I guess it's not clear - my husband was the FIRST one to offer the help, and he pushed the car all the way to Walmart!  
**Beth**You are praising the help of others and yet at the same time it seems your husband was the only one that didn't help. Next time maybe give him a kick in the rear and tell him to join in on the helping!  
**jamiahsh**Yes, there are some good samaritans in town here, too. While walking to work the other day, I saw no less then four people shoveling and blowing someone's house out.  
**Justin**this is good stuff... I think it is easy to become complaisant that we miss all the true alturistic acts out there!  
**taylhis**@phyllis beyer - my previous post? The one about the song I like? Or did you mean A previous post? Either way, you are right - I am SO not a big city person!!  
**Phyllis Beyer**This and your previous post is a tribute to the wonderful small town you chose to settle in. Whenever I visit, I feel the friendliness of everyone I come in contact with.

# My Favorite Music Comes From Sesame Street

I’m not really hip with pop culture these days.Â  Sure, I read my share of celebrity gossip whenever it happens upon cnn.com, but I’m really out of it when it comes to the latest tv shows and music.Â  I am such a nerd that I had to wikipedia ‘Jersey Shore’ because I got sick of reading all these headlines about it and not knowing what the heck they were talking about.Â  Sounds like kind of a dumb show, by the way, not for me.

Because I listen to country music, mainstream music is usually of no interest to me.Â  But I couldn’t help but take notice when a snappy tune came out of the tv this morning – it was Sesame Street, and there was a musical guest.Â  I know that Sesame Street has celebrity guest-stars all the time, so I chose what seemed to be the title of the song and did a search on youtube.com.Â  The song is “I’m Yours”, and it’s sung by Jason Mraz.Â  Even all my reading of celebrity gossip didn’t help me here – I’ve never heard of Jason Mraz, but I have to say that I like his sound.Â  But that shouldn’t really come as a surprise that I’ve never heard of him – I don’t think he’s a regular in my pop culture circle that includes such characters as Dora, Miss Spider, Little Bear, or Wow Wow Wubbzy.Â  My 18-month-old son and I couldn’t help but bounce and groove to this song; see if you feel the same.Â  By the way, when Mr. Mraz performed this song on Sesame Street, the lyrics were changed to make the song be about playing outside, making it more kid-friendly.Â  Cute.

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**taylhis**@mary911 - that's the one! The Zac Brown Band has some good harmonies!  
**mary911**Oh! I like that song!!!! Just a little bit of chicken fried, a cold beer on a friday night, a pair of jeans that fits just right...and the radio ooooonnnnn..." That song????? :)  
**taylhis**@mary911 - It didn't fly right over your head - I'm sure you didn't know about my 'Chicken Fried' obsession. It's a country song, and when I find a new song I like, I tend to play it over and over and over until I'm sick of it, but unfortunately for those who live with me, other people often get sick of the songs before me. Such is the case with 'Chicken Fried' - poor hubby didn't even like the song to begin with, so when I played it incessantly... well, let's just say that I'm still hearing about it. He actually likes 'I'm Yours' though, so we shouldn't have the same problem with this song!  
**mary911**Me likey Jason Mraz. I had actually heard and enjoyed some of his stuff before he became popular. Am I slow? (don't answer that.) But what does our friend whatever mean about less chicken-fried? Is this something that just flew right over my head? I'm thinking it is......ugh..... :(  
**whatever**At least this means less chicken-fried!  
**jamiahsh**and no matter how much it keeps getting mentioned, i will NEVER fall under the lure of this Jersey Shore trash!  
**taylhis**@mysmichelle - I will have to check out Mraz's other songs, including "Remedy". @Justin - you're right about that using their own voice thing... it's so funny to me when a celebrity singer gets hooked on using technology to enhance their voice, only to be called on it when they're caught lip-syncing in concert - not going to mention any names, but there are a famous few who've been caught doing that.  
**Justin**"I'm Yours" is my favorite song within the last 3 years... I think there is something to be said when an artist actually uses their OWN voice instead of some computer generated digital perfect pitch device! :\  
**Mysmichelle**Remedy is my favorite Mraz song. He really is more like an "artist" than alot the the pop culture stuff these days. My 16 year old keeps me up on current culture.  
**jamiahsh**I really like Jason Mraz. His sound is really unique an I think I caught the reux of "I'm Yours" on some Sesame Street special advertising their landmark season premiere a few months ago

# Uh Oh, Snow!

There is a kink I did not foresee in my housebreaking-the-new-puppy plan – snow.Â  We are currently getting nailed by a snowstorm – about 4 inches on the ground and much more expected.Â  The snow engulfs our poor little shivering puppy, and I’ve had to shovel first every time before I take him out.Â  It’s quite challenging to find the time to go out and shovel and take the dog out, all while taking care of 4 kids – changing diapers, feeding lunch, breaking up fights, helping them do homework and Valentines…Â  But today school was canceled,Â  and this time it’s actually been more of a good thing than a bad thing.Â  The new puppy and the Valentine’s projects are helping to ward off cabin fever, plus the older girls are helping to walk the puppy.Â  Adding some fun to the snow storm is that my husband and I started watching [Storm of the Century](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0135659/) last night; which is an excellent scary movie that we watch every year during heavy snows.Â  I’m looking forward to watching the second part of the movie tonight, but only if I make it through the dinner rush.Â  My husband gets home from work around 5, and the kids are always starving by then,Â  but it’s nearly impossible to start dinner before he gets home with my 18-month-old underfoot.Â  Complicating today’s dinner rush is the fact that my husband will have to finish the shoveling when he gets home, and I also have to send him on an errand – stupid me didn’t stock up on certain essentials before the storm hit.Â  Most of the region is experiencing the same weather, so stay warm, stay dry, and most importantly – stay safe!!

### Comments

**taylhis**@justj - It is very difficult to ignore someone I love! But, it's important for the family, and it's gotten easier after years of practice. I try to keep the kids downstairs during the day. As difficult as it is, I am still very happy to have him at home. It's especially nice to not have to worry about waking a napping kid if I have to take another one to school.  
**justj**Is it hard to ignore someone when you see them every time you go up the stairs?  
**taylhis**office = landing on the stairs, but it's still an office, and it's still off-limits during work hours. My job would be much easier, as would Chris' I'm sure, if there was an actual office with a door, but...  
**justj**@derek, I was going to ask the same thing. Last I knew he was still working from home. I didn't know he had an office.  
**derek**Ah- thanks. No snow day today, but I would be far from surprised if there is one tomorrow.  
**taylhis**He works from home, but he works in his office, which is off limits to everyone while he's working. It's just easier for everyone if we pretend he's not home :) We are expected to have 8-12" when it's all over, then it's supposed to blow around like crazy tomorrow, creating 2-3 foot drifts. I would bet on having the second snow day in a row tomorrow. Usually we are located in the little pocket that gets less than everyone else, but this time is an exception.  
**derek**I really have to read your blog more closely- I must have missed something: "My husband gets home from work around 5" C no longer works from home? I know you blogged about the computer meltdown before- this forced him to get a job outside the home I take it? What does he do? Snow: over here we're only expected to have 6 inches or so when it's all over.  
**taylhis**They WERE a help today; it was a good day. The problem is, the puppy gets really cold really easily and starts shivering as soon as I pick him up to go outside :( How do you housebreak a puppy in the winter?!? Yes, you can borrow Storm of the Century next time I see you!  
**jamiahsh**I must borrow this Storm of the Century movie soon (if it is one I can actually borrow?). I thought the weather would be a blessing in disguise with four little ones to help out with the puppy training. But when was the last time we actually had a "blizzard?" I remember the county being totally shut off way back in 1978. But a good 8"-10" is a nice storm to keep most people in.

# Introducing: ?

We don’t know yet!Â  We have a new addition to our family, but he doesn’t have a name yet!Â  It’s hard for a family of 6 to all agree on the same name for a new puppy…

As you probably know, our beloved almost 12-year-old dog passed away a week before Christmas.Â  If you know our family and how much we love animals, then it should come as no surprise to you that we are again a 2-dog household.Â  It all started a few Saturdays ago when we decided to take the kids to the Humane Society, “just for fun”.Â  Yeah, right – I should have known better!Â  How could I possibly think we’d be able to resist giving a cute homeless pet a loving home?Â  We couldn’t.Â  We found a lab mix we all loved, and we went to lunch, talked it over, and decided to turn in an application.Â  But another family turned in an application five minutes before us for the same dog!Â  They said they would look over the apps and call us either Monday or Tuesday either way.Â  Well, the entire week went by, and my husband called them every day because we had 3 anxious kids!Â  Disney (who’s 3) kept asking if we were going to take the ‘vanilla dog’ home; it was so cute!Â  Finally they called on Friday to tell us that the dog had been adopted.Â  We were disappointed but also kind of expecting it since we knew that another family wanted him.Â  But that did it – now we officially wanted another dog.Â  So Saturday on the way to the zoo, we stopped by another humane society and found another dog we really liked – she was a very unique looking dog, a black Lab / Basset Hound mix.Â  She had the long, stocky body of a basset, complete with long ears, but she was all black like a lab – adorable.Â  We didn’t have our checkbook with us, so we had to come back Sunday to put down a deposit.Â  When we came back Sunday, the dog got so excited that she nipped my husband on the mouth – twice.Â  Uh, oh.Â  Can’t do nipping on the face with 4 small kids, whether it was intentional or not, so we were back to square one.Â  When we were there on Saturday, we had seen people come in with 2 teeny tiny puppies, so we decided to have a look.Â  I was going to have to housebreak the Lab/Basset, so I figured if I was going to have to housebreak a dog, it might as well be a teeny tiny adorable puppy, right?Â  Never mind that I’m potty training a 3-year-old, have a toddler to chase around, and two other kids to get to school.Â  My days are so hectic, why not add to the chaos?

So here he is, how cute is this puppy?!?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/Feb-2010-048.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/Feb-2010-046.jpg)

He’s a beagle / shepherd mix about 8 weeks old, and yes, he is as sweet as he looks!Â  He just adores our dog Beesly, but she’s not sure what to think yet – eventually they’ll be friends I’m sure.Â  Squawky the parrot was intrigued with him too, mostly because he has a little bell on his collar so we know where he is.Â  The kids like the names Johnny and Buddy, but we’re not taken with either of those.Â  We liked the name Gizmo, especially because the kids have been into watching Gremlins lately, but the kids don’t like the name.Â  My husband and I also think the name “Hank Markdukas” is really cute – it’s a reference to the movie I Love You Man.Â  It’s a funny movie, not one of our favorites or anything, but there is a funny running joke in the movie about a Hank Markdukas.Â  We also like the name Michael Scott after the main character on our favorite show, The Office, but of course the kids aren’t thrilled about any of those names.Â  This sounds like a good poll…

**What name would best fit this adorable puppy?**

* Hank Markdukas
* Michael Scott
* Buddy
* Gizmo
* Johnny
* Other - add your suggestion in the comments section

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

The bottom line is, our cute little guy needs a name before he starts answering to “puppy”.Â  Yesterday I was feeling overwhelmed by the prospect of adding a puppy to my already hectic lifestyle, but it went well today, and he is incredibly adorable!Â  I love to snuggle him; he is so soft and sweet.Â  And the responsibility involved with him is different than the kids; there is much more instant gratification.Â  Kids whine, cry, yell and fight, while puppies wiggle and snuggle.Â  I love our new puppy!Â  That reminds me of an Alan Jackson song – “I’m in love with you baby, and I don’t even know your name”!

### Comments

**taylhis**Thank you all so much for your comments! It was so great to hear from those of you who don't usually leave me comments!! And I have to announce... the girls decided upon Gizmo as his name! I agree with Great Grandma; he will be a "Buddy" to us all, but Gizmo is also a cute name, and he is already starting to answer to it! Thank you all again for your input!!  
**GRANDMA**GREAT GRANDMA THINKS YOU SHOULD NAME HIM BUDDY CAUSE HE WILL BE A BUDDY TO YOU ALL. HE IS SO CUTE.  
**GRANDMA**I VOTE FOR BUDDY.  
**Austin**I vote for buddy..love Austin  
**tim**I vote for buddy......  
**derek**I couldn't say, but definitely not Michael Scott. Just think of the character of Michael Scott. If sticking to The Office theme, Halpert would definitely be much better, but I think you should try to let the kids name him if the three girls can agree (maybe two- I don't know if Dis would be interested).  
**taylhis**He IS really cute, and growing bigger by the day! Wonder what he'll look like in 1-1/2 weeks? Can't wait!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Oh my gosh!!!!!!!!!!! He is the most adorable puppy I have ever seen. Can't wait to see him in 1-1/2 weeks. I like either Buddy or Gizmo.  
**Kim**What a cutie! I am really looking forward to seeing you guys soon - and meeting both new members of your family! I think he looks like a buddy, but I also like the name Gizmo (reminds me of my sweet chinchilla "Gizmo" I had years ago). Looking forward to hearing what you decide on!  
**taylhis**@ elizabeth - thanks for your input! The kids are starting to warm up to Gizmo; I will post an update when we decide for sure.  
**elizabeth**i think Gizmo would work for him  
**taylhis**I really like the idea of having a Halpert and a Beesly! At the same time, Halpert isn't as cute as he is... then again, neither is Hank Markdukas. C'mon guys - I need some more votes!!  
**jamiahsh**And he is SOOOOO adorable! I think Beesley needs a bit of time to become adjusted to her new brother.  
**jamiahsh**I really think Gizmo fits beautifully! I of course think that it would be cool to continue The Office trend. Halpert?

# :)

Wow – that last post was such a downer that I decided to write a little follow-up – I’m feeling better!Â  I took forever in the shower, and my son is still napping!Â  And the two girls have been playing together…Â  funny how the house calms down when a certain little Kindergartner is at school.Â  Coincidence or instigator?Â  You tell me 

My little parakeet JJ likes the sound of running water, so my shower music today was supplied by a happy little bird – that was a mood lifter!Â  I’ve been reaching into his cage as part of training to get him used to me, and he’s been letting me touch him!Â  So today I was touching his belly, and he started to close his eyes, and it occurred to me that we didn’t have to just do training – I could pet him!Â  So today, I would say that JJ became a REAL pet – he enjoyed my company, let me pet him, and he cheered me up!

And now I get to sit here at the computer for a few minutes, and I actually get to have my glass of water next to me since there is no one to come drop things into it (one of my son’s favorite activities is the put things in water, you’d think he’d appreciate his baths more than he does).Â  And I treated myself to a piece of chocolate.Â  Ah, a long hot shower, chocolate, and peace and quiet…Â  what more could I want?Â  Sorry about the grumpy post I made before 

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I like Mysmichelle's stream of conscience idea. IF you had the extra 20 minutes that is. And yes, you are a great writer.  
**taylhis**@ JustJ - in our house, there is only ONE instigator. The other kids might cause problems, but there is only one child who purposefully plots to get the others in trouble. I know it's common for kids to take turns causing trouble - and mine do - but as far as what I meant by the term 'instigator' - there is only one. @ Mysmichelle - Thanks for the suggestion! I don't know about writing everyday, especially because it took me 15 minutes just to address a letter yesterday with my little boy pulling at my arms! :) The blogging works for me - I like typing better than hand writing, and I also like to know that I have nice people here to read my rants :) You always have such interesting things to say - maybe you should get a tangents.org blog! If you want one, I can help you set it up (it's free). Thanks to every one who read the post and offered their great advice!  
**Mysmichelle**I know most of the posters actually know you and I don't but I want to make a suggestion to you. I came across this idea in a book called 'The Artist's Way' I love the book and recommend it highly especially since you are such a great writer but anyway here's my suggestion:' Every morning I HAND write out 3 pages. They are called morning pages. They are not a journal they are not a list of things to do today, they are just a mind streaming exercise of whats cluttering my mind. I know it sounds wierd and simple but this could be a great stress reliever for you and you can just tear them up and throw them away when your done (don't do like me and keep them I have BOXES of nothing) but anyway I think something like this which only takes about 20 minutes of the day could really help someone like you with so many stressors coming from so many directions. OH - And I'm glad you let JJ do his job.......  
**justj**As far as instigators, there is always one, but usually never the same one. Venting is a wonderful way to relax. I do that on occasion. Get things out in words that you can't seem to get a handle on any other way. That is when the long bath/shower and chocolate help. Your downer/grumpy post just proves you're human, and that is something. :)  
**jamiahsh**Same here. "Calgon take me away, eh?" May be dating myself with the jingle. Nice long showers, pets, calm. Enjoy it while it lasts. Sammie, an instigator? WHo woulda thunk?  
**Phyllis Beyer**That's why you feel better - you vented. I'm glad your day got better.

# My Job Is To Make People Miserable

My husband works from 9:30 to 5 on weekdays, which leaves me the job of holding down the fort.Â  My kids are generally good kids, and they are adorable, so it should be a fun job.Â  But I’m not having fun today.Â  I’ve had 3 kids crying literally constantly today from 9-12:30.Â  Taylor is 10, and she’s home sick from school.Â  She’s the only one being good, but I can’t give the poor kid a break because her sisters and brother are acting so crazy!!Â  This is the 2nd Wednesday in a row that the kids have acted up – what is up with that?!?Â  I have 5 minutes of peace right now because we got Sammie to Kindergarten and the baby is napping.Â  I just need to blog about it because I feel like I’m going to explode!!Â  The baby is getting over being sick, so if he’s not being held, he’s crying.Â  I don’t know what the deal is with 3-year-old Disney, she’s usually pretty good, but today she is screaming about *everything*.Â  And she has this loud, shrill, ear-splitting scream like you wouldn’t believe.Â  In the meantime, Sammie was provoking everyone and starting fights with all 3 of her siblings; I was trying to referree, hold the baby, clean up his messes, change dirty diapers, and make lunch all at the same time.Â  Now that I have some “peace”, I feel worse – Disney has asked me 6 questions just in the short time it’s taken me to write this.Â  I’m trying not to snap at her, but I’m in a really bad mood.Â  It would really help if I had my dog to snuggle, but she died in December and my other dog is too smelly to snuggle.Â  I feel like I work really hard all day, and all I do is make people miserable.Â  How can my husband get any work done with all the screaming in the house?Â  It adds pressure to me to try to keep a suitable work environment for him.Â  I am looking forward to a relaxing evening.Â  No, wait.Â  It’s youth group night, which I normally enjoy, but to go try to teach a bunch of preteens after a day like today seems daunting.Â  Not to mention that I have an extra group tonight since a fellow teacher had back surgery yesterday.Â  I hope it went well for her…

I would cry but then I’ll get another nosebleed – my nose has been bleeding a lot lately, stress maybe?Â  I sure wish I could figure out a fun way to wind down to give me something to look forward to tonight, but my kids have been refusing to go to bed lately, and the little guy has been waking up all night with his illness.

Ok, that’s my vent, sorry to be such a downer, but I thought writing about it would help.Â  Dunno yet if I was right… Â  Time to make the most of the baby’s nap and get the garbage out and lunch cleaned up.Â  If I’m lucky and he sleeps long enough, I just might get a nice long hot shower – but that’s probably too much to ask.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I KNOW you don't no thinking necessary. :D Glad your day turned around.  
**taylhis**Derek - I was not ready to sit and write about it, can't even really talk about it still, don't know if ever. Maybe I'll write you an email about it or next time you talk to Chris... I DID have a great night! I only got two extra girls, and they were SO nice and calm! Going to have to see about a trade ;) Plus my biggest drama queen wasn't there, and neither were the twins. So I only had 4 total, and we actually got thru some of the questions before they started to run around and act crazy - my girls, of course. The girls from the other group were VERY good and interested in talking about the lesson! Jamiahsh - I'm not really good at taking bad days in stride ;) but thanks for thinking I don't make anyone miserable. If you were standing outside our house earlier listening to 3 kids screaming for hours, you might have thought differently.  
**jamiahsh**Hope your day improved. I totally disagree with your title. I don't for one minute believe that you make life miserable for anyone. Bad days... take em in stride.  
**derek**Wait...what? Sorry to open a wound here, but... one of your dogs died? I realize I stopped reading blogs for a while so I did a search through your December post but only found a quick mention of it in your ABC post that I obviously missed. If I may ask, what happened? I hope you had a great night tonight with your double-group, knowing I am posting my comment while you are at youth group tonight.  
**justj**Well, somebody has to do it. Too bad making people miserable doesn't pay very well.

# LOST!

What seems like ages ago, I was a big fan of Lost.Â  I didn’t watch the first season when it aired, but all the buzz about it got me curious, so my husband and I gave the first season dvd’s a try – and really liked it!Â  But then the second season of Lost wasn’t as good, mainly because there were way too many questions and loose ends brought about – we couldn’t figure out why they weren’t concluding some of the mysteries instead of adding tons of new questions each week!Â  When production was temporarily halted because of the writer’s strike a few years ago, things on Lost really went downhill.Â  But we had invested the time in watching it, and because the show’s creators announced a definitive end date for Lost – this is the last season – we decided to stick it out.

So last night’s highly anticipated last Lost season premiere was… eh.Â  Only so-so, I would say.Â  First, the show opened with really cheap-looking computer animation showing the island underwater, what was that?Â  And there was a recap episode before the premiere, thank goodness for that, but between the 2 episdoes, we saw the same climatic scene 3 times in 12 minutes!Â  And the recap episode didn’t help as much as I would have hoped – 12 minutes into the new Lost, and I was officially lost.Â  My husband tells me that there are now two sets of each character, but I somehow missed that.Â  If it’s true, I don’t like it.

Ugh…Â  I like the concept of seeing flight 815 before it crashed, but all the actors look 6+ years older!Â  Especially Boone!

The end of the episode was breathtaking, although I remain confused…Â  were any of these people aware of what had happened?Â  The time travel throughout the various decades?

I guess I have to watch the premiere again; I feel like I’m missing something… actually I’m missing a lot of things.Â  The show is still entertaining, but I am so glad it’s almost over!Â  It really require more thought and more of a time commitment than I have toÂ  give to tv right now!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I'm LOST already!

# My New Doctor

How funny is it that I had this email forward waiting for me in my inbox when I returned from the doctor this morning?

MY NEW DOCTOR

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/02/doctor.jpg)

Q: Doctor, I’ve heard that cardiovascular exercise can prolong life. Is this true?  
A: Heart only good for so many beats, and that it… Don’t waste on exercise. Everything wear out eventually. Speed up heart not make live longer; that like say you can extend life of car by driving faster. Want live longer?Â  Take nap.

Q: Should I cut down on meat and eat more fruits and vegetables?  
A: You must grasp logistical efficiencies. What does cow eat?Â  Hay and corn.Â  What are these?Â  Vegetables.Â  So, steak nothing more than efficient mechanism of delivering vegetables to system.Â  Need grain?Â  Eat chicken.Â  Beef also good source of field grass (green leafy vegetable).Â  And pork chop give 100% recommended daily allowance of vegetable products.

Q: Should I reduce my alcohol intake?  
A: No, not at all.Â  Wine made from fruit.Â  Brandy is distilled wine.Â  That means they take water out of fruity bit; get even more goodness that way.Â  Beer also made out of grain.Â  Bottoms up!

Q: How can I calculate my body/fat ratio?  
A: If you have body and you have fat, ratio is one to one.Â  If you have two bodies, ratio is two to one, etc.

Q: What are some of the advantages of participating in a regular exercise program?  
A: Cannot think of single one, sorry. My philosophy: No Pain…GOOD!

Q: Aren’t fried foods bad for you?  
A: YOU NOT LISTEN!!! … Foods fried in vegetable oil..Â  How getting more vegetables bad for you?

Q: Will sit-ups help prevent me from getting a little soft around the middle?  
A: Definitely not!Â  When you exercise muscle, it get bigger.Â  You should only do sit-ups if want bigger stomach.

Q: Is chocolate bad for me?  
A: You crazy?Â  HELLO .. Cocoa bean! Vegetable!!! Cocoa bean best feel-good food around!

Q: Is swimming good for your figure?  
A: If swimming good for figure, explain whale.

Q: Is getting in-shape important for my lifestyle?  
A: Hey!Â  ‘Round’ is shape!

Well, I hope this has cleared up any misconceptions you may have had about food and diets.  
AND…..  
For those of you who watch what you eat, here’s the final word on nutrition and health.Â  It’s a relief to know the truth after all those conflicting nutritional studies:  
1. The Japanese eat very little fat  
And suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.  
2. The Mexicans eat a lot of fat  
And suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.  
3. The Chinese drink very little red wine  
And suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.  
4 The Italians drink a lot of red wine  
And suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.  
5. The Germans drink a lot of beers and eat lots of sausages and fats  
And suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.

CONCLUSION…..  
Eat and drink what you like.Â  Speaking English is apparently what kills you!

### Comments

**justj**Hmm, I guess I will just have to live with it, I only speak one language. But the Dr. makes a lot of sense to me.  
**taylhis**"I am born not understand" - that is the translation I got from google. The rest of it would not translate. I have not had any French, so... BTW - it said SPEAKING English is what kills you, didn't say anything about what language to type in... We are all such dorks!! ;)  
**jamiahsh**Je nais comprend pas! Ca c'est tres drole :D  
**derek**Since I have blood from elsewhere in the UK, how about: AifÃ©ala orm! NÃ­ fÃ©idir liom BÃ©arla nÃ³ SpÃ¡innis, Gaeilge amhÃ¡in. Google tells me that's Irish for "Sorry! I don't speak English or Spanish, only Irish."  
**derek**Don't feel too bad- I had to use Google to translate part of it myself, as well as your own comment (LOL). They're the ones who provided me with the punctuation as well- cut 'n paste did the rest. :)  
**taylhis**ReÃ­rse a carcajadas! (ok, so I used translation software and couldn't figure out how to do the upside down exclamation point - but I WAS able to translate your hilarious comment all by myself!!)  
**derek**Â¡perdÃ³n! No hablo inglÃ©s- solamente espaÃ±ol.

# Double Doctor Duty

This morning was our appointment with the pediatrician.Â  The “our” refers to my little 18-month-old boy and I.Â  It seems strange for a 31-year-old to have an appointment with the pediatrician, but as I’ve said before, he is also our resident sleep expert.Â  Since I never feel rested no matter how much sleep I get, I was trying to get to the bottom of it and evenÂ  got a sleep study done.

First and most importantly, my little boy is growing exactly in accordance with the growth chart at the pediatrician’s office!Â  There was an intern doctor he was training this morning, and he noted to her that it was very rare to have a baby grow so normally – so I will take that as a good thing.Â  My little guy **hated** being poked and prodded, but at least he got the A-ok!Â  He weighs 24 lb 2 oz and is 32 7/8″ long.

As for me…Â  nothing doing, really.Â  My heart was fine during the sleep study, so that’s a good thing.Â  But according to the doctor, I slept for 7 hours of the 7.6 hours I was being studied (could have fooled me).Â  My oxygen levels went a little bit low, but nothing that needs any fixing, I guess.Â  He said that because of my “structure” (I have one huge tonsil), I will have to get this sleep study done every few years to make sure that things don’t get worse, but I disagree – that is not going to happen.Â  All in all, it was a waste of time I would say.Â  I’m a little frustrated because the sleep study was kind of an unpleasant experience, especially to have nothing to show for it.Â  And for the past week, my sleepiness has gotten even worse – I feel like I’ve been bordering on narcoleptic!Â  I’ve stopped sleeping with the tv on, something I’ve done and loved doing since I was about 6 years old.Â  I’ve been going to bed earlier, as much as I hate missing out on ‘me and Hubby’ time – I even got a nap in on Sunday!Â  But even after making all these efforts, I’ve still fallen asleep at the movies, at home while watching movies; and (I hate to admit it), but I was struggling at church and I also dozed during a class we’re taking.Â  And it’s not like I’m bored – I love to learn, and I really like church and look forward to it!Â  I was really disappointed that I missed some of last week’s message!Â  Why can’t I stay awake?!?Â  Back to square one, I guess…Â  whatever that is.Â  Time to stock up on coffee and energy drinks, I suppose, there seems to be no other hope for me.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**;) Dunno about the sleep issue.... warm milk? But great to hear that the big guy is doing well.  
**taylhis**Hmm, I wonder if they would release my sleep chart or whatever results they got from my sleep study to another hospital? Doubt it, and I don't want to do another sleep study, yuck!! But it does seem like logical advice to get a 2nd (and perhaps 3rd) opinion. Now that I'm home, I have a few questions, but at the time, things were so hectic with my son crying that I couldn't think of anything to ask! I don't drink all that much caffeine, but probably enough to be physically addicted to it... I couldn't get thru the day w/o 2 cups of coffee, no matter how much sleep I get, so maybe it's time to quit cold turkey - watch out world!! ;)  
**Mysmichelle**I don't know the doctor situation but definetly you should consult with at least one more source. Try ginsing over energy drinks and caffine........caffine will make you irritable. Also and I know this sounds counter productive.......try cutting down on caffine, that helped me in a simular situation.

# Reading Dog?

Have you seen the dog who can read on the news lately?Â  The really cool-looking dog named Willow was on the Today show in October; here’s a snippet:

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

SoÂ  what’s your opinion?Â  Can he really read or is it much ado about nothing (ie, the owner is doing something else to signal the trick)?

**Can Willow the dog really read?**

* No - his owner is actually doing another command, hidden from the audience
* No - I don't know how they do it, but there is no way that a dog can actually read!
* Yes! Amazing!
* I just don't know

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**justj**My initial reaction was that there was some no verbal clue going on. The little dog did try to play dead before that card came up. Then it waved.  
**derek**Well, I think I can say the dog certainly doesn't read like we read. I do think it's possible though that the dog has been trained to recognize the shapes of the words. As a whole, not the letters making up the words. Probably not easy to do, but she \*is\* 12 years old after all. Of course, it could still all just be a trick.  
**jamiahsh**Cute doggie. But I'm sure she trained her pooch well. "The password is..."

# Dear (Deer) Friends

It’s always fun to read about friendship that crosses the boundaries between animal species.Â  I received some cute pictures of a cat and her deer friend via an email forward.Â  What’s interesting is that friendships between cats and deer don’t seem to be as uncommon as one would think – I was having trouble getting the picture from the email to the blog, so I did a search for cat and deer pictures, and I came up with pictures of at least 5 different cats being friendly with deer!Â  But thanks to Hubby for graciously taking the time (even during football playoffs) to help me get the original pictures from my email.Â  These are cute!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/image00111111.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/image00555555.jpg)

### Comments

**Kim**Saw this email, too. So cute!  
**Carol**Cute, cute, cute!  
**derek**"Oh deer. Too big to eat, so I might as well just make friends with her," the cat thought.  
**jamiahsh**Simply adorable and WHAT a guY! And during playoffs?!

# Those Crazy Kids

Well, it’s not a full moon tonight, but you could have fooled me.Â  My kids are acting completely nuts today; I just had to get away from them for a few minutes for some “me” time to vent and blog this out.Â  Ok, it’s not really “me” time; the kids are right here, they just happen to not be needy at this moment – first time all morning.Â  I actually just checked the moon’s forecast, and we are only 2 days away from a full moon.Â  Oh, my – does that mean I have 2 more days of this?Â  My [blogging teacher friend](http://carol.tangents.org/2010/01/16/feast-or-famine/" \t "_blank) wrote about how she used to be able to predict her students’ daily behavior by the way a herd of Clydesdales were acting when she passed their farm on the way to school each morning.Â  If the horses were running around, there was a good chance the kids were going to be crazy.Â  I’m betting that if I had a herd of Clydedales in my backyard, they would be running around.Â  And that would be cool – I’ve always wanted a bunch of animals.Â  But hopefully I’m wrong about something crazy being in the air and the chaos is just localized to only our house because I have to teach youth group tonight, and I don’t know what I’ll do with crazy teenage girls if I have to deal with crazy little kids all day!

Sammie, my Kindergartner is still sleeping, and it’s almost lunch time.Â  I can’t complain about her behavior because for the past 3 days now (knocking on the wood floor), she’s been good as gold.Â  Yes, I am counting the days of her goodness because we just endured an incredibly bad phase of hers that lasted a few months – it was really bad.Â  Why dwell on the negative, though?Â  Today she was playing with her little brother without even being asked, and they were so cute together!Â  They played tag, and she read books to him – I would have taken a picture, but I was busy meeting the demands of my 3-year-old, Disney.Â  She was always the one I could count on to be good; she’s always been a sweetheart.Â  But lately, she’s been in a really intense phase, and it’s hard to handle.Â  She has a very loud, shrill little voice, and she’s always using it to yell “MOM”, and you wouldn’t believe how often she needs something – hungry, thirsty, help with something…Â  we starting heavily potty training; I’m talking no more diapers during the day, so of course that makes her even more needy.Â  By the way, the potty training is not going very well.

Well, I’d better wrap up; I’m sick of all the interruptions – I’ve found it’s better when I don’t really try to blog or work while the kids are around because it causes more frustration than productivity.Â  But it’s amazing how positive things look when our Kindergartner is in a “good” phase!Â  And her older sister has been completely awesome lately too, so that makes 3 of my 4 kids in good phases.Â  And Disney’s bad phase can’t even be called “bad” when you compare it to one of Sammie’s bad phases.Â  It’s funny how our family dynamics are constantly changing as the kids go in and out of phases – kind of like the moon!

### Comments

**Kim**This cracked me up!!! I totally agree with you on the full moon thing! When I was teaching, my kids would act CRAZY on full moon days. Tim says he always knows when it's a full moon, because people are out acting nuts, and he has to deal with them!  
**derek**Methinks you forget where I live. Okay, so the horses are not exactly of the *draft* variety, but still... Okay, I'll grant that I'm a real teacher too, just part-time.  
**taylhis**Well, ok, so I should have said ONE of my teacher friends... good point, sorry! I consider you a real teacher, derek! Also derek, your first clue was the field of Clydesdales - is there any room for a field of Clydedales anywhere on the way to any of your jobs, haha?  
**derek**And here I thought that link led to \*my\* blog, then wondered when I got the, er, operation- you know which one- when I read "she"... ;) So we have a \*real\* teacher blogging here now. :)  
**jamiahsh**Sammie.... what a character! Glad to hear that they are being "good" but I always thought that they were.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Aw....the world of children.....no 2 days are ever the same. Now you know why I love working in a school. Some days are a huge joke. Dad always hears good stories. I thought my grandchildren were "perfect".  
**taylhis**JJ is doing great! He's very happy; always chirping and squawking and experiementing with different sounds. I haven't gotten him to perch on my finger yet, but he let me pet his belly the other day. I've been going really slowly with the training, partly because of my lack of spare time, and partly because I'm afraid to scare him. We moved his cage to sit on top of a different piece of furniture the other day, and he seemed really happy to get higher up and further away from our toddler and the dog. Thanks for asking! I would recommend parakeets as pets - they are low maintenance, cheap to maintain, and happy little critters!  
**Mysmichelle**Great post.......you know I'm 36 and I have phases too so I'm not gonna dig on a 3 year old for being a little testy!! Hang in there, you seem to be well suited in attitude for your brood. I'm just curious how the parakeet is doing though? Your making me want one since you have been postiing about JJ

# Lab Rat

Mostly, it was worse than I thought it was going to be, but I survived.Â  I spent the night at the hospital last night undergoing a sleep study.Â  These are becoming increasingly common, and many people experience anxiety beforehand, so perhaps I can help by describing it to someone who doesn’t know what to expect.Â  Then again, maybe you shouldn’t read this post if you’re looking to be reassured…

First, I got a prescription for a sleep study from my kids’ pediatrician, who is also the local sleep expert doctor – I had mentioned to him that I never feel rested.Â  So I arrived for my sleep study last night around 8 pm; usually they have you come earlier, but they wanted to mimic my bedtime schedule, and I rarely goÂ  to bed before midnight.Â  That’s funny – mimic my bedtime schedule, yet the 4 rowdy kids who usually keep me up past midnight were no where in sight, hmmm, not much mimicry there.Â  So I waited in the lounge for a little bit for the nurse to do paperwork, which is more like a little living room that I luckily had to myself – didn’t really feel like being social.Â  Soon it was time to “hook me up” (which sounds better than it is, believe me) and we went into this little room off the lounge.Â  I would not be exaggerating to say it was reminiscent of a clinical torture chamber.Â  There was a simple chair bolted down in the middle of the small room, and various medical apparatuses and who-knows-what bolted to the walls, along with extra wires and electrical looking boxes and things – is this where they interrogated Saddam?

Not that I was nervous or anything because I really wasn’t.Â  I didn’t like being away from my family, but I made the best of it by telling myself that I was going to enjoy the few hours away from the chaos; I had brought piles of old newspapers to catch up on and 3 hardcover books to read.Â  And as far as the medical stuff goes, it didn’t really seem like a big deal after the 9 mos. of poking and prodding I’ve endured as a pregnant woman – times 4.

So I get all wired up, and after I sat in the lounge alternating between reading and watching tv (I had no idea what was even ON tv, which shows how little I watch it now), I decided that it was time for bed, and this is where things take a turn for the worse.Â  As if the millions of electrodes the nurse had glued to various parts of my body weren’t enough, she added two belts and also shoved something up my nose.Â  That’s right – they **glue** electrodes to you, disregarding your hair and everything.Â  My kids today had fun playing with my stiff “glue hair”, but I quickly took a shower and washed it out before anyone got any ideas that “glue hair” is cool – that is one mess I don’t need to clean up today or ever!

So I’m fully wired, and the nurse plugs me in, and then she leaves the room and comes over the intercom.Â  She makes me do a series of silly actions – she said she wanted to “test the sensors”, but I was starting to think that her having me roll my eyes around in my head and demonstrate fake snoring might have just been cheap entertainment for the hospital’s 3rd shift.Â  When we were finished “testing the sensors”, the nurse turned off my light and I was expected to fall asleep, but I had lots of trouble.Â  First of all, imagine trying to sleep while looking like this:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/delete_SleepStudy_Woman.jpg)

Not only that, but the bed was just awful, hard as a rock – I have a crick in my back today.Â  And don’t forget there is a camera and microphone on you at all times; it’s a bit daunting to relax in this situation.Â  And when they said that I could “bring my own pillow if I wish”, I thought that was implying I should bring my pillow if I have some sort of special attachment to it.Â  What they really meant was “You might wish to bring your own pillow because we only have little slabs of rubber we cover with pillowcases.”Â  Maybe they figured that if they put a pillowcase on it, they could call it a pillow, but after spending 8 hours with it, I strongly disagree.

So I had trouble falling asleep, big surprise.Â  Not only was I so wired I felt like I could help E.T. phone home, but the bed and pillow were awful, there was a camera and a microphone on me, and the room was dark and quiet (that NEVER happens at home!).Â  I was alone with my thoughts, and that’s never a good thing ðŸ˜‰Â  It didn’t help that I could occasionally hear the wind howling outside, and it reminded me of when the lights were on and the nurse was “checking” my fake snores – the lights had been flickering slightly.Â  What if the power goes out, and there is a sudden electrical surge?Â  Would I get shocked?Â  Would I burst into flame?Â  Would I disappear?Â  Might I come away with some sort of obscure superpower?Â  Hey, that might be kind of cool…Â  I guess I finally drifted off, because the next thing I know, I’m waking up, even though it felt like I hadn’t fallen asleep yet, and that’s how I knew I still had hours left in my sleep study.Â  Still uncomfortable, still cold, still not liking being both seen and heard while I’m asleep.Â  And then I wake up again.Â  Still uncomfortable, still cold… you get the picture.Â  I must have woken up about 5 times during the night, tossing and turning each time, hoping for comfort until I passed out for good all tangled up in wires like a fly caught in a spider’s web.Â  Then I had a nightmare, and I wonder how that appeared on the charts?Â  Finally, I hear a voice from above say “Lisa, the sleep study is over.”Â  Even though that was the best news I had heard in hours, it was a bit unsettling to be woken up by an intercom saying my name.

Overall, it wasn’t that bad, even though I was disappointed because I had been under the impression that I would be able to fall asleep easily, and that I would be in a comfy bed and stay asleep until the morning.Â  Instead, I returned to real life very poorly rested early this morning with 3 kids to look after all day.Â  But at least today, unlike yesterday, I can have all the coffee I can brew, and tonight I get to sleep in my own bed!Â  Well, providing the coffee doesn’t keep me up all night anyway!

### Comments

**Kim**Tim had to do one of those a few years ago, because the doctors thought he had sleep apnea. He said it was one of the worst night's sleep he ever had. What was their conclusion for you?  
**jamiahsh**I hope the picture isn't one of you. That alone scared me! Yes, I hope the tests come back with positive and helpful results. Now get some sleep! HAHA!  
**derek**A little ironic, their wanting to stick to your sleeping schedule when that appears to be the only thing that might have been the same. :o I hope they get good results for you from this.  
**taylhis**oops - didn't mean to make it sound horrible; it wasn't too bad - I can think of a hundred worse things for which to have to spend the night in a hospital. The staff was very nice. If it leads to any help or better rest, it will be well worth it!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Sounds horrible. I hope I never have to do one of those.

# IT

Last Saturday night,Â  because the temperature wasn’t too bad, we went for an evening family walk and took the kids to Walgreens for milk.Â  Even at just 6:00, it was already completely dark outside, and a dense fog was starting to settle in, so Hubby and I decided it was a perfect night to watch a scary movie.Â  The only thing is that we watch A LOT of horror movies, and most of them just aren’t scary anymore.Â  Call it desensitization to the horror, or maybe it’s the fact that we have 4 kids and it’s difficult to find something scarier than say, 3 of them being wide awake at midnight or someone taking off their dirty diaper and making a mess with it.Â  But whatever the reason, it’s hard to find a movie that will actually scare either of us.

While we were trying to choose a suitable scary movie, we came across Stephen King’s IT.Â  MyÂ  husband was skeptical, but I was certain it would be terrifying, so we gave it a try.Â  And I was right, well partially right anyway – the first time Pennywise the horror clown was shown on the screen, it was so creepily done that my husband grabbed ME and not the other way around – which was only actually because I couldn’t even watch it; it was so scary!Â  Unfortunatley, my husband was no longer scared once Pennywise began to talk, but I was creeped out by the entire movie…Â  well, at least until the end, when the big showdown scene completely disappointed me and took away my fear – that’s all I’ll say, don’t want to spoil it if you haven’t seen IT.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/delete-pennywise.jpg)

I like to research movies that I watch; I look them up on imdb.com to see if I’m correct when I recognize actors from other movies.Â  When I looked up IT, I came across information that pointed to the theatrical release of an IT remake in the near future – I’m there!!

I think I might want to read Stephen King’s IT the novel first before I see the remake maybe; I’ve been thinking about what to read after I finish the 2nd Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.Â  It’s going kind of slowly for me; I think I’m ready for a break from Hogwarts – some Stephen King should do the trick!Â  Then again, maybe not, I’ve beenÂ  having enough trouble sleeping as it is – matter of fact, I go in for a sleep study later today.Â  That’s all I need is to get my sleep problems under control and then give myself nightmares by reading scary books…Â  But anyway, wish me luck – I’m a little nervous about the study (I don’t know what I do in my sleep, and I don’t know how I feel about **strangers** knowing what I do when I sleep – that’s kind of personal!Â  Plus I’m going to miss my family like crazy and worry about them.Â  I hate sleeping in hospitals, but at least in the past, I’ve had a newborn baby to cuddle!).

[Click here](http://www.dreadcentral.com/news/30802/stephen-kings-it-remake-going-theatrical) if you want to do more reading about the IT remake – but keep in mind that this article complains about the same spoiler at the end of IT that I hated, so if you don’t want to know what happens, don’t read it!Â  And one more thing…Â  I thought Tim Curry was just excellent in IT.Â  He was unrecognizable, which was probably part of the charm!

### Comments

**taylhis**Here I thought you were making a joke... we tossed around Clue in the play reading committee, and it was a show that C and I were heavily pushing before we got, er um, decided to step back from theater. Seems like it'd be a good money maker with the name recognition from the movie, the board game, and now the movie remake, and also it's audience participation which sounded like fun. Might have to check out both the old and new versions of the movie - I don't remember liking it all that much, but it seems like I would so I'll have to try it again. And as for Rocky... yes, the local theater did it and begged C to be in it - one of the wisest show rejections we've ever made...  
**derek**Oh, here's the link, but there isn't anything there yet: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1267299/  
**derek**Ah- you mentioned it! 8O Yes, that's the one. There is actually a movie stub for the remake on IMDB. If it is accurate, it will be coming out this year on the small screen. I never thought it was Clue- I don't remember hearing of WCCT doing something like that, but I do remember them doing The RHS at the same time as Idol.  
**mary911**Derek, I think he was referring to "Rocky Horror Picture Show."  
**derek**The one he wouldn't mention (I'm guessing- did WCCT do a Clue show?)  
**taylhis**Clue remake? Other than the board game getting remade, that is?  
**derek**Of course, the movie jamiahsh alluded to in the first comment is in for a remake as well... I guess C's reaction to Pennywise is why some of the more infamous slasher villains never open their mouths. I saw it a such long time ago all I remember is that face and a paper boat.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, The Orphange was really good! Glad to hear that you returned "in one piece."  
**taylhis**Thanks for the suggestion; haven't seen The Others yet. We really like The Orphanage (same sort of title, so I used to mix up the two), but you have to read subtitles - well worth it though. And thanks for your good wishes - it went... well, let's just say I'm back in one piece and you call that a bed?!? More about that in a future blog post, hopefully ;)  
**Mary**Yes, good luck on the sleep study! I know when you have it done at Hicksville, they have a special room with a real bed and more natural lighting without the "institutional fluorescent" lights. Hopefully it's done close to the same way there so you can be comfortable...or at least as comfortable as you can be with wires and stuff hooked to ya! As for IT....that's an older movie. I remember watching many moons ago. I couldn't believe my beloved John Boy was in such a scary movie! But I'm with you....it was a good scary movie. Another kind of eerie scary movie that I have always is enjoyed is "The Others" with Nicole Kidman.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Good luck with your sleep study Lisa. Let me know how it turns out. Hopefully they'll be able to help you sleep better.  
**jamiahsh**I like Tim Curry (Clue, Home Alone 2... we won't mention arguably his most famous role, but let's just say that WCCT did the stage version a while back). I will definitely read IT before seeing the movie. Good luck with your sleep study. I know it will be hard to leave your family, but hopefully it will help your sleep.

# My Favorite Amphibian

Recently, a friend and fellow tangents blogger wrote a [blog post regarding her bucket list](http://mary911.tangents.org/2010/01/18/so-tired/" \t "_blank) – for those who haven’t seen nor heard about the movie ofÂ  said title, a bucket list is comprised of things you want to do before you die.Â  Her post got me to thinking about my bucket list, and maybe I’ll post it in the future.Â Â Â  For now, I know that one of the items on my bucket list – or many items, depending upon how I write it – will involve seeing certain species of animals; many of them endangered and rare.Â  If seeing rare animals is on my bucket list, then I can cross off one item – last week I got to see several specimens of the [Kihansi Spray Toad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kihansi_Spray_Toad) – an animal that is considered *extinct* in the wild!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/delete-frog.jpg)

Given my intense fear of them, I never thought that a frog or a toad would be on my list of animals to see – but the Kihansi Spray Toad is actually kinda cute!Â  For me, it seems that the more brown and dry the amphibian, the more it creeps me out – not including salamanders, which I don’t have a problem with at all.Â  I’m not at all frightened by the beautiful blue Poison Dart frogs or other colorful species, which is strange since those are the ones that tend to be poisonous and harmful to humans.Â  Weird.Â  So anyway, I think the Kihansi Spray Toad is both extremely fascinating and very cute!

The Toledo Zoo is the only place in the entire world where people can view these special little toads who were first recognized as a species as recently as 1996.Â  Not only that, it is estimated that over half of the earth’s entire population of the toads live in Toledo.Â  I am so glad I decided to venture over to the Museum of Science in the Toledo Zoo last week to see the spray toad!Â  It was the highlight of my zoo visit; all of the other animals were kinda lethargic.Â  Oh, there is one more thing – my 10-year-old daughter got pooped on by a bird in aviary!Â  She was a really good sport about it, and it just **plucked** right out of her hair – no harm, no **fowl**.Â  My daughter’s unfortunate accident:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/zoo-and-other-1-18-and-19-10-012.jpg)

It was neat to see the local wildlife congregating in the unused Hippo-quarium.Â  It’s too cold for the hippos to be outside, but the ducks have a nice place to swim – who would have thought about what a group of ducks look like from under the water?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/zoo-and-other-1-18-and-19-10-007.jpg)

My 3 daughters fit into one giant egg!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/zoo-and-other-1-18-and-19-10-016.jpg)

This was taken on a different day, but I had to put in this cute picture of my 2 youngest.Â  My little guy is learning to say “CHEESE!” for the camera 

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/zoo-and-other-1-18-and-19-10-023.jpg)

### Comments

**The Great Zoo Debate | My Food Chain Gang**[...] and spend nearly $70 million on conservation initiatives annually.Â  Remember my post about the Kihansi Spray Toad?Â  This is just one example of a creature that would be completely extinct (it is believed to be [...]  
**Staycation « Morat’s Blog**[...] Monday, I visited the zoo with the same friends… minus admin who was stuck working. Â But taylhis and company had a great time, as always. Â I then went to auditions for the dinner theatre that I [...]  
**derek**Eww to the hair job. That's a neat little toad. Rain forest tree frogs come in exotic colors too, to tell others, "Eat me and I will kill you. Seriously." I like the egg pic too.  
**jamiahsh**Absolutely adorable. I LOVE MY ZOO esp. when I get to visit it with my best friends (minus one)

# Harry Potter - Reading Vs. Watching

Now that I’ve read the first installment in the Harry Potter series, I decided to watch the movie make the story come to life.Â  I wasn’t disappointed, but I much prefer the book – the movie leaves out a lot of details.Â  It was obvious that was going to happen otherwise the movie would be about 12 hours long, but the excluded details were enough to make me prefer the book to the movie.Â  Here is a run-down of thoughts I had while enjoying the movie last night:

â€¢Â  Did the beginning of the movie portray Professor McGonagall as a cat as she is in the book?Â  I didn’t notice it, but I also came into the movie a minute or two late due to an unplanned (though pleasant!) phone conversation.Â  I would have liked to see her as a cat.

â€¢ Â I really liked seeing how the train station came to life, and especially how exactly they found platform 9Â¾!

â€¢Â  Did the movie explain the resident ghosts of Hogwarts?Â  I noticed lack of explanation for other characters as well – especially Neville! – but as stated before, it’s a long movie, so maybe it was out of necessity that they had to cut some descriptions that were present in the book.

â€¢Â  The movie is well cast and directed.Â  Everything is just like I pictured from the book, and that’s a good thing.Â  I had considered waiting to watch any of the Potter movies until I was finished reading the series for fear that movie would ruin my vision of Hogwarts, but I’m glad I didn’t wait; the movie was very enjoyable.Â  I was pleased to seeÂ  that creatures like the Gringotts bank goblins, for example, looked just like the sketches in the book which also helped to make my expectations match the movie.

â€¢Â  Visually, the invading troll was cool, although its extreme smelliness was completely downplayed in the movie – one of the things I wish was not.

â€¢Â  This movie would be so cool in 3D!!

â€¢Â  The charcer Hagrid gained about 50 IQ points for the movie.Â  He was likable, but reads dumber than he acted in the movie.Â  I think I would have liked to see him more like he was in the book.

â€¢ Â The movie is a good representation of the book brought to life, but how is it to watch it on its ownÂ if you haven’t read the book?Â  I will talk to my husband about this because he did just that. Â And for me – the movie almost went too fast for me.Â  I saw events happen in minutes that in real time, took me weeks to read about! Â But then again, there are over 300 pages being shown in under 3 hours.

â€¢ Â The character Severus Snape stood out as being very well cast – I’m not remembering a very vivid depiction of him in the book, and the movie did not disappoint in this regard.

***FOLLOWING MIGHT BE SPOILERS – YOU MIGHT NOT WANT TO READ ANY FURTHER IF YOU HAVEN’T SEEN OR READ HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER’S STONE***

â€¢ Â Quirrell didn’t seem to be stuttering much in the movie, which brings me to a minor complaint that I have about both the book and the movie. Â  I felt that Professor’s Quirrell’s character was not elaborated upon enough to fully give the audience the big surprise ending. Â Sometimes I would even get Quirrell mixed up with Filch (while reading the book anyway), but I guess that could also be a side effect of reading while falling asleep!

â€¢ Â Did I miss something, or does neither the book nor the movie elaborate upon why Harry’s scar hurts when he see Snape?

Overall, a very enjoyable movie-watching experience! Â Fun for everyone – the kids weren’t scared by it and enjoyed it, and my husband liked it so much that he’s been asking me when I’m going to finish the 2nd book because he wants to see the 2nd movie!

### Comments

**taylhis**I will keep reading the HP books as long as time permits, however, I'm definitely going to take some breaks - I never stay in one genre for too many books in a row, let alone the same series! And Jamiahsh, I think there's danger in being too analytical about fantasy. It can seriously inhibit one's enjoyment, not to mention the enjoyment of those seated in the area :) And I try to tune out when I hear anyone talking about the entire series. I know some of the spoilers, and I don't want to know any more!  
**derek**I enjoyed both the book and the movie, though as you said much was cut out of the movie. Of course HP1 was only 300 pages, the shortest of the series, less than half the length of some of the longer ones...  
**jamiahsh**Right justj... keep reading, taylhis is all I will say. I think your hubby enjoyed it a lot. He just likes to analyze a lot and clear up confusion that he was having. I tried to be as vague as possible to not ruin anything that you aren't already aware of.  
**justj**You missed something on Harry's scar. Spoiler for anybody who didn't see the movie or read the book.... It didn't hurt when he saw Snape, but did when he saw the back of Quirrell's head.

# He Ate The Cheesy Fiesta Potatoes, And Then He Wore Them

I have an 18-month-old little boy, and the other day, he tried cheesy fiesta potatoes from Taco Bell.Â  I think the title of this blog post pretty much says it all.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/Beeber-wears-potatoes-1-16-10-002.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Maybe he has an opinion on Taco Bell food... ;)  
**jamiahsh**Edible Beebs. Maybe he was trying to do a re-enactment of his dad's favorite animated movie of the past year ;)

# Learning The HARD Way

This guy learned the hard way that there was no escape from Lake County Illinois Sheriff’s deputies.Â  He fled from a courtroom, trying to escape, and well, it didn’t go quite as planned…

Oops, I didn’t have the time to try to figure out how to embed this video, so [click here to see it](http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid18011347001?bctid=61875965001" \t "_blank).

### Comments

**derek**If only I could picture what was going on in his mind. "Must get away-must get away-freedom right in front of me-I'm doing it-just another few feet-so long suck-[dwonnnngggg]-I think...I'll just...lie...down...now"

# Easy Money

How I wish I were talking about real life, but ‘Easy Money’ is the title of a board game we’ve recently discovered.Â  As you may have read in the past, my husband and I collect board games.Â  We used to go to thrift stores and pick up any games we saw that were missing from our collection.Â  We fashioned ourselves a large game closet where we keep them all, and there are some games in there that we haven’t yet had the chance to try.Â  A few weeks ago, we pulled out the board game Easy Money and gave it a whirl – we all loved it!

According to the instructions, the first thing you do to prepare the game is to count out millions of dollars (fake of course, but still too bad) and bundle them into various amounts.Â  This does actually add a fun element to the game; for some reason, it’s much more fun to bet a million dollar bundle than it is to wager a million dollar bill – go figure.Â  Had we purchased this game new, we would have had to do all the money-bundling ourselves, and knowing our general lack of patience, we might have quit right there.Â  But we’re glad we purchased this game used since all of the money had been pre-bundled for us.Â  What I don’t understand, however, is why the people who bundled all the money then got rid of the game, especially without seeming to play it much given the game’s relatively good condition.Â  Once the bundles of money are made, each player takes his or her turn, all moving the same pawn around the board untilÂ  the bank runs out of money.Â  Each player follows the instructions on the space they land upon, and usually some sort of gambling or betting is involved.Â  I really like the game’s Lottery concept, but the Wall Street spaces are not my favorite.Â  I’ve played 3 games of Easy Money, and the Lottery was responsible for letting me win 2 of those games at the very last minute.Â  When someone lands on the Wall Street space, every player has to predict whether the market will go up or downÂ  and bet accordingly.Â  Since the chances of winning the Wall Street bets are 50-50, you’d think I would have made some money.Â  But I have some sort of terrible Wall Street luck, and I’d bet (pun intended, hehe) that I’ve only won the Wall Street gamble under 5 times throughout all 3 games I’ve played.Â  I take it in stride though, the rest of the game is so fun and great for the whole family.Â  Its only negative is the fact that it only accommodates up to 4 players, therefore it is not a contender for the crowded game nights we have with friends.

### Comments

**taylhis**That will be fun, derek - looking forward to it. And don't worry about not making it this month - we wouldn't have the money to entertain you anyway ;)  
**derek**Sounds like fun. I'll have to get over there and play it with you sometime. Just not this month unfortunately.  
**jamiahsh**VERY FUN and addictive!

# Patience

Our new bird is so cute!Â  Not having parakeets for years has made me forget how pleasant they are to have around.Â  JJ chirps and sings, and even when he’s quiet, he’s adorable to look at.Â  My husband (who is not known for his patience anyway) mentioned the other day that he’s having trouble with his temptations to reach into the cage and grab the bird to play with him.Â  It’s partly his impatience, and it’s partly because he’s used to just reaching out and grabbing his obnoxious parrot.Â  But my husband knows that if he is disruptive to the training process I’ve chosen for JJ, there will be big trouble!

I’m having trouble being patient too, but I understand how innately nervous parakeets are.Â  Once you build their trust, they can make wonderful interactive pets – but the key is taking it slow and being consistent.Â  As much as I want to cuddle my baby bird, I can respect his need for space right now too.Â  But try telling that to my excited kids.Â  The older ones (ages 10, 5 and 3) are ok about it; for the most part, they’re content to just stand there watching JJ and talking to him.Â  But my 18 month old toddler is another story.Â  He is fond of banging on metal cages because that’s what makes the most noise, and the rats don’t really mind.Â  My poor little baby bird, on the other hand…Â  We usually shut the door to our bedroom since that’s where JJ lives, but the other day, we forgot.Â  I figured shutting the gate at the bottom of the stairs would keep the dog away from our bedroom, but kids opened the gate.Â  While the dog was fine (I don’t think she even realizes there is another bird in the house), IÂ  found little Beeber (that was our then-2-year-old’s nickname for her baby brother) next to JJ’s cage, and he hasn’t been the same since.Â  He still chirps and acts happy, but he now tries to fly around the cage whenever I come near – he used to let me put my finger right up next to him…Â  He was doing so well with the training, we were bound to take a step backward.Â  I still have confidence that I can train JJ to be a nice family bird, or at the very least, a little buddy bird for me.Â  We just need to have a little patience.

### Comments

**derek**I remember a game for the Turbografx-16 called JJ & Jeff, a platformer where one of the heroes used a spray can to fight enemies. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY8Ox7emqug#t=1m23s That weapon was much nicer than the one in the Japanese version which didn't require a spray can. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uY-a\_3qyOY0#t=1m11s Sorry, unrelated to your own JJ!  
**jamiahsh**Right you are. It's only been a week. I was soooo tempted the other night, too ;)

# Missing The Office

Last week I really could have used a Thursday night pick-me-up from my favorite show, The Office, but alas, no new episode.Â  I was sure I couldn’t be disappointed two weeks in a row, but this week’s ep is also a re-run!Â  Then I started thinking about how it’s been in the news lately that NBC is changing around their scheduling, most of it having to do with the Olympics and Jay Leno.Â  Then I realized that if the Olympics are on NBC, the Office probably won’t be on for the entire duration of the Winter Games!Â  I did a quick search, and to my relief, I found that a new Office is scheduled to air on January 21 – not this week, but next week thankfully.Â  We might have to wait out the entire airing of the Winter Olympics, but at least they’re not going to make us wait until it’s over and we’ll have at least one new Office episode to enjoy in the meantime.Â  Any other Office fans out there?Â  Does anyone know how many more new episodes we get for the rest of the season, or atÂ  least how many we can expect to enjoy before the beginning of the Olympics?Â  How long IS the Olympics, anyway?Â  And fyi, the Jan. 21 episode of the Office is called, “The Banker”, and the plot outline is this:Â  When a prospective buyer for Dunder Mifflin visits, everyone looks to impress and Michael gets nostalgic.

Sounds hilarious, as usual!Â  And don’t get me wrong, this show is so great that reruns are tons of fun too.Â  We were just watching the “Frame Toby” episode from season 5 last night, and we had to rewind 4 times to listen to Creed’s classic line about the quarry – I’m not going to repeat it here because it’s mostly the WAY he says it, but it has to be one of the funniest Office moments EVER!Â  Which got me to thinking about a hypothetical situation –Â  what if Creed were a character who came to our semi-regular game nights?Â  HAHA!

### Comments

**Carol**One of these days , I am going to watch this show. You will probably have to give me a cheat sheet to know all the background. I liked the characters that were on the show fixing up a house .  
**jamiahsh**I get the deleted scenes on facebook usually the day after a new ep airs. I check out the webisodes from time to time. RIght... nothing beats an all new show.  
**taylhis**They have all kinds of webisodes and extra minutes for episodes (an extra nine minutes for the Santa episode, for one) online, but I always forget about them... there's something about just seeing a few minutes of footage anyway, just kind of a teaser - can't really compare with REAL episodes.  
**jamiahsh**Probably will have the 16 day wait for the Olympics but 2 two part episode is coming in March according to reliable sources. No spoilage cause that's all I know! WHHO HOOO.. just have to wait another week. Hopefully there is another new ep before the games begin! And I knew that Jay's Prime Time stint would not last long... just by one episode.

# Introducing... JJ!

As you might have read in an earlier blog post, I received a pet store gift certificate for Christmas from my husband.Â  Today I spent it – I picked out the newest member of our family – JJ the parakeet!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/JJ-comes-home-1-9-10-002.jpg)

When you adopt a pet parakeet from a pet store, the workers have to barge into the cage full of parakeets with a towel on their hand to grab your bird, and then they put it in a cardboard box for the ride home.Â  This might sound like a mean thing to do, but in my experience (this is my fifth pet parakeet), the bird recovers very quickly; I wouldn’t even use the word recover really; they always seem just fine.Â  And JJ handled his transition like a pro!Â  He actually seemed immediately happy in his cage!Â  I put my finger in there, and he let me almost touch him, just a few hours after he got home!Â  He didn’t back away or anything!Â  I am so excited to become friends with this little guy; he is so cute!Â  It’s been about 15 years since I’ve had a pet parakeet, and I’ve forgotten about how they just exude happiness!Â  Already JJ moves his beak like he’s trying to talk and responds to my voice.Â  Hopefully I will make the time to train this little guy to be the little buddy I’ve always wanted in a bird – I get jealous of my husband’s relationship with his parrot.Â  Wait, that doesn’t sound quite how I meant to say it…

There’s a fine line between training a bird, earning trust, and scaring him off for good.Â  JJ seems very patient and ready to learn, and so am I – but getting to spend time with him while there is a trouble-prone toddler toddling around will be my greatest challenge, I think.

Many people have fun parakeet stories; they really are pleasant little birds.Â  My dad and my uncle had a parakeet whenÂ  they were kids named Tippy who would walk on their kitchen table.Â  They would hold a hand of playing cards, and Tippy would walk up, choose a card, and then carry it in his beak to the edge of the table, let it go and watchÂ  it float downÂ  to the floor.Â  I’ve heard that many (male) parakeets can talk, and of course they will sit on your shoulder and be your best friend.Â  So yeah, I’m excited about this bird, and it’s a nice feeling – can’t say there’s been a lot of that lately.Â  Even if he isn’t easily trained (defying all early indications), I’ve already tremendously enjoyed just looking at him and absorbing his pleasantness, something I look forward to doing in days to come…Â  feeling a contentment that I haven’t felt for awhile…

Just for the heck of it, here is a timeline of my other pet parakeets.Â  I was a kid when I had them, so I don’t remember dates or ages – each one lived for around 5-8 years, the usual parakeet lifespan.Â  But it bugs the heck out of me that I can’t remember which of my birds liked to ring his toy bell –Â Â  Tippy, I think?Â  I named him for my dad and uncle’s childhood pet…Â  The memories of the bell ringing bird have been replaced in my brain by the obscenely loud parrot we currently own who jangles his bell-shaped toy whenever he starts to get rowdy.Â  Parakeets are actually in the same biological family as parrots and are in fact classified as parrots.Â  So technically, we’ve gotten ourselves another parrot for our house, just what we needed, right?Â  But Squawky, the scarlet macaw (loud a\*\*hole) parrot belongs to my husband (or my husband belongs to Squawky, depends upon who you ask), and JJ is mine – this is important since birds “mate” for life – I’m so happy to have MY bird!

So here’s that rundown of parakeets past:

Spunky – he was blue and fiesty, but we were really surprised when ~~he~~ she began to lay eggs!

Tweety – the only parakeet I had who was of the green /Â  gold variety.

Tippy – named after my dad’s childhood bird; he was light blue.

Goat –Â  my sister found him flying loose outside around her work.Â  They took him in, and when no one claimed him, I named him “Goat” in honor of my dream pet at that time.Â  He was pretty tame for a “wild bird”!

J.J. – dark blue, almost a gray to violet hue.Â  And why is he named J.J.?Â  It’s short for **J**ungle **J**ack Hanna, of course ðŸ˜‰

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Did I ever tell you about the parakeet I had when I was a teenager? I can't remember his name but he was very tame. Used to sit on the edge of my glass of pop. One night he fell in and in panic to save him, I dumped the whole glass on my bed. Couldn't sleep in my bed that night.  
**taylhis**That's funny, Mom, I remember being the one to clean the cage :) I was thinking about this the other day though - why we continued to take all those toys out and wash them when none of the birds would ever play with them... I remember you getting on my case about feeding them because I always thought the dish was full, but it was seed that had already been cracked. Don't worry, as an adult I'm quite good at remembering to feed all of my pets and kids - most of the time ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**I always loved your pet parakeets....I just hated to clean the cages when you guys didn't do it. They do make nice pets. Enjoy....I, too, look forward to meeting him next time I visit.  
**jamiahsh**He looks like Corky... the blue variety. Very cute. Can't wait to meet the new addition. I had a feeling that his name was going to have some tie to one of your favorite celebrities ;)  
**taylhis**Oh, I thought you would remember this - I should have brought it up last time we talked on the phone... I thought you were working at Kinder Care - right after the time you found the tortoise (or turtle)...  
**Kim**I loved our parakeets as a kid! I have a very faint memory of "Goat", though. Do you remember where I was working when we found him? That's so weird, but I don't really remember that. Anyway, JJ is really cute, and I look forward to meeting him the next time I visit!  
**justj**Even though you named your new parakeet after Jungle Jack, I like the name a lot. ;)

# The Abyss

It took two nights, but we finally made it through the sci-fi 80’s thriller, [The Abyss](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0096754/" \t "_blank).Â  What is with me and all the science fiction lately?Â  Not usually my cup of tea; I guess I’ve just been enjoying a change of scenery.Â  One reason for wanting to watch the Abyss is that I was very impressed by director / writer James Cameron’s latest movie, Avatar.Â  I enjoyed the movie in a little theater with old fashioned sound equipment, and I also got to catchÂ  it at a larger theater with awesome sound and in 3D – I REALLY enjoyed it!Â  That doesn’t mean I’m a James Cameron fan, however, and you couldn’t pay me to sit through Titanic, whose concept I always thought sold out the disaster itself.Â  I mean, for characters in the movie, there were over 2200 real Titanic passengers from which to choose – why spend millions of dollars to bring to life fictionalized accounts of such a horrible tragedy?

But back to The Abyss, another James Cameron water movie…Â  Overall, this winner of the 1990 Oscar for visual effects was enjoyable, but I don’t evenÂ  know if I can say this is a watch-again-er for me.Â  Reading the trivia on imdb.com about how the movie was filmed was almost more interesting than the movie itself, which tells the story of a group of oil workers who are hired to go on a dive search for a missing nuclear sub.Â  Enter some Navy SEALS and a mysterious alien species,Â  and you have enough action for a 138 minute movie.Â  All of the diving and talk of the oceanic pressure kinda got to me after awhile; I don’t think scuba diving is something I’m ever interested in doing.Â  But I enjoyed the story and especially the visual effects, and without risking spoiling anything, let’s just say that in typical 80’s fashion, the plot was predictable.Â  If you do happen to check this one out, or if it happens to be one of your old favorites, I highly recommend reading the trivia section on imdb.com to further your enjoyment.

### Comments

**justj**I don't think I ever saw that movie.  
**jamiahsh**It has been a long while since I've seen The Abyss. But I do remember the visuals being very groundbreaking for its day.

# Harry Potter And The Sorcerer's Stone

I did it.Â  I’ve finished reading the first book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*.Â  And I really enjoyed it; I think I can officially call myself a Harry Potter fan!Â  The book was very fast-moving, and because it’s kind of a kids’ fantasy book (but don’t get the wrong idea – MANY adults like it too!), I was able to finish the entire 300 pages on my limited reading schedule without even having to renew it at the library once!

Tonight, I’m going to start the second book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, and if I can convince my husband, we’ll be watching the movie of the first book this weekend.Â  And now I am REALLY excited to see the new [Wizarding World of Harry Potter](http://www.universalorlandoresort.com/harrypotter/" \t "_blank) at Universal Studios in Orlando.Â  They are being kinda secretive about the Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey attraction, but it promises to use “entirely new technology” to bring the Harry Potter series to life “in a way never before experienced”!Â  Maybe something like The Mummy ride or The Amazing Adventures of Spiderman 3D?Â  How cool would that be for Harry Potter!!Â  And the shops and restaurants are all going to keep in the tradition of the boy wizard’s world.Â  Chocolate frogs, anyone?Â  The world doesn’t open until spring, and it doesn’t look like we’re going to get to Florida before the fall or next winter anyway, so if that becomes a reality, we will have to make sure we get to Universal – I really liked Islands of Adventure anyway, and now it’s going to be even better!Â  I just have to make sure I read all the Potter books by then.Â  And I almost don’t want to read too much about the new world on the internet for fear that it would be spoilers about things I haven’t discovered yet.

As much as I’m enjoying the Harry Potter series, I’m not usually one to stick to one type of book.Â  If I need a break from Hogwart’s before I get through all 7 stories, I might try *[The Zookeeper’s Wife](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/13/AR2007091301895.html" \t "_blank)*, a story about a zoo in Poland in the 1930’s and how it’s destroyed during the holocaust – as long as it’s not too depressing of a read.

### Comments

**taylhis**Eww... the buttered popcorn was always my least favorite flavor of Jelly Belly.  
**jamiahsh**Hedwig is beautiful... wait til you see her on screen.  
**justj**I've had a few of the every flavor beans. The dirt tastes like dirt, and the buttered popcorn tastes like buttered popcorn. I didn't really care for either. I'm not sure about the chocolate frogs, I think my daughter may have had one or two.  
**taylhis**I remember when they released Jelly Bellys which strange disgusting flavors, like vomit, dirt, boogers, etc. I'm pretty sure those were Potter themed, though I didn't pay much attention at the time. And if a 'chocolate frog' is simply chocolate in the shape of a frog, then no prob! If it's something like frog legs using parts of an actual frog, then no thanks. Hopefully for my sake, the world won't have companion toads! Owls would be cool!  
**jamiahsh**Agreed... Those of us who started at the beginning (or nearly) had to wait a year or two between each installment. But I think the new Universal park will be very cool. I've always wanted to sample some Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans. Didn't they have them at the time of the first few movie's releases. So glad you enjoyed the book! I always thought you would. Yes.. would you be hesitant to indulge in a CHOCOLATE frog?  
**justj**You do have it little harder than those of us who started at the beginning. Waiting for books to be released was an experience. My youngest and I were in line for the release of book 7 at midnight.

# A Big Sarcastic THANKS

THANKS –Â  to the one who got us the 300 piece puzzle for Christmas.Â  Granted, 300 pieces are not too many for a puzzle.Â  But normal puzzles usually have the person putting together a broken portrait, like a picture of a landscape or a scene. But the puzzle given to my 10-year-old back in December was a depiction of a collection of small toys clustered together on some shelves – what seemed like 300 toys broken into 300 pieces which we were supposed to piece together…

I wanted to doÂ  this puzzle together as a family days after it was given to us, but since that was one of the worst weekends of my life, we didn’t get around to it.Â  Tonight, my 10-year-old was having trouble sleeping after her little sisters had gone to bed, so we hauled it out and went to work.Â  Thank goodness the little ones were asleep.Â  There was no way that they would have felt anything but frustration when trying to do this puzzle – it was too daunting for even my husband to try, but then again, he is not a puzzle person in the slightest.Â  As a matter of fact, when he saw our completed triumph, he asked, “How do we preserve this?”Â  I answered, “Why bother, we’d probably like to do it again; it was fun.”Â  He gave me the strangest look and said, “I guess our definitions of fun in this case are completely different.”

I’m proud to say that together, my daughter and I finished the “impossible” puzzle about 15 minutes under our two-hour goal.Â  Here are some pics:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/The-puzzle-1-10-0011.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/The-puzzle-1-10-002.jpg)

Despite my clever blog post title and in all seriousness, I am thankful for the time that we spent together doing the puzzle, and we will look forward to doing it again.Â  The thanks I would like to expend to the puzzle-giver is not at all sarcastic; we actually had a lot of fun.Â  But that same puzzle-giver should keep a watchful eye…Â  there are now two of us looking to challenge you to an equal payback ðŸ˜‰

### Comments

**justj**They have roll-up mats and folding puzzle tables. I wasn't fond of the roll-up mat, but the folding tables (that hold the puzzle in any state of completion) look really nice.  
**taylhis**Maybe someday we will work up to more pieces. Can't really do the card table thing with Climb-y Climberson around to ruin anything he can. I've already had to get him off the table 4 times today - guess it's time to put away the finished puzzle, but I'm having trouble bringing myself to do it!  
**justj**Most, if not all, of my girls love to do puzzles. I'm sure they get this from their mother. She thought any puzzle less than 500 pieces was easy. They would set up a card table and work on 1000+ piece puzzles until they were finished. Me, I just like to put that last piece in place.  
**jamiahsh**My 6 year old niece received a puzzle. OK, it is a puzzle containing 8 different puzzles all Disney related. The piece count ranges from 150-500. I'll have to share pictures at a later date. I always liked a good jigsaw.

# Let It Snow... Well, Just For Tonight

I am glad to be home.Â  I’ve got a nice warm cup of coffee next to me as I sit at my computer…Â  but don’t let my facade of relaxation fool you.Â  I’ve already changed 3 dirty diapers and broken up 4 squabbles in the past hour since I’ve been home, with more of both sure to come.Â  But my errands today went even worse – one of those days where most things, even the littlest things, are going wrong – too many things to list, and I’m exhausted.

And it’s snowing, which made everything I did today more difficult.Â  It depends upon the news outlet of choice; the radio says we are to get 2-4″ of snow today with another possible inch tomorrow.Â  I am also a fan of weather.com, who says my area is due for a possible 3-5″ today, and another 1-3″ at night.Â  Basically the same forecast, but I know they weren’t exaggerating this time – there are already at least 3″ of snow on the ground.Â  I know because I had to trudge through it, both on foot and in the car.Â  The roads are terrible, but walking is a breeze thanks to the boots I got a few months ago.Â  Well, it would be a breeze if it weren’t for all the little ones I have to bundle and re-bundle and lift out of the car at every stop.Â  I had so many stops to make and was so sick of the snow today that I decided to not go to the library and pick up the second Harry Potter book.Â  I know, it sounds great to be snowed in with a good book, especially because hubby is working all night, but it’s difficult to imagine that I will achieve any kid-less time.Â  I just couldn’t bring myself to make that extra stop, especially when the day’s other errands had already gone so awry.Â  Some of it was just plain bad luck and some had to do with the fact that all 4 kids – well, ok, 3 of them, but I’m not mentioning any names –Â  have been terribly behaved lately.

In what has turned into a ranting blog post of complaints, where was I?  
My husband had a major issue with his work in December, so he needs to work basically whenever he’s awake to get our family back on track.Â  I lost my other best friend in this house in December, and it feels kind of lonely when the people you hang out with all day do nothing but poop, cry, or argue, sometimes all doing all 3 things at once.Â  And I started today on such a good note; where on earth would I be right now if I hadn’t?Â  I stayed positive this morning while I cleaned the poop out of the bathtub, and I even smiled when my son pooped again on the floor and slid on it like it was a banana peel – disgusting, that’s obvious, but you have to admit that it makes for a humorous mental picture (no one was hurt, unless you count my bathroom floor).

The trip to Walmart today went surprisingly well, even though I didn’t leave myself enough time for lunch.Â  But then the kids lost it as I was loading the groceries into the car, and between the yelling and the snow, I realized I was not really IN the drive-thru at McDonald’s – I was kind of taking up the drive-thru lane AND the drive-past lane simultaneously.Â  It was too late for me to move over, at least not until the car in front of me moved, and sure enough, there came someone *squeezing* past me…Â  I turned my head, ready for the dirty look I knew I was about to receive, and the driver did not disappoint.Â  He glared at me, and that’s when I saw it was a county sheriff, and I sank low in my seat – how embarrassing.Â  And great – I feel sorry for the other red vans that get pulled over if this guy is looking to get revenge on me; he looked awfully perturbed at my ignorance.

So then I get home, and my little boy has fallen asleep (only took 15 minutes of crying in the car), so I put him in his crib and venture back out into the snowstorm because IÂ  forgot milk – a morning requirement in this house o’ kids.Â  But because it was today, and because anything that could go wrong **was** going wrong (remember that I’ve left out still most of the gory details), the first store I check is completely *out of milk*.Â  So I go to another place, and they do have milk, but there I run into an acquaintance with whom I am forced to make chit-chat.Â  Normally, I’d be ok because I like most people I meet, but there are a select few (usually those afflicted with [P.A.S.](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/12/29/a-not-so-cynical-look-at-the-2009-holiday-season/" \t "_blank)) who really get on my nerves. Â  Enter this guy, today, one of “those days”.Â  But I’m nice, I’m still in a positive mood, I’ve got my milk, and I’m on my way home.Â  When I slide into my driveway (reminding me it has to be shoveled later), I want to sit at my computer with my cup of coffee and relax, but I decide instead to play a game of Dora Candyland with my 3-year-old because it’s something we can’t do when her brother is around and wreaking havoc.Â  No sooner do we get out the Candyland than her brother wakes up – great, so all I accomplished during his nap today was getting milk!Â  No “me” time and worse yet, no quality one-on-one time with my daughter – just errands, UGH!

Well enough ranting for now, let’s just say that I did end up with my cup of coffee and my quiet time.Â  But if you think the kids relented and gave me this on their own, you should read more of my blog posts because that is SO not the case.Â  My husband had to take a break from work and spend it with the kids.Â  So now it’s my turn, and my quiet time is over.Â  But let it snow – we don’t have anywhere to be because Girl Scouts was canceled this evening due to snow.Â  Maybe we can counteract some of today’s unpleasantness by spending some quality family time together tonight while we’re snowed in….Â  but please, not another day off school for the kids – after today, I don’t think I could handle a snow day!

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I'm sorry you have had such a bad day. I remember those when you guys were little and Dad was travelling. And with 4 kids it has to be double what I had to deal with. I wish I were closer so I could help you out. Hang in there....they grow up fast....or so they say.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I'm sure after ten years they would be a bit used!  
**justj**I'm hoping to get out of the house tomorrow. I hope the snow is done for a while. I hope you had some good family time this evening. And I hope the kids get to go to school tomorrow.  
**taylhis**You are, but I thought I'd get it from the library and start it NOW! Well, maybe tomorrow, anyway... And when I get your copy, I can always return the one from the library, especially if it's in as bad a shape as the first one I read, yuck!  
**jamiahsh**The surprisingly god trip to Wally World must have been the highlight. OH< WAIT! I thought I was bringing Book 2 with me Sunday?  
**jamiahsh**Pat, pat, pat. Just reading your post has cheered me up although it doesn't sound like it has done much for you. I dunno... it appears to have stopped snowing here. I think we have quite enough here... thank you very much!

# Nothing To Say...

Another fog day, so the kids are off school.Â  They’re playing with each other right now, so I have a few minutes…Â  why bother to start cleaning when I know that they’ll be “momming” me any second?Â  The house is a disaster, and it needs a good few hours of attention at least.Â  Why bother starting laundry?Â  The bird will only scream at me and rile up the kids who are otherwise being good.

A fellow tangents blogger recently wrote about the grey days of winter, and I guess I’m feeling that now.Â  It’s too cold to bundle up the kids and take them anywhere, and we’re really trying to watch our pennies anyway – taking them out costs money, even if just the gas in the car, it’s still more expensive than staying home.Â  Can’t walk anywhere because it’s too cold.Â  So, we’re staying home, trying to keep all 5 of us out of the way of my husband, who works at home and is, of course, working all day.

No need to bring you up to speed on the current happenings in my life – just every day stuff, laced with a little bad luck.Â  Nothing to spread any “cheer” about.

We’ve watched a few movies recently; saw Star Wars for the first time as an adult.Â  Growing up in the 80’s, I saw clips of the most famous parts as a kid.Â  My husband and I both had the stomach flu last week, and we couldn’t sleep, so we stayed up and watched Star Wars.Â  It was entertaining; not my kind of movie, but perhaps eventually I will watch the other movies in the series.Â  Here’s a question for Star Wars fans:Â  I know that they re-released the movie with digital enhancements, including the scene with Jabba the Hut.Â  So did they film that as new footage for the re-release?Â  Harrison Ford did look like he could be decades older…

And speaking of series, I have begun to read the Harry Potter series.Â  I’m about 50 pages away from finishing the first book, and I’m really enjoying it.Â  I was really excited to watch the movie when I was finished with the book,Â  but then I started thinking that I might want to keep my own vision of Hogwarts.Â  Might the movie ruin the picture I have in my head?Â  Using imagination is fun; I don’t want to take that away from myself or lose motivation to finish reading the series.Â  Then again, I’ve never heard any Potter fans complain that the movies didn’t do the books justice; I hear they are very good.Â  I’m just wondering if I should wait until I’m done with or at least a little further in the series to watch the movies.

Then again, it’s not like we have a lot of time to watchÂ  movies, anyway.Â  With my husband back on full time and us still fulfilling our youth group and other obligations, as well as caring for our 4 kids (who don’t sleep a lot!), by the time we put in a movie for “us” time, we are both dozing and can’t get through an entire one anyway.Â  Sigh.Â  Well, not to be negative, but the grey days of winter are here.Â  Can’t wait until spring!!!Â  GO CUBS!Â  Maybe THIS year…

### Comments

**justj**jamiahsh said almost everything I was going to say. As far as the Harry Potter Books and Movies. I found that the first two movies tried very hard to stay faithful to the books. There were some differences, but they seemed insignificant. I think that they did a great job of casting and set design for this. They wanted to keep the set audience of book readers. Since the movies are making an average of 285 million for each movie release, they are doing a good job.  
**taylhis**Well, I meant nothing INTERESTING to say, or even anything positive for that matter. But for that, I did find a bunch of things to write... too bad I don't get paid by the word! ;)  
**jamiahsh**I do remember that I first read the first three Potter books as the first movie was being released. I had the first book finished before and I don't think it took away from any of my enjoyment.  
**jamiahsh**And for having Nothing to Say... you sure said a post full. :D  
**jamiahsh**I would definitely watch the remaining original SW movies first... not a bad idea. In the original release of the first movie, a scene with Han Solo and a human Jabba the Hutt was filmed but ended up on the cutting room floor. For the Special Edition release of the 90s, the scene was added and the human Hutt was replaced with the "slimy piece of worm-ridden filth" we all remember fondly from Return of the Jedi using the marvel that is CGI technology.

# Fermilab

Most people, especially those outside the circle that encompasses any employees involved in scientific fields, have not heard of a place called [Fermilab](http://www.fnal.gov/) – a particle acceleration lab located some 30 miles west of Chicago.Â  You may have heard the name in the news recently as a scientific record previously held by Fermilab was broken in Europe near the end of 2009.Â  Seeing Fermilab in the news recently caught my eye because I grew up living right next to it.

The Fermilab campus consists of more than 10 square miles – about 2Â½ times the size of the town where I currently reside – of mainly naturalistic landscape dotted with buildings of scientific purpose.Â  There are lakes, forests, ponds, prairies; even a little village complete with public pool and bomb shelter.Â  Back in the 80’s and 90’s, the site was open for public usage during the day until 8pm.Â  The main roads that went into and through Fermilab provided us with a major shortcut to the roller skating rink which easily cut the travel time in half.Â  It was difficult to secure rides to and from the skating rink – none of our parents wanted to be the ones who had to pick us up and go all the way around the lab!

http://www.dailyherald.com/story/?id=340709

### Comments

# Clue - The Office!

My first Christmas present of 2009 – Clue The Office Collector’s Edition!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/12/delete-clue2.jpg)

Ok, I have to be honest – could you tell I started the draft of this post weeks ago?Â  But I had to finish it, cuz this is a super-cool game given by a very thoughtful friend.Â  In addition, I received some other awesome gifts: Walmart gift cards and a gift certificate to the local pet store so I can get my parakeet – more on that later.Â  My gifts also included something incredibly touching and sentimental from my husband and kids, but that’s all I need to say about that to keep from traveling the dark road of sadness.

Back to Clue – The Office version – it was so fun!Â  In true keeping with Office traditions, the victim in the game is Toby Flenderson!Â  Obvious, especially when the game’s instructions were penned by Michael.Â  Each player chooses an available character, and they get a little Office ID card for their person (Office fans at our church exchanged this game for Christmas, and they replaced the little Office ID’s with pictures of church staff – hilarious!).Â  Players then move about the Office, entering rooms like Michael’s Office or Accounting, and play continues just like the other versions of the game Clue – you make accusations about who killed Toby with which weapon in which room.Â  My favorite part of this game (aside from the fact that I won the first round we played!) are the weapons –Â  pewter figures representing various hilarious Office plot lines; for example, a bike chain, a Dundie award, and my personal favorite: a George Foreman grill!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/01/delete-clue-weapons.jpg)

It’s a must-have for any fan of The Office, to be especially appreciated by game collectors like myself!

### Comments

**taylhis**Well then we should play it sometime. It's not like you have to know anything about the Office, and you might enjoy the differences. The secret passages are the same, but there are a few things that are different - one thing is the mystery card that makes it much more difficult to figure out the who, what, where! Perhaps the regular Clue update has this element, but I don't know, I've only played the old school version.  
**justj**I like Clue, should I comment on the other? Needed more words.  
**jamiahsh**LOVE IT LOVE IT

# GOODBYE To 2009!

As if the month of December 2009 wasn’t negative enough for our family, we spent the last days of the year with the stomach flu – all 6 of us.Â  It’s just an interesting end to an interesting month, and I have to admit I am glad to see 2009 go.Â  Hopefully, a year like that only comes along once in a blue moon…Â  Actually, after reading about [blue moons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_moon), I’m hoping our family’s bad luck years occur much less frequently than even a New Year’s blue moon, which we will enjoy this evening.

But my point is, have a happy and safe New Year’s celebration!Â  If you drink, don’t drive, and if you drink and drive, you’re not invited to read my blog anymore.

***Happy New Year to you and yours!!!***

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/12/delete-new-years.jpg)

### Comments

**taylhis**Sorry about that Mare... but now that's one more strain of flu you've built up antibodies against ;) Hopefully it was a very quick bug for you like the rest of us? It hit really hard and fast, but it was also gone very quickly.  
**mary911**So you're the ones I contracted my flu from.....oh my.....what a way to start the year....but besides that, had great fun with all of you on New Years and look forward to many more happy times in 2010 with all of you, illnesses and all! :)  
**taylhis**Same here... they were saying we're 20 degrees below normal - it hasn't made it into the 30's in days! I hate it. They say this came straight from Siberia... BRRRR!!!!!!! Stay warm too!! Hard to think of anywhere worth it to bundle up the kiddies and take them out - maybe that'll be the subject of my next post...  
**Mysmichelle**Happy New Year to you and yours. Really cold where I'm at, stay warm!!  
**justj**taylhis, when will we get together again? Good question. I've missed all of you. I'll have to give you a call.  
**derek**Happy new year! I had a stomach virus a few weeks ago for the first time in years. H1N1 perhaps? It came on quickly after a good day so I thought it was food poisoning. Then someone got it from me, so it was clearly a virus.  
**taylhis**Glad you had fun justj, but are we ever going to see you again?!?  
**justj**I'm so sorry I did not make it to your party. The Floridians left this morning, and I spent the dawning New Year with my family in Toledo. Got back to Williams County around 2:30  
**jamiahsh**Thanks... had an absolute blast as always... here's to a better 2010!

# A Not-So-Cynical Look At The 2009 Holiday Season

I was thinking about our family’s 2009 holiday season, now come and almost gone already, and I was envisioning words to describe this wonderful season, despite the fact that this year ours was peppered with unpleasant familial dramatics.Â  But about a week ago, I made what was a conscious decision to pull myself up from the depths of despair I had fallen into after losing a beloved family member just one week before Christmas.Â  So, in my good humor, I chose 24 of the best words to describe my holiday season, each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet.Â  Here goes…

Avatar – Saw it and actually liked it, despite my typical sci-fi reluctance.Â  But I liked Avatar so much that I’m really hoping the timing and budget work out so that I can see it again in 3D at a more technologically savvy theater.

Big Family Christmas – We traveled to Illinois on Christmas Day and got to take part in a huge gathering of my husband’s large extended family.Â  His 92-year-old grandmother, who speaks with a thick east-coast Connecticut accent (and who smoked 3 packs of cigarettes a day from age 16 until age 70!) told many of her infamous stories that had everyone in stitches!Â  After hearing one of Monie’s stories, I could have used the words Blue Boob for B, but I will spare you those details…Â  ðŸ˜‰

Christ Was Born – We went to a beautiful church service on Christmas Eve to celebrate and reflect upon the entire purpose of the Christmas holiday.

De…Â  There are two words that come to mind for this letter based upon certain recent events in my life, but I’m not going to go there; this is to be “A Not-So-Cynical Look…” blog post.Â  So here, D will stand for Dumbledore, since I’m almost halfway through my first Harry Potter book and lovin’ it!

Elf – My favorite holiday movie, and we actually had time to watch it this year!Â  It, unlike a few other favorite Christmas experiences, did not lose any magic this year.Â  I still felt that warm and fuzzy “Christmas Magic” feeling after I watched this movie – I’d pull it out more often, but it’s not the same unless it’s Christmas!Â    
*“I love smiling; smiling’s my favorite!!”Â  – Buddy The Elf*

Friends – We are so blessed to have such wonderful friends, and I can’t thank them enough for the things they did and just for being there during this bittersweet time.

Grandparents –Â  We were able to visit 3 of our grandparents this holiday season!Â  Even being in our 30’s, we have 3 surviving grandparents among my husband and I –Â  we were blessed to be able to spend time with all of them this year!

Homemade spaghetti – Best.Â  Christmas.Â  Gift.Â  EVER!!Â  My mother-in-law sent us home 4 huge frozen batches of her out-of-this-world spaghetti sauce!Â  AND a large bag of grated Asiago cheese.Â  AND…Â  something I’ll save for another letter…

Ice – Drove through plenty of it to reach IL and get back to Ohio on Christmas day.Â  Luckily, traffic was light and travel for us was smooth and safe.Â  The kids were good as gold and slept for the majority of both drives.

Jill – Screwed us over again!Â  This little story begins with Walmart.Â  Since this is “A Not-So-Cynical Look…”, I won’t go off about Walmart, but I will simply state the facts:Â  the pump in our windshield wiper cleaner fluid dispenser stopped working after the last time we got an oil change at Walmart.Â  We didn’t really need it until Christmas night, when we were driving past the city of Chicago, and apparently smog + snow = some sort of disgusting pollution paste.Â  So visibility is limited, and we still don’t know exactly what happened since we’ve driven this route dozens of times, but basically the express lanes on I-90 seemed to suddenly dissolve into city streets.Â  So now it’s 10:30 on Christmas night, and we’re wandering around in the city.Â  We can’t see out the back of the car since there’s tons of Christmas presents, and we can’t see out of the front of the car because of the pollution paste.Â  This is where Jill comes in – and she directs us straight back to I-90.Â  Only problem is, our van can’t just jump guardrails; we needed an entrance ramp, and Jill was only directing us to streets that crossed over the expressway and didn’t actually intersect with it.Â  So we crossed bridge after bridge, and we criss-crossed I-90 until one of those streets had an entrance ramp.Â  Then Jill freaked out and tried to get us off of the expressway again, but she got her power button pressed – we knew our way from there.

Kalachkies – I have a fun memory of a Christmas years ago when my forgetful Polish grandmother was sitting in her wheelchair, instructing my equally Polish uncle and myself how to make kalachkies, a usually delicious Polish cookie.Â  The end results were inedible and referred to as “hockey pucks”.Â  This year at Christmas, my husband’s cousin made homemade kalachkies – real ones, no hockey pucks, and they were delicious!Â  Thanks Lilly!

Late night drive – One night, we took the kids out in the car in their pajamas with some snacks, and we drove through the snowy countryside to a townÂ  about 30 minutes away for a drive-thru lighted display that’s just wonderful.Â  Late night drive could also refer to my husband’s and my peaceful drive home (after the unscheduled tour of the city) while the kids were asleep all the way from Illinois to Ohio – nice.

Mashed Potatoes – My mother-in-law is a great cook!Â  I guess it’s beenÂ  awhile since the last time I had her mashed potatoes, because IÂ  didn’t remember how they tasted.Â  But I told her the truth after Christmas dinner – they were the best mashed potatoes I’ve ever had!

Noodles – My mother-in-law’s spaghetti sauce also came with EIGHT pounds of whole wheat gourmet organic pasta!Â  I love whole wheat pasta – it actually tastes better, and you don’t get the pasta-stomachache / horrible stuffed feeling that can accompany pasta over-indulgence.

Onions – One of my favorite holiday dishes is creamed onions, and it was a nice surprise to see this dish on the Christmas buffet.Â  Fortunately for me, my husband can replicate the taste of his mother’s creamed onions –Â  yum!

P.A.S. – Pompous Ass Syndrome – my poor brother-in-law is a victim.Â  Enough Said.

Quiet – With 4 kids and Christmas celebrations spread out over 2 weeks, there really wasn’t much of this.

Revenge – My brother and sister-in-law gifted our kids 3 little gumball machines.Â  Cute, but not when you realize how many gumballs needed to be pried out of our candy-obsessed toddler’s little hands, for one thing.Â  Who would give little kids gumball machine gifts?Â  Wait, isn’t that what we got her 3 kids last year?!?Â  I’m all for re-gifting; I really think it’s a smart thing to do.Â  But maybe next year I’ll choose our Christmas gifts more carefully…

Snow – It’s been snowing on and off for a week and a half here in Ohio.Â  The Chicago area was unexpectedly blanketed with about a foot of snow on Saturday – thank goodness we left for Ohio on Friday night!

Turkey – We ate it and it was good.

U-Turn – see “J” – Jill the GPS.Â  Besides the time we were lost in Chicago, Jill caused us to make at least one other U-turn on this trip.

Vile – Odor in Gary Indiana – I don’t care what the Music Man had to say – Gary Indiana STINKS!Â  Literally!!!

WeatherÂ  – I was worried about it all week, but thankfully, it didn’t impede our journey in the slightest.

X-changing gifts –Â  Ok, that’s too generic?Â  What else could X stand for, the rating of Monie’s Blue Boob story?Â  We x-changed gifts many gifts, and that’s all I’m going to say.

Yellow Puppy – When our friends heard about our family’s heartbreak, they gifted us a gigantic (stuffed) dog.Â  This cute puppy’s headband wouldn’t even fit on my head, and she wears a sweater that could probably fit me – or at least all 4 of my kids in it together…Â  so cute and so thoughtful, and the kids LOVE her!

Zoo lights – With everything that was going on during this December, I’m so thankful that we were able to make it toÂ  one of our favorite Christmas destinations this year –Â Â  the Toledo Zoo for their Lights Before Christmas displays.Â  Beautiful lights in a peaceful atmosphere, and if you get there early enough, you can see some zoo animals, which is probably my favorite thing to do in the whole world!

Hope you had a Merry Christmas, and best wishes for a great New Year!!!

### Comments

**Let It Snow… Well, Just For Tonight | My Food Chain Gang**[...] be ok because I like most people I meet, but there are a select few (usually those afflicted with P.A.S.) who really get on my nerves. Â  Enter this guy, today, one of “those days”.Â  But [...]  
**derek**That was a fun ABC list. I think I will pass on that bb story myself, so I am glad you're keeping it to yourself. :o  
**taylhis**No jamiahsh, the blue boob story has nothing to do with the Smurfs, and I couldn't tell it like Monie does. Besides, the story did include a visual :0 so I won't be repeating it! Mysmichelle, I'm really glad you're a regular reader, and I hope to be back to blogging regularly and in better humor in the new year - our December was kind of dark, and as I've learned with a bout of the stomach flu in the past few days, it's not over yet!! Thanks for the well wishes, everyone! Have a safe and happy new year!!!  
**Mysmichelle**I read your blog regularly and I'm guessing by the neighbors gift a family member that was ill earlier in the winter has passed. I'm sorry for your loss. I admire your spirit and energy. Time heals all wounds. Here's to a better 2010!!!  
**jamiahsh**I want the Blue Boob story... does it involve our blue friends who are three apples high?  
**jamiahsh**WOW... How could I forget the mashed potatoes. Mom boiled them, mashed them, then THOUGHT she had them on low to keep warm. However, they came out a little too warm. Charcoal potatoes, anyone?! One of us enjoyed them... everyone else sampled them. Wonder why we didn't notice the smell.

# Merry Christmas!

I haven’t really felt up to blogging lately (one of those major life change things – NOT one of the good ones and NOT something I’m going to discuss on a blog right now), but I couldn’t let the holidays go by without sending good wishes to everyone (anyone?) who still reads my on-hiatus blog.Â  Bear with me, I’ll probably be back soon.Â  Here’s to hoping 2010 is better than 2009!

Have a very merry Christmas and a Wonderful New Year!  
*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:14*

### Comments

**derek**I hope you had a great Christmas! Still don't know about this week, but I am going to give a tentative no, if only that money is a little tight right now (and that I may be needed at work).  
**Carol**Have a great Christmas. You all deserve one. Here's a virtual toast to you for your great friendship. I hope we can reciprocate as fully. See you soon!  
**justj**My hope is that you have a very Merry Christmas. If you need anything, I'm just a phone call/email away.  
**jamiahsh**Hope you have the Merriest of Christmases and a Better Year in 2010. Ir's kinda lonely here at tangents without you. Hang in there ;)

# The Fun Kind Of Chaos

Last night’s youth group was…Â  interesting, to say the least.Â  It was the last session before a 2-week holiday break, and the kids were as hyper as they could be!Â  We had decided to throw the kids in my husband’s group and my group a pizza party, but last week, my husband had another teacher’s group as well, so two 6th grade boys groups and one 7th grade girls group were invited.Â  The kids ran in, ate pizza and drank pop (got all sugared up), and kept running around the room.Â  Finally, we got them to sit down for a kid-friendly version of the party game Mafia (I’ve linked toÂ  it enough, if you want more info, you’ll have to do some searching thru my blogs or just google it).Â  Well, that presented a problem we hadn’t foreseen: once the players were eliminated from the game, what were they supposed to do with themselves?Â  When adults play the game, players get “killed” in the game and then are trusted to sit there quietly, observe and gather strategy for future games.Â  Not the case with a bunch of preteens.Â  The boys were trying extra hard to impress the girls, and they were falling all over each other like a bunch of buffoons.Â  One kid even decided to record the Mafia action with his cell phone while he was closing his eyes – cheating, but you’ve got to recognize his resourcefulness.Â  The girls weren’t running around, but they were busy texting with their cell phones and shooting the immature boys dirty looks.Â  It wasn’t quite what we had in mind, but it was fun nonetheless and a great way to end our first session as youth group leaders!

### Comments

**derek**Trying to impress the 7th grade girls! The 6th grade boys don't realize they are just "little kids" to the girls, some of whom are probably looking at older boys let alone ones their own age. Glad you had fun at it. :)  
**jamiahsh**Hmm... quietly sitting while the game continues? Interesting...

# Bohemian Rhapsody By The Muppets

Came across this funny rendition of the Queen song Bohemian Rhapsody the other day.Â  I don’t know about you, but the Muppets always make me smile!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**justj**I saw this a few weeks ago and I'm now able to hear this song on the radio without thinking of pink tights. I was so tired of this song after Scapin.  
**jamiahsh**WOW! The best version of the song I've ever heard. Poor Fozzie always being heckled by Statler and Waldorf.

# A New Favorite

I am a fan of many of the wordpress blogs, especially those written by my wonderful friends here on tangents.org.Â  But recently, I came across a previously undiscovered (to me)Â  blog that is right up my alley, and I was surprised to find out that it’s a wordpress blog: [designingzoos.com](http://designingzoos.com/) – does that sound like my cup of tea or what?!?

This woman ~~blogs~~ blogged (she hasn’t written since July – disappointing!) about her job, which is far from boring – she designs zoos, aquariums, theme parks, etc. for a living!Â  My dream job calling?Â  Well, not really, I’m working my dream job taking care of my 4 wonderful kids.Â  And besides, zoo designers sometimes have to compromise their grand zoo visions, and they go to a lot of meetings.Â  But it’s certainly fun for me to read about zoo design!Â  I found this site while researching the history ofÂ  [BrookfieldÂ  Zoo](http://www.czs.org/czs/Brookfield/Zoo-Home.aspx" \t "_blank) near Chicago, a place I was quite familiar with as a kid.Â  I ended up finding this, which is a re-design [master plan map](http://zoodesign.files.wordpress.com/2008/07/75236-revised-master-plan-1-to-100-copy.jpg" \t "_blank) of the zoo.Â  If you are at all familiar with Brookfield Zoo, you might find it interesting, along with this [designingzoos.com blog post](http://designingzoos.com/2008/07/29/brookfield-zoo-the-master-plan/) about the proposed map.Â  Many other zoos have re-design master plans, but unfortunately, these plans are forced to be nothing but pipe dreams while this economy has forced zoo visits to be much lower on the priority list for many families.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**yep... right up your alley! I'll look at it in the future.

# It's STILL Scary!

When I was growing up, my parents pretty much operated as a pair, and my dad worked outside the home.Â  Therefore, I only remember two times when he was left in charge – the time I went missing and the time I watched the movie Poltergiest.

Both incidents occurred when I was 4 or 5.Â  My dad was having a meeting with someone I didn’t know (think it was an insurance guy), so I didn’t want to come in the house from playing and walk past the scary insurance guy because I was a really shy kid.Â  So I waited for him to leave, and I waited, and I got sleepy, and next thing I know I’m waking up in our little red wagon in the dark garage and my sister is there saying, “I found her!”Â  My parents had the neighbors all out canvassing the neighborhood calling my name, and so my babysitter came over afterward and I remember showing her how I had just learned to tie my shoes.Â  My parents probably don’t remember the incident in quite the same light…

As for the other time, somehow my sister and I were allowed to watch the classic 80’s horror movie [Poltergeist](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0084516/" \t "_blank) even though we were both under the age of 10.Â  If you haven’t seen the movie, then you wouldn’t know about the terrifying clown scene that takes place in a kid’s bedroom.Â  My favorite stuffed toy at that time just happened to be a Ronald McDonald doll, which was no longer the case after I saw that movie.Â  The Ronald McDonald doll went into the basement, and a few years later, I decided I was over it and went to look for my old friend.Â  But he was gone, and when I asked my mom about it, she said that she had put him out for [Amvets](http://www.amvets.org/" \t "_blank) since I had decided I was done with him.Â  But I had trouble explaining that I wasn’t done with him; he was just on probation!Â  So I felt badly, but it was probably nothing compared to how my dad felt when mom found out we watched Poltergeist…

So anyway, I was thinking about my Ronald McDonald doll after seeing Mr. McDonald in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade, so I decided to look it up on the internet.Â  If you ask me, you can’t reallyÂ  blame a kid for being scared and banishing this thing to the basement:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/12/delete-mcdonald-doll.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**HEHE!!!! Welll... I tried.  
**taylhis**And fyi - Poltergeist is not still scary as an adult ;)  
**jamiahsh**I know I have a few stories involving the parents which they would see in a different light than I. Poltergeist.... oooohhhhh  
**Phyllis Beyer**You're right...your parents don't remember it in quite the same light. Now that you have children, you can imagine what horror we went thru. Cute blog....I'm wondering if I should print it and show it to Dad or not.

# Why Did The Chicken Cross The Road?

…to get to the city council meeting, of course!Â  Did you happen to catch this story on the AP news wire a few weeks ago?Â  While Durango, Colorado’s city council was discussing their recent 3-2 vote which made it easier to keep backyard chickens, a person in a chicken costume ran into the meeting, circled and flapped, and then sat in the gallery.

Several minutes later, the unidentified chicken exited – after laying an egg on the floor.

No need to worry about disrupting business, however, the council found it humorous!

“I thought it was hilarious,” councilwoman Christina Thompson told The Durango Herald. “I was laughing so hard my eyes hurt. There are just so many other things for us to be serious about, it’s good to take a break once in a while.”

I, like everyone else, I’m sure, have questions.Â  Who was the anonymous chicken?Â  Was it a prank?Â  Were they there to show their support for the hen ordinance, or were they against it?Â  Was the egg hen-sized or was it larger, perhaps large enough to contain a message for the council?Â  What was inside that egg?!?

### Comments

**derek**Hilarious! . .  
**jamiahsh**I heard about the ordinance but must have missed "the rest of the story." thanks for the laugh.

# Budgeted Birthday Blast

I think I blogged about my daughter’s upcoming 10th birthday party a few weeks ago, looking for activity ideas.Â  There was no need to worry, because we had the party last weekend, and everyone had a blast!

We ended up extending the party to make it last 3 hours instead of 2, and two of the girls were even able to spend the night.Â  It was actually really easy to entertain 8 nine and ten-year-old girls, as well as the birthday girl’s two little sisters, ages 3 and 5.Â  Seventeen-month-old little brother was a nuisance, but the poor little guy was really very outnumbered by all those girls!

As we waited for the girls to arrive, they played a video game on the tv where there are floating balloons they get to break using their bodies instead of controllers.Â  Next, Dad led the girls in about 5 rounds of the [party game Mafia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mafia_%28party_game%29) – they loved it!Â  Then, we made English muffin pizzas – I set out the English muffins, pizza sauce, cheese, pepperoni, and mushrooms, and the girls made their own pizzas and then I put them in the oven for 5 or 10 minutes.Â  The entire activity cost about $6, and the kids loved it!Â  Then we had cake, but I had realized ahead of time that with 4 kids, we spend about $80 on birthday cake per year!Â  Wow, does that add up!Â  So I had a talk with my oldest, and she really had no problem with me getting mini cupcakes instead of a personalized birthday cake and numbered candles.Â  This decision saved us about $15!Â  I got two 2 liters of pop, and a few cheap bags of snacks for the sleepover, and the entire party cost us under $20!Â  Most importantly, my daughter and her friends had an awesome time and made some great memories!Â  Happy birthday Taylor!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/12/Taylors-10th-birthday-party-12-5-09-004.jpg)*(No, the party wasn’t so boring everyone fell asleep!Â  This what a group of kids playing the party card game Mafia look like!)*

### Comments

**derek**Ah, the things a bachelor such as I misses out on. Only occasionally (such as my Halloween sub day) do I get to do something similar in a classroom.  
**justj**Sounds like you had some good ideas and a good time for all.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Way to go Mom.....great ideas.  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like a great time! I like the idea of cupcakes... out of the ordinary. Happy Birthday Taylor!!!!!

# My Stage Debut, Sort of...

Well, ok, so last Sunday wasn’t really my stage *debut*; I acted in about 4 stage plays when I was a kid, and three quarters of those roles were in The Wizard of OzÂ  

But somewhere along the line, I developed a severe stage fright, and I haven’t come close to the front of a stage since I auditioned (and wasn’t chosen) for the part of Thor in The Nerd in 1990.Â  I’ve worked in many various capacities behind the scenes and on the members’ boards for a few of our local community theater groups in recent years, and if ever someone was brave enough to inquire, I would always reject and adamantly refuse the offers of roles to be portrayed onstage in front of an audience – just way too nervous, and I’ve actually had many a nightmare about having toÂ  get onstage!

But a few weeks ago, my husband and I became involved in our church’s semi-annual Kidstuff, which is a small collection of skits and musical numbers aimed at instilling a virtue in its audience, this time being ‘compassion’.Â  So my husband was rehearsing for Kidstuff, and I was tagging along to rehearsals as I usually do when he is in a play.Â  I was asked by the director (who is also the school nurse in my two oldest daughters’ school district) if I would “just stand there and hand out prizes” during one of the skits.Â  Always being willing to help providing it doesn’t get in the way of my family life, I obliged, and next thing I know I am a character complete with a name, Fran Hootenhiener!Â  So I guess you could say it was my stage debut as an adult!Â  The director was right though, I really just had to stand there during one of the skits and hand out cookies, but I even had an introduction by the extremely handsome game show host (my real-life husband) where I had to smile and even give a little wave to the audience while I showed off my cookie prizes.Â  I was incredibly nervous beforehand, but I got through it without fainting or doing anything really embarrassing like throwing the cookies at someone or dropping my tray.Â  I think it helped that 90% of the audience was kids and also that our little show had a more divine purpose than simple entertainment.Â  It was quite a different experience to work with a cast and crew who were coming together to teach kids a virtue versus a community theater production where the goal is to entertain paying adults.Â  Not that one is better; it’s just a matter of personal preference, I think, and it helped me to be less nervous.

And I think this experience helped me for what was to come last night…Â  because of the weather, the two other small group leaders for the 7th grade girls at youth group were unable to make it, so I was in charge of ALL the 7th grade girls last night!Â  It went better than I thought, even though I really don’t like to be the one in charge of a group.Â  But, such is life, and I’m just happy I didn’t know about it until we arrived last night otherwise I would have been a nervous wreck all day.Â  And the youth pastor’s face when he told me IÂ  was the only teacher who could make it was just priceless, haha!

I’m not saying I will ever get on stage again, but for this one time, I actually had some fun!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Well... it's a start, anyway ;) Really sorry I could not make it to the performance. Taylhis in charge of a gaggle of 7th grade girls?! I'm sure it was interesting.

# Feeling Short And Old

I’ve been experiencing some sort of awful fatigue lately, so I begrudgingly went to the doctor to get it checked out.Â  My husband had noticed me stop breathing in my sleep last week, so we suspect sleep apnea, but I have to undergo a sleep study to find out for sure.Â  Good luck scheduling THAT during this Christmas season!

But the doctor also had a few interesting tidbits of advice, even though I felt extremely silly at the office since I actually saw my kids’ pediatrician – he is also the resident sleep specialist.Â  It didn’t help any when I got measured by a Sponge Bob ruler and found out that I must be shrinking – I’ve always considered myself to be on the tall side, but this time, I didn’t measure up – according to Sponge Bob, anyway.Â  So not only am I shrinking, but somewhere along the line I’ve become a year-round allergy sufferer who also has mild asthma.Â  And I just thought I was out of shape…

And to add insult to injury, I also got two new prescription medicines to add to my cabinet –Â  just like any other senior citizen would get at a doctor’s visit ðŸ˜‰

### Comments

**Chris**Felling short and old but looking young and beautiful!  
**derek**With your oldest just (almost) ten? Nah, you're fine. I'd hate to know where I stand if you're old. Now where did I put that medicine again? Just kidding. ;)  
**justj**You're only old when you forget what medicine you were supposed to take to improve your memory, so you could remember to take your medicine.  
**jamiahsh**Wonder how yoou would "Measure Up" on Mary Poppins' measuring tape? ;)  
**taylhis**I remember the inhaler, but not the diagnosis. So it wasn't caused by years of poor decision making (smoking), hehe! Seriously though, I'm sure that didn't help any, glad I finally quit for good!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Do you remember when you were younger and you were diagnosed with mild asthma...had an inhaler for use at school.

# I'm Still Here, Somewhere...

Just a quick note because I’ve been too busy, and I miss blogging!Â  I had started two posts about last weekend, but haven’t had the time to finish either one – hopefully I will soon!Â  It’s been really difficult to blog with a 17-month-old who only wants to climb on me and bang on my keyboard when I actually do have the time to sit down!Â  So then my computer will reset, and that’s the end of that…

More later – I’m hoping!Â  STAY WARM!!!

### Comments

**taylhis**Thanks for the suggestion, but there is WAY too much noise in the house for that. And I actually enjoy typing, but I have to wait to do it just before a meeting or something when the kids are already at the babysitters. Finding the time to mess with new software would just frustrate the heck out of me, I'm afraid.  
**justj**I'm not sure how screaming would be picked up. I may have to try it. My biggest problem with the voice recognition was having to be in a word processor for it to work. It would work to go from page to page on the web, but it didn't seem to know how to reply on web content.  
**derek**Put the keyboard away and try dictating your blogs as justj tried once? Or would he then just scream into the microphone?  
**jamiahsh**That could be an interesting post, one co-authored by a 17-month-old ;)

# Favorite Christmas Movies

The ‘What’s Your Favorite Christmas Movies / Tv Specials’ poll has been done before, but IÂ  thought I would obtain my own consensus.Â  After all, opinions change from year to year, and I’m also interested to see what people like.Â  FeelÂ  free to choose more than one answer and also to add something I may have forgotten.

**What are your favorite Christmas movies / tv shows?**

* Miracle on 34th St
* It's a Wonderful Life
* Christmas Carol (share version in the comments section)
* A Christmas Story
* How the Grinch Stole Christmas
* Charlie Brown Christmas
* Elf
* While You Were Sleeping
* Ernest Saves Christmas
* Jingle All the Way
* It's a Very Merry Muppet Christmas
* Frosty the Snowman
* Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
* Scrooged
* Home Alone
* Christmas Vacation
* The Santa Clause
* This list was getting too long and I left out a favorite! Add it in the comments section below.

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

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### Comments

**jamiahsh**Watched Paul Blart today. I loved it! Hilarious and Great 80s tunes!  
**taylhis**I need to give it another whirl as well after falling asleep all 3 times I tried to see it! I think it says more about me than the movie though; I don't think it was boring; I was just tired!  
**jamiahsh**I must look into that. It keeps going under or above my radar.  
**admin**Yes, Paul Blart is a holiday movie. I really enjoy it!  
**jamiahsh**That's one of my mom's favorites, too.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Bells of St. Mary's with Bing Crosby  
**jamiahsh**Paul Blart is a holiday movie? The first Santa Clause was good... kinda went South after that.  
**Chris**Christmas Vacation Elf Miracle on 34th Street Scrooged George C Scott Christmas Carol **Paul Blart - Mall Cop** (Yes, I REALLY like this movie!) The Santa Clause (J/K Never seen it)  
**jamiahsh**Christmas Carol ( I agree just j.. the '51 version is very good), Christmas Story, Christmas Vacation, I will say that the original, animated Grinch ranks very high. The good doctor has yet to be translated well in live-action.  
**justj**If I knew what it was, maybe. If it was "A Christmas Story", yes.  
**taylhis**I added a vote for justj for Christmas Carol, and another vote for derek for the "misc" answer at the end. Justj - was I supposed to subtract a mistaken vote for something else as well? Thanks everyone for your input!  
**derek**I'll just take a pass like everybody else on that SW holiday special, thank you very much jamiahsh. :D  
**derek**I really don't have a favorite, but I picked five movies from your list I enjoyed more than the others. Generally comedies I think. The recent [Nativity Story](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0762121/) is one of those missing- I should have checked that last box too, whoops.  
**justj**Oops, I think I hit the wrong movie.... I thought I hit A Christmas Carol, but apparently not. Christmas Carol movie favorites. Alastair Sim as Scrooge in the 1951 version is one of my favorites. A Muppet Christmas Carol is just a lot of fun for a Muppet and Christmas Carol fan. Patrick Stewart made a wonderful Scrooge. And of course George C. Scott and Albert Finney. Of course I can't forget Scrooge played by Scrooge McDuck in Mickey's Christmas Carol.  
**taylhis**You are supposed to be allowed to choose more than one - mistake on my part. I actually double-checked the poll, but I guess I should have triple checked. Try voting for your other faves now...  
**jamiahsh**Since I was only allowed one, I had to pick the one I remember watching the most years.  
**jamiahsh**I remember the John Denver (not the John and Denver) and Muppets special from years ago. I love the old b/w Christmas Carol from the 30s or 40s not sure which but the Muppets Carol is fun. White Christmas with Bing Crosby is a tradition. How about the Star Wars special ;)

# Miracle Squared

Our weekend began with the likes of a Christmas play to which we took our two oldest daughters.Â  The play was Miracle on 34th Street, and we were a little up in the air about bringing our 5-year-old because we want to milk the Santa thing as long as possible – we didn’t want to put ideas in her head about ‘not believing’.Â  But when it came time to go, we felt too badly to leave her behind, so we had a nice half-family outing without the little ones who wouldn’t have been able to sit through the entire show.

At the play, I was really having a great time.Â  We ran into more than a few friends, and the seasonal cheer of the almost sold-out audience emitted a wonderful family feel.Â  The first act of the show was thoroughly enjoyable; everything was so cozy and Christmas-y, and I couldn’t wait to see how Kringle finally proved himself to be authentic (I haven’t seen either version of the movie).Â  Unfortunately, some unnecessary drama taking place at intermission almost ruined the entire show for me.Â  I was so upset that I could barely pay attention to the second act.Â  But as I sat and seethed – and I don’t think I’ve ever been so angry while literally just stuck sitting in the middle of a crowd with no where to go and no way to vent – I began to come to terms with the situation and to actually feel sorry for the person who’d completely overblown a simple misunderstanding and hurt my feelings with her unbecoming actions.Â  How incredibly sad that her negative attitude cast a cloud over what must have been such hard work by so many to pull off a show of this magnitude.Â  During the second act, I was thinking about what I was going to say in my blog to vent about it, but now that a few hours have passed, I really don’t need to share all of the ugly details.Â  As if by miracle, I am completely at peace with the situation – I’m usually not the type to just get over something without hashing it out with the person.Â  The bottom line is, I truly believe I handled the situation the best way I knew how, and I’m going to pray that the other person can find peace as well.

So all that’s left that needs to be said is, congratulations to those of you who were involved in Miracle on 34th Street; everyone that I know who was involved and who reads this blog did a really super job!Â  Keep up the great work, and best wishes for the success of the rest of the run of your show!

### Comments

**taylhis**It wasn't really in the audience; it involved a staff member of the show at intermission. I'll tell you the story sometime...  
**Phyllis Beyer**So now I'm curious....what happened in the audience?  
**derek**Great comment, C! And L, I still forgot to ask about those teen Christian sites you asked about- sorry.  
**justj**Those of us on stage missed the drama in the audience, thank goodness.  
**jamiahsh**Beautifuully put, C. The Miracle of the piece in any form is that it has great power to just make you feel good and make us all believe.  
**Chris**Pray for those who persecute you. :-) Matthew 5:43-48 You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

# That's IT!

I’ve **had** it with my sleep problems!Â  I don’t usually have trouble falling asleep, but that’s probably because I don’t even start trying until midnight or later.Â  Sometimes I do have trouble falling asleep, and even if I can fall asleep easily, I usually do not stay asleep all night.Â  Not that I remember any of the several or many times I wake up each night; I’m usually in a stupor where I’ll say things that don’t make sense or say not-so-nice things to the dog or anyone else who happens to be in my way.Â  The main problem is that I wake up in the morning feeling terribly under-rested, never ready to start the day, and the problem has been getting steadily worse in recent weeks.Â  I rarely get headaches, but because of the stress of my horrible week compounded by the not sleeping, my head has been throbbing all week (the extremely loud live band at youth group did NOT help!).Â  I’ve tried going to bed earlier, I’ve tried limiting my food and drink intake at night, I’ve tried taking naps when time allows (which is rare), and I’ve tried taking melatonin (an herb found naturally in the body that helps promote sleep), but nothing is helping.Â  I just can’t take it anymore; it’s impossible to make my long busy days of caring for 4 small children enjoyable when I feel so tired all the time.Â  My husband stayed awake for a little bit and listened to me sleep last night, and he said that there were times when I stopped breathing, which is a symptom of sleep apnea.Â  So, as much as I hate toÂ  do it and don’t even really have the time for it, I’ve made an appointment with the local sleep specialist who just happens to be our childrens’ pediatrician.Â  We’ll see what he says next week, but chances are that I’ll get sent over to the sleep center for a sleep study – YUCK.Â  Just what I want to be: a lab rat; the subject of a study who has to find a way to fall asleep in a room with a bunch of people watching and while hooked up to all kinds of machines.Â  This is just about one of the last things I want to do, but it shows how incredibly desperate I am to finally get a good night’s rest.Â  If they can actually help me, feeling well-rested is going to be an amazing yet totally foreign feeling!Â  If it doesn’t help me, I’m back where IÂ  started but with one less option AND having missed out on a fun night with my family 

### Comments

**Samuel Johnson**sleep apnea can lead to cardiovascular problems in the long run:.;  
**derek**I hope it works out for you. I know about those periods of little sleep by experience unfortunately.  
**jamiahsh**Hope you find away to increase your rest soon! Maybe it was the stress of the week creeping up on you, but here's hopin' ;)  
**justj**Good luck with that. As one who also knows the trials and tribulations of sleep problems, I commiserate with you. But hey, after 30+ years it gets easier not to sleep. I'm surviving on 4 to 5 hours per night.

# New Baby!

Made you look!Â  Did you think I was going to say we were awaiting the arrival of our 5th child?

No such luck – probably wouldn’t declare it for the first time on a blog anyway.Â  I just wanted to share my son’s first professional haircut that made everyone joke about him being a different baby – although “toddler” is a much more appropriate word here than “baby” – my son is all over the place, and the haircut made him look SO MUCH older!Â  He’s really cute with the haircut, but why do they grow up so fast!?!Â  These pictures were taken only 4 days apart.

BEFORE:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/12/Santa-Arrival-parade-11-27-09-019.jpg)

AFTER:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/12/Christophers-new-haircut-12-2-09.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**How adorable! That's my grandson!!!!  
**derek**It was getting just a bit long, wasn't it? Well Christopher, better get used to the haircuts. At least mom didn't do it herself with a [flowbee](http://www.flowbee.com/) :D  
**taylhis**He was pretty good! Quiet and still at first, but then he got overwhelmed and the hair was probably itchy and tickly so he started to crab and try to climb away. Can't blame the little guy though, he had so much hair to get rid of!  
**jamiahsh**And how did the Beeb do during his first H.C.?  
**jamiahsh**OMG... Who IS That? Unbelievably adorable :D  
**justj**Too cute... They do grow up don't they.

# Bad Things Come In Threes

Ok, so no one in the family has bad health (at least not yet, we’ll see what happens in a few weeks after the stress from the holidays and everything I’m about to unload takes its toll) and for that I am very grateful, but we have been hit by some bad luck in the past few days.

First was worst – my husband’s hard drive went *kaput*.Â  No warning; he just went to work Monday and found that virtually everything he had worked upon for the past 5 years or so is **gone**.Â  Software he had written, info for clients that are now going to be extremely unhappy – **everything**.Â  There are few options; everything he read on the internet about this problem raises little hope.Â  He can send the hard drive away to a company with special equiptment, but it’s doubtful they can fix it, plus the price tag would be $1500-2000.Â  Basically there is no hope for the hard drive, and it’s essentially as if he was laid off from his job less than a month before Christmas.

As if that wasn’t enough, we noticed the other day that we no longer have a metal flap guarding our van’s gas tank.Â  We have no idea what happened to it, but now that it’s missing, we are going through gas about twice as fast as we should be.Â  Of course the car is no longer under warranty, so it will cost who-knows-how-much to fix it.Â  The glove box broke months ago, and the tires are getting pretty bald (all 4 of course).Â  We were going to get everything taken care of at the same time, but with no income now, that won’t be happening.

And for #3 – our mortgage company decided to buy us extra disaster insurance for our house.Â  Except it’s not their treat – we have to pay for it.Â  What happened is that we switched insurance companies about a month ago, trying to save money.Â  Apparently there was some sort of mix-up, and everything was not transferred smoothly, leaving us lacking in the disaster area of the insurance.Â  So the mortgage company got us some of their own choosing, added $300 to our monthly bill, and sent us a letter about it after it was too late to avoid paying this monthly fee.Â  I hate insurance companies!!!

Don’t mean to complain, like I said earlier, at least no one is ill and we do still have our health –Â  that is the most important thing.Â  And if it’s really true that bad things happen in threes, then we should be done with the bad news for at least a little while, right?

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**When our computer crashed, the tech we had was able to recover everything and it only cost us about $200. Of course, I am sure you had a lot more on it. I sure hope your luck changes soon.  
**derek**Ouch. C, C- no backup? Yes, it looks like you will have to have the data recovered professionally which is expensive- the more critical something is, the more they gouge you and recovering business data is among the most critical. Was going through gas twice as fast a one time thing? That would definitely verify the siphoning. I pray you get all of this worked out soon!  
**justj**Unless you have rust around the gas fill area, the only way those things usually break is by them being forced in some fashion. That usually means someone siphoned some gas or at least tried.  
**taylhis**I was thinking of siphoning being a possibility. It could have happened around here, though I tend to want to blame the urban areas we visit like Chicago and Toledo.  
**justj**So sorry to hear about all of that. Metal thing for the gas tank.... Hmmm sounds like some one was siphoning off your gas. Those things tend to break off when you remove siphon hoses. It is probably floating in your tank now. Could it be time for a locking gas cap?  
**jamiahsh**You would think so... YIKES!

# Classy.

**Family brawl erupts at children’s pizza place***Deborah Donovan | Daily Herald Staff  
Contact writer*

CHICAGO:  
Arlington Heights police are investigating a “family ordeal that got out of hand” Sunday night at the Chuck E. Cheese restaurant, 955 W. Dundee Road.

According to Sgt. Tom Boggs, a family was apparently celebrating the birthday of a young man in his early teens when other members of the family showed up, and an argument began.

“There was a pushing match and things were thrown,” said Boggs.

One person was taken to Northwest Community Hospital with a cut below an eye and another person went to a clinic for a cut on a hand.

“We tried to talk to everybody there last night,” Boggs said. “It’s hard to say at this point whether there will be charges.”

Boggs said he believes some of the participants had been drinking. He is not sure how many people were involved, but officers talked with five or six Sunday night.

While the altercation created a mess in the restaurant, no physical damage was done there, the sergeant said.

Boggs said the people involved were from the Northwest suburbs.

The restaurant has pizza, arcade games, shows and other things that appeal to young children.Â  A woman who answered the phone Monday afternoon declined to comment on the record.

### Comments

**derek**I read about this. I am just curious why a teenager would want to celebrate a birthday at CEC anyway? At least this isn't as bad as other recent news, such as a dad killing his entire family in Addison.  
**taylhis**Probably a good opinion to have because of the apparent clientele they attract and the employees they hire. I left the part out of the blog about an acquaintance who was a former employee of Chuck E. Cheese and decided to go back and rob it after he was fired. Not the sharpest tool in the shed.  
**justj**I knew there was a reason I never liked Chuck E. Cheese.  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like a funeral I was at years ago... minus the Chuck E. Cheese :D

# Tool Man

My almost 17-month-old son has started using “tools”.Â  When we put up the Christmas decorations, he started pulling chairs away from the table, pushing them over to the bookcase to try to climb and get at the nativity.Â  Yesterday, he took down a wall hanging and began to use the hanger rod as a spoon for his mashed potatoes.Â  When I told my dad about this mischief, he said that this behavior seems pretty smart.Â  Yeah, I replied, smart like a chimpanzee!Â  I really don’t remember the girls doing so much climbing, tool-using, or just general sabotage!

And another thing about little boys – the parental chasing.Â  I always see moms chasing their little boys; running after them around the store, the zoo, wherever – and nine times out of ten, the kid being chased by the parent is a boy.Â  I had a little boy almost a year and a half ago, and I’ve been wondering when my turn would come.Â  Yesterday I got my answer.Â  While I was getting my little boy dressed, he said an emphatic “NO!”, then turned around and ran from me.Â  He dove under the dining room table, where I had to drag him out, kicking and screaming.Â  So yeah, the chasing of little boys by their parents begins shortly after they learn to walk.

Ah, the toddler days again – feels like it’s been awhile, probably because the toddler in our family before our son was Disney, who is an almost perfectly behaved child.Â  We often joke that Disney is [D.A.R.Y.L.](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088979/) – remember that movie from the 80’s about a boy who is actually a robot?Â  And she is a quick learner!Â  We’ve been doing “sight words” with our Kindergartener Sammie, which are flash cards with words on them, like “orange”, “the”, “purple”, “my”, “I”, etc.Â  Disney, who just turned 3, has been picking up the sight words as we practice with Sammie!Â  She knows all the ones I listed above and is also starting to work on letter recognition – 3 years old is pretty early to start reading!Â  I just feel badly for Sammie, who has her own gifts but is also very competitive by nature – it might be difficult for her to see her little sister learning certain things faster than herself.

But the point is, Disney’s toddler stage was barely noticable, which is probably why her little brother seems like more than a handful – and I hate to tell myself this, but I think this is just the beginning!!

### Comments

**derek**I thought it was Data Analyzing Robot, Youth Lifeform? It was one of my childhood favorites as well. Flight of the Navigator was another one. As for the main point of the post, my nephew Alex was quite a handful too, but I don't think you have to worry about Christopher being like Alex as his father (whom he takes after) is nothing like Christopher's daddy.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Since I have been fortunate to live very close to the first boy in my family, Austin, I have been blown away by the difference between boys and girls. I have said often that I now know why God gave me 2 girls.....I could have never survived 2 boys. Good luck, Kim. However, Lisa, I think you may have your work cut out for you during the teenage years of 3 girls. I, myself, will enjoy all 6 grandchildren and when I'm tired, I'll go home.  
**justj**I know nothing of little boys, but I do remember having to chase after all of my girls at one point or another. I seem to remember all my girls going through that. As far as the movie, I thought at time my daughters were robots at times. They were too smart at times. Good luck with yours. You are right it is just the beginning. You have years ahead of you.  
**jamiahsh**DATA ANALYSIS RESEARCH YOUTH LIFEFORM. I remember the movie very well. Disney is a very well mannered little girl and the third of four... hmm, intriguing. I picked up things quickly, too and was reading by age 4. Dunno, if that is common in thirds or not. But I do recall (or at least being told of) getting into things causing havoc, too

# Thanksgiving Favorites

I forgot to poll our Thanksgiving guests, but I was wondering about everyone’s favorite Thanksgiving dish.Â  Judging by what the kids had for breakfast this morning, I would say my kids’ favorite Thanksgiving dishes are as follows:

Taylor, age 9 – sweet potatoes (we put marshmallow creme in ours)

Sammie, age 5 – mashed potatoes and gravy

Disney, age 3 – oatmeal (ok, so oatmeal wasn’t at the Thanksgiving dinner, but Disney didn’t really eat Thanksgiving dinner, so I don’t think she has a favorite dish.Â  She LOVES oatmeal though!)

Christopher, age 16 mos. – turkey

And for lunch, Mom and Dad had their first delicious leftover sandwiches.Â  They were so good we think we’ll have the same for dinner.Â  We got a smoked turkey this year, and it was delicious!Â  It was great to not have to mess with cooking a turkey with great company and all these little ones underfoot.Â  There are so many ways to make a leftover sandwich; the best way is of course with creamed onions.Â  We didn’t have any creamed onions leftover this year, but my husband’s yummy mashed potatoes make a really good leftover sandwich condiment.Â  And not having leftover creamed onions is a good thing – I’m glad people enjoyed them!Â  Creamed onions are my favorite Thanksgiving dish AND my husband’s!Â  So what’s yours?Â  Feel free to add anything in the comments section I may have forgotten!

**What is your favorite Thanksgiving dish?**

* turkey
* stuffing
* mashed potatoes with gravy
* mashed potatoes with butter
* green bean casserole
* cranberry sauce
* sweet potatoes
* rolls
* corn
* creamed onions
* pumpkin pie
* other dessert
* other - add below in the comments section

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

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### Comments

**jamiahsh**well... any dessert (oops... my bad) will do. I usuually endulge in more than the traditional so "dessert" covers them all.  
**derek**BBQ ribs. What? That's what I had yesterday. :D Okay, with dessert included, the real vote is a no-brainer.  
**taylhis**And I forgot to put pumpkin pie on there?!? Double-duh!!  
**taylhis**And I put your vote for dessert, Jamiahsh - hope that's right?  
**justj**Pumpkin Pie or Pecan Pie. Usually only get those at the holidays. My favorite Thanksgiving meal was all the times we had something other than the usual turkey dinner. Chinese was good.  
**taylhis**oops - I KNEW I was forgetting something! Adding it now... I was too full for dessert yesterday, so I forgot to put it in my poll - OOPS! ;)  
**jamiahsh**thanks again. Good thing the first celebration kicked off at noon. And the final one ended @ 10. WHEW!  
**jamiahsh**you forgot... desert! Everything was delicious... you can never get too much Thanksgiving. Smoked turkey... never before have we don ethat. Yummy!

# Happy Thanksgiving!!

I am thankful every day for all that I have, but today is an excuse toÂ  feast in celebration of our thankfulness.Â  Here’s to hoping you have a safe and happy holiday!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-turkey.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Thank you all for being an excellent part of my holiday! I am truly thankful everyday for the lot of you!  
**derek**I hope your day was a good one. :)  
**Phyllis Beyer**I am thankful for my 4 wonderful children and 6 fantastic grandchildren. I am so very blessed. I still have my parents to enjoy and I work at a job I love. What more could I ask for?

# Parenting Pickle

My almost 10-year-old daughter has a friend I’ll call Kathy.Â  Kathy has been over to our house to play with my daughter for years, and we’ve never really had much of a problem.Â  We’ve noticed lately that Kathy isn’t as well behaved as our daughter’s other friends, and she also is not as tolerant of my daughter’s younger siblings.Â  Yesterday, Kathy spent about 6 hours with our family, and it was a fun yet tiring day.Â  It was one of the few times we’ve had an extra kid around and I’ve noticed extra chaos and strife; usually the extra kid(s) blend right in and sometimes even help out with the little ones.Â  We took Kathy to the mall which is about 20 miles away, and we ate a Mexican buffet, bought the kids candy at the $ store, and took the kids to the pet store.

Kathy’s mother was supposed to come at 6, and since the kids had a late lunch, we were waiting to feed our kids until Kathy was picked up.Â  Kathy’s mother was late, and the kids got hungry, so we tried to stretch our planned dinner for 4 kids into one for 5.Â  It didn’t really work, there was some squabbling about food, and Kathy’s mother finally showed up around 6:25.Â  On her way out, I called to Kathy who has asthma, “Do you have everything?Â  Do you have your inhaler?”Â  To which she responded, “I still haven’t found my inhaler.”Â  (like she had told me she was missing it, but she hadn’t!)Â  I unlocked the car for her to look in there, and I went up to her mother’s car and explained that this is the first I had heard about the missing inhaler.Â  Her mother was extremely rude to me.Â  We didn’t find the inhaler, and they left, and I vented to my husband because I don’t like when people are upset with me!Â  He was sure that I had misunderstood; that Kathy’s mom was upset with Kathy for losing her inhaler.Â  After all, if her mother had told me at any time that Kathy has a tendency to lose her inhaler, she could have asked me to keep a special eye on it, and I would have!Â  But not one word was said – I only know about the inhaler because I’ve seenÂ  her carry it; it was never explained to me.

So then today, our cell phone had some missed calls, and they were Kathy’s mom.Â  When my husband called her back, he was sure she had called because they had found the inhaler.Â  No such luck.Â  The frantic phone calls were Kathy’s mom asking if we had found it yet and informing us (quite rudely) that if we did not find it, we would owe her $47 for a new one.Â  So my husband, now knowing that I had NOT overreacted to the rudeness last night, calls the mexican restaurant, and sure enough, they have it.Â  He called Kathy’s mom, who basically told us we would have to drive back out the twenty miles each way to get it.Â  But it’s Thanksgiving week, we have 4 kids, and my husband works during the day.Â  So she hung up on my husband, and now I’m upset and writing a blog post about it.Â  Here’s the pickle:

Kathy is the real victim here.Â  Her mother is mad at her and her friends and their family, and her mother’s erratic behavior is going to isolate her daughter.Â  As it is, Kathy calls our house about 20 times every weekend and is pushy about being invited over – it’s hard not to feel like our house might be the only place to where she gets invited.Â  But as a parent, I did not like the negative influence I saw Kathy having on my younger children yesterday, and that was *before* any conflict was had with her mother.Â  My daughter’s birthday party is coming up, and I feel badly for both Kathy and my daughter if she isn’t invited.Â  On the other hand, I feel this is more than just a parental conflict that can be overlooked for the sake of the kids.Â  I feel a little bit taken advantage of – after all, we invited Kathy to spend the day with our family, and her presence did incur some minor costs.Â  Nothing I would have thought twice about, until I was given flak about our fun day… and I’m 95% sure we told her mother we’d be heading out to the mall ahead of time also, so it wasn’t as if it came out of left field!Â  Also, my husband and I are concerned about what Kathy’s mom might hold us liable for should we have any further incidents with Kathy at our house or in our care.

So do I let my daughter invite her to the birthday party?Â  Should I say anything to my daughter about this conflict?Â  Do I pay any bills I might get from Kathy’s mom for gas, etc?Â  It’s just a shame this had to happen; my daughter has plenty of friends whose parents are on the same page with us; we take their kids out all the time without incident, and they even usually say ‘thank you!’.Â  I honestly don’t feel like we did anything out of the ordinary here…Â  Should I have gotten a babysitter and driven the 40 miles to get the inhaler myself?Â  Honestly, if I had done that though, I might have THROWN it at her when I got back!

### Comments

**Mysmichelle**If she wanted you to be responsible for the inhaler she should have given it to you for safe keeping. Period in my opinion.  
**justj**It can be a problem dealing with other parents. I know I've had a few problems over the years, but very few where the parent or parents were rude or nasty. At times it takes some effort to be fair with the children and civil with the parents. My first reaction was to drop all relationships with problem children and parents, but I've always waited until I had a chance to cool down and discuss it with calm heads. Good luck.  
**Phyllis Beyer**This is a tough one. However, you have to put your family first If this girl is not in tune with the younger kids, there's reason enough not to invite her over. I think Taylor would understand. Maybe Taylor could spend time with her for a 1 on 1 such as a movie where they meet at the movie. Good luck with whatever you decide to do. By the way, I would not have driven back for the inhaler. I would have told her "sorry, but it's your daughter's and I can't drive back with 4 small children." If she never speaks to you again, is this a loss?

# I Want A Customized Cupcake Car For Christmas...

I really don’t, but try singing this blog post title to the tune of “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas”, just for laughs.Â  And for further amusement, here is a picture of the customized cupcake cars, which of course come complete with candy caps for the contraptions’ captains!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-cupcake_car.jpg)

All joking aside, thankfully I don’t know anyone who could or would blow $25,000 on one of these, now that is just a waste.Â  The title of the article I found this in was intriguing, *[“9 Extravagant Holiday Gifts”](http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2009/news/0910/gallery.neiman_marcus_gift_guide/index.html)*, but honestly, I didn’t find much amusement beyond the cupcake cars; maybe you’ll disagree when you click on the link above.

### Comments

**taylhis**@terese orlikowski - too much of an old fart or too much of a spambot? What is molecular cooking? Now I'm going to have to look it up...  
**Terese Orlikowski**I guess I'm kind of an old fart, but I can't get behind the concept of molecular cooking. Apparently, neither can Italy. They have introduced a ban on molecular cooking for italian restaurants. What do you think?  
**justj**Could they make the cupcake into a mini Oscar Mayer Wienermobile?  
**taylhis**A plus for some, a punishment for others... ;)  
**jamiahsh**well... the aircraft, too but the double training would be a plus.  
**jamiahsh**The ICON A5 Training And Training would be just fine ... the Jag wouldn't be bad either ;) Wonder how much the 12 Days of Christmas gifts are THIS year.

# Awesome Octopi

While I’m on the subject of our visit to the zoo…Â  well, in some ways it wasn’t our best visit, that’s probably why it took me almost a week to get motivated to write about it.Â  A few of us were still recovering from the flu, while others in the family were coming down with it, so the lot of us that day were quite crabby!Â  But we did see some amazing animal action, including the often inactive octopus – he was moving all around his tank, which prompted many questions fromÂ  my kids, my husband, and myself.Â  I did a bunch of research when I got home, and I learned what I already suspected – octopi are awesome!Â  Here are some of the coolest facts:

â€¢Â  The octopus has a short lifespan; varying among species from 6 months to 5 years for the larger species held in captivity.

â€¢Â  Octopi are invertebrates, meaning they have no hard skeleton, and they are very intelligent creatures – considered the most intelligent of all the invertebrates.Â  They have been known to manipulate man-made objects, like opening jars or even solving puzzles and mazes.Â  Check out the following video – an octopus navigates a water maze by getting **out** of the water and going **over** the maze!Â  (The major action starts about 2 minutes into the video.)

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

â€¢Â  Because of the fact that octopi don’t have skeletons, they can squeeze their bodies (which is actually that bulbous looking mass most people mistake for a head – and it contains **three** hearts!) through extremely small openings.

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**taylhis**Yes derek - that's a cool fact I left out, there were just too many! The female is genetically programmed to die after caring for her eggs. Scientists have tried taking out the gland that causes the death, but she only lives a few months longer and dies of starvation instead. And I also didn't know before all this research that the mouth (with a BEAK!) is actually on the underside where the legs meet. And the legs have transmitting neurons in them, so essentially, the tentacles contain almost like mini-brains! I could go on and on...  
**derek**Definitely cool. That first octopus is a cheater! :D As for what you wrote about the "bulbous looking mass most people mistake for a head," I guess we call it a head because it has the eyes on it. I was just reading the [Wikipedia entry on the octopus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octopus), and sadly, it seems parenthood isn't in the cards for them as they die shortly after reproducing, both genders.  
**jamiahsh**That was awesome. I like octopi, also.

# Do Meerkats Often Sit Like This?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/Toledo-hotel-and-zoo-11-13-09-006.jpg)

We had a chance to visit the Toledo Zoo the other day and snapped this amusing pic of a meerkat just chillin’.Â  Is this a common pose for a meerkat?Â  I’ve never seen one sitting up like this before last Saturday.Â  Anyone watch Meerkat Manor?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**That's GREAT! HEY, Timon, dude!  
**justj**Yes, they often sit like that. I've often seen them sitting like that while just relaxing. It is also fun to 'click' at them to put them on alert.  
**admin**It was so cute. The kids and us just stared at it for minutes.

# Totally 80's!

I haven’t done one of my board game reviews in awhile, so I thought I’d write about a little treasure we found at the Goodwill tonight and actually had time to play – Totally 80’s Trivial Pursuit.Â  Since my husband and I were both children in the 80’s, we thought we’d enjoy this version of the popular trivia game – even though I threatened to kick some butt sinceÂ  between the two of us, I’m the one who’s chosen to fill her head with useless knowledge (most of which I’ve forgotten over the years anyway!), but what I’m trying to say is that I usually win the trivia games in our family.Â  So we start to play the game, and the pawns are in the shapes of various pop culture staples in the 80’s.Â  There is a Care Bear, a computer, a Trapper Keeper, and a CD – cute!Â  And I loved how the pie pieces are stored in the bases of the pawns when players earn them!Â  My only complaint is that there definitely should have been more pawns – can’t believe there wasn’t even a Rubik’s Cube pawn?!?Â  How about some Jelly Shoes?Â  A banana clip?Â  Cabbage Patch Kid?Â  Atari console?Â  The list could go on and on…Â  Here are the ones they **did** include:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-80s-pawns1.jpg)But anyway, my husband did end up beating me, but I have two excuses.Â  1.Â  The kids came down in the middle of the game and kept trying to play with the pawns which was distracting and IÂ  lost my focus.Â  2.Â  My husband is older than me, and therefore he remembers more of the ’80’s – haha!Â  Ouch!Â  Ok, so I’m a little bit of a sore loser –Â  rematch tonight?

*(I guess this didn’t end up being much of a review.Â  It’s a Trivial Pursuit game, nothing new there.Â  But if you were around during the 80’s and enjoy getting quizzed about the decade of excess, you’re in for some fun!)*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**OHHHHH... a trivial pursuit game you actually WANT TO PLAY! I may be a bit intimidated. There is also an 80's edition of Scene It.  
**derek**Just so you know, the Atari console (at least the popular one- the 2600) was 70s. 1977 to be exact. The NES would be the system to use, or even the Gameboy. I agree though that more should have been included than what you pictured. Licensing issues perhaps?  
**admin**You're on!

# The Popular Social Networking Site Called "Book Face"

It’s time for me to officially make my presence known on Facebook.Â  If you watch the awesome NBC comedy “The Office”, then you’ll understand the reference in the title of this blog post involving a creative Halloween costume worn by Jim Halpert, a character on my favorite show – it was hilarious!

But back to me learning Facebook…Â  some time ago I signed up for a Facebook account (don’t even remember why), but then I stopped using it because it started doing freaky things behind my back – like randomly adding mere acquaintances and business associates as my Facebook friends.Â  That was NOT the way I had envisioned social networking!Â  But my youth group kids have been BEGGING me to join Facebook, and since I took pictures of them last week, we decided that my homework challenge is to get on Facebook so I can post our pictures.Â  So here I go, and the first thing I’ll be doing is looking for a way to NOT invite everyone on my email contact list to be my Facebook friend!

### Comments

**derek**I guarantee you I wouldn't have been your FB friend had you gone along with it, but only because I don't use it either, or wish to- nothing to do with real friendship of course. Incidentally, in one of my email accounts I have an email from several years ago welcoming me to MySpace, before it became the social networking predecessor of Facebook. I don't remember ever signing up for it but I must have had a reason.  
**taylhis**No, no tangents bloggers as Facebook friends, but that's only because I'm not going on Facebook after all! Went on Facebook, saw all the requests I have from various people for various things, and got scared back off. Instead I'm going to set up a tangents blog for our youth group, to be kept separate from my Mommy blog.  
**jamiahsh**I usually prefer the original but there are exceptions.  
**justj**or is that "We're coming to get you" from 2004? 1968 or 1990? I like the 1968 movie. Do us tangent bloggers get to be your friends?  
**jamiahsh**Ohhh, Ohhhh I know... I know!!!!!! But we'll see if anyone else does.  
**Chris**It's alive! There coming to get you Lisa... (Replace Lisa with Barbra -- can you name the movie this quote is from?)

# Yummy Healthy Snack

My husband and I have been enjoying this snack lately, and it’s healthy and easy to make.Â  You’ll need:

**Apples** – Type is up to you – we think Granny Smith tastes best for this.Â  I also tried it with Gala apples which are good, but IÂ  don’t recommend softer varieties like Red Delicious.

**Peanut Butter –** We highly recommend natural peanut butter – Smucker’s makes some.Â  It’s a little more expensive than the standard variety like Skippy or Jif, but it contains only peanuts and a little salt – none of that other junk like hydrogenated oils, sugar, and who-knows-what-else.Â  The taste of real peanut butter is amazingly better than the junky kind too!

**Grape Nuts Cereal**

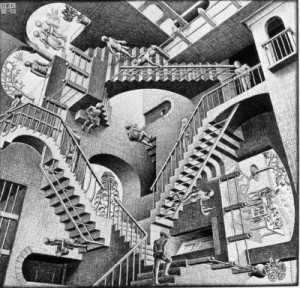
Basically, you just slice the apples, cover them with peanut butter(less if you’re watching your fat intake), and sprinkle with Grape Nuts – it’s really good!Â  And it’s great for a snack or light lunch for diabetics also because the protein in the peanut butter lowers blood sugar that might be elevated from the apples and cereal.Â  If you decide to try it, let me know what you think in the comments section!

### Comments

**justj**For non-browning apples -- Soak 5 to 10 minutes in orange, lemon, lime or apple juice. For the citrus, to prevent flavoring, using 1 tbls of lemon or lime juice per gallon of water. Or the off the shelf product called fruit fresh.  
**taylhis**It would be a good treat for game night, and I thought about making it for MOPs also, but the problem is, the apples begin browning and must be eaten immediately after slicing.  
**Many People Have Gum Disease, are You At Risk? | Online Dating Advice**[...] Yummy Healthy Snack | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**jamiahsh**I like a good Granny Smith... APPLE!  
**jamiahsh**sounds like an excellent game night treat ;)  
**justj**I'll have to try that. My favorite apples right now is Braeburns and Fujis. Both are fairly firm.  
**derek**Sounds interesting. Ordinarily I'm not really an apple eater, but this may be worth trying.

# 3D Escher

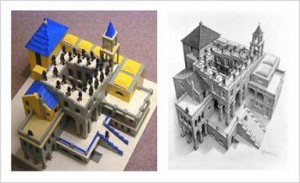
Have you ever heard of the Dutch artist M.C. Escher?Â  His famous works depicted impossible realities, often based upon mathematical and spatial challenges.Â  Case in point, one of Escher’s most famous works, titled *Relativity*:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-escher.jpg)

Let me guess, even if you’ve never heard of M.C. Escher, you’ve seen the aboveÂ  picture, right?Â  But have you ever seen it in 3D?Â  Seems people have been recreating Escher’s art in Lego form, which I think is pretty cool!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-lego-escher.jpg)

How about more of Escher’s most famous works, done in 3D Lego style?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-escher-lego.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-mc-escher-lego-belvedere.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-mc-escher-lego-waterfall.jpg)

### Comments

**justj**Ah, but the first picture is one that can be modeled in 3-d. You just can't walk on all the walls. I've always liked Escher's work.  
**derek**And they did a pretty good job, even if the task was impossible. :)  
**taylhis**Ok, I see your point. I guess I titled it wrong. I didn't mention that the photos of the Lego creations were altered in various ways to achieve the same illusions as the original prints on a 2D photograph :)  
**jamiahsh**Impressive... someone really wants some Legos.  
**derek**Neat that someone would try, but I am skeptical that when seeing these in 3D, as opposed to the 2D representation of them (photos), they will really appear as Escher's illusions. The whole point of the illusions is they are impossible in 3D. (Yeah, spoilsport- I know... :D )

# Fun With Houses

There’s a celebrity in Britian named James May who has a show on the BBC called “Toy Stories”.Â  Each episode centers around adventures he has with one of Britian’s best loved toys.Â  For theÂ  episode about Legos (to be aired in the spring), he had a life-size Lego house built in which he lived for several days.Â  While the house itself didn’t look all that cool from the outside, it was fully furnished with Lego, including a working commode.Â  Here are some shots from the inside set to a groovy little song, *“I’m living in a Lego house…”* It’s aÂ  shame that the entire project went to waste when they tore the thing down…Â  prospective buyers were scared off by the million dollars it costs to move a Lego house.

**If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.**

And while we’re on the subject of life-size toy houses, this people-sized dollhouse can be found in Saskatchewan:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-dollhouse.jpg)

### Comments

**taylhis**WOW - that would take a long time! Not to mention how expensive it would be! I think it was implied that the underwear was lumpy :) I'm good without my Legos; I just like to look at Lego stuff on the internet sometimes (NERD!) I figure I can haul out the Legos in about 2 years, maybe 3. Then I'll have a bunch of helpers!  
**jamiahsh**I do have a question... Is it the Lego underwear that are lumpy or the house itself? The outside of the domicile was rather unimpressive, but the interior was neat. I'm livin' in a lego house. I say again... someone is wanting her Legos. How about a theatre set made of Legos ;)  
**derek**Already gone (been listening to worship songs for small group tomorrow night), but thanks!  
**taylhis**I actually kind of like the Lego song, but one problem... it lodges in one's head quite easily!! I've been singing it all day! Good luck getting it out of your head! I'm living in a Lego house...  
**derek**I'd hate to meet the one who plays with that life-size dollhouse! :D That Lego song was...painful. Thanks for the clip- I hadn't seen the inside of the house.

# Wonder Woman

Probably a year ago now, I received one of those email forwards about getting to know your friends.Â  You know the type –Â  you read your friends’ answers to some strange and random questions and then you answer them, getting to know more about your friends and yourself.Â  One of the questions was something about choosing a fictional character that best describes your friend, and my friend wrote “Wonder Woman” about me.Â  I thoughtÂ  that was awesome because I don’t feel like a wonder woman, but it’s fun that someone else thinks that about me, so it’s kind of stuck with me…Â  Especially in these recent days where I am one of the last ones in our family standing as the others are flu-stricken.Â  It’s been kind of a mantra I say to myself as I walk around our barren wastelands of a living room, tending the ailing…Â  *“I am a wonder woman, I will not get the flu.”*

If I were a sort of flu wonder woman, I would carry holsters for my tools of trade: bottle of disinfectant, antibacterial soap, hand sanitizer, Hall’s Defense lozenges, antibacterial wipes, tissues…Â  I’ve washed my hands raw in the past week.

This is all very strange, maybe the flu has infected my brain.Â  I’ve also taken on what seem like really weird habits lately, like swallowing garlic cloves and onion petals like pills with my dinner.Â  I’m not going to say anything about how I smell lately, but hey, I’m one of the last ones around here who hasn’t gotten sick.Â  So far, our two youngest kids and myself remain healthy.Â  IÂ  can’t believe we haven’t gotten it, and it feels strange to live life feeling like a sitting duck.Â  This thing is so nasty and contagious, it’s really only a matter of time…

Our oldest daughter came home last Friday night and stayed in bed until Tuesday when she also finally starting talking and eating again.Â  Our second oldest daughter had a bad fever Tuesday and slept for awhile and then she was fine.Â  My husband has felt terrible for 3 days now.Â  It’s affecting everyone differently, and it’s completely unpredictable.Â  I had to go into the middle school to get my daughter’s homework, and that’s where I found out that half the 4th grade came down with it Friday night.Â  I also learned of the “8 day” theory – some people have thought that their families were sick and over it, only to have other members of the household come down with it 8 days later.Â  Sounds like a horror movie, feels like a sci-fi movie.Â  Pretty much everyone I know who has kids has H1N1 in their families.Â  I’m especially worried about our friends whose diabetic daughter was sent home from school with a blood sugar reading of over 300.Â  Her mother also has a chronic illness and her medication includes steroids, so both of them are high risk for H1N1 complications.

We had a busy week planned this week and had to cancel most obligations.Â  It’s really difficult to live our busy lives without being able to commit to anything, not knowing whether we’ll be sick or healthy.Â  I hope everyone else is doing ok…Â  is the outbreak especially bad in our small community, or is this just the reality of the 2009 flu outbreak?Â  *I am a wonder woman, I will not get the flu…*

So what’s that tickle in my throat?

### Comments

**Susan**Me and my children got the vaccine two weeks ago. I still got the flu a few days later. I don't know if I had the H1N! strain. If it was, I am thinking that the vaccine did not have time to fully make my body immune to the virus. I can say that I was only sick for a day and then really tired a few days after that. Other than this, me and my children have had really no illness. I have heard numerous people voice concerns over the vaccine. As for myself, the 3 hours I stood in line for the vaccine was worth it. I do hope that you and your family gets to feeling better. Take care, Susan  
**derek**Vaccinations in hometown district happened today where I was posted. Sounds like your town is getting hit pretty hard. Here's wishes for your family to get well soon!  
**Phyllis Beyer**It hit my school very hard 2 weeks ago. Some kids were out of school the whole week. After you get over the flu, be careful because secondary infections then hit. I got my flu shot last week. I've been exposed to H1N1 several weeks now and so far have been lucky. Hang in there Wonder Woman.  
**jamiahsh**Wonder Woman... Wonder Woman You're a wonder... Wonder Woman  
**Mysmichelle**No girl it's hitting Nashville too. This week I have found out 3 people I know have it...........I'm going to go get the vaccine - maybe right now!!

# Country Music Award Time!!!

It’s time for the CMAs, and I’m making just a quick little post to share my guesses –Â  we’ll see how I do at the end of the night.Â  I know, I know I whined and cried about missing the show this year, but my family came down with H1N1 and we’re under a self-imposed quarantine.Â  I think the kids need to get to bed early – for their health, of course ðŸ˜‰ –Â  and I get to watch the show live after all!Â  Believe me, I would so much rather be at youth group tonight, despite all my whining, I swear!Â  This is an awful sickness, and I would so much rather not have anyone in my family have to have it…Â  but I don’t want to dwell on that now –Â  we’ve been living this illness since Friday night, so it’s time to break from that now a little bit –Â  CMA time!!!!!

My picks – I’ll try to update throughout the night to see how I did.Â  Correct in green, wrong in red.

**TOTAL:Â  4/11**

Entertainer of the Year:  
Taylor Swift, winner  
Kenny Chesney

Female Vocalist:  
Taylor Swift, winner  
Carrie Underwood

Male Vocalist:  
Brad Paisley

Vocal Duo:  
Sugarland, winner  
Brooks and Dunn

Vocal Group:  
Lady Antebellum, winner  
Rascal Flatts

New Artist:  
Darius Rucker, winner  
Jake Owen

Album:  
Taylor Swift’s Fearless

Single:  
I Run To You – Lady Antebellum

Song:  
In Color – Jamey Johnson, winner  
I Told You So – Randy Travis

Event:  
Start a Band  
I Told You So

Music Video:  
Taylor Swift

NOTES:Â  Awesome show so far –Â  great performances, and I love the hosting duo of Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood.Â  Their little duets are entertaining, funny, and even pleasant music to listen to!Â  I especiallyÂ  appreciate the ditty about the swine flu – priceless, and it really hits home right now!Â  Carrie Underwood has an **amazing** voice!Â  Thank you American Idol for gifting her to country music!  
I love the infusion of the classic country: Mamas Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys and especially the Zac Brown Band’s rendition of Devil Went Down to Georgia (on speed!) was EXCELLENT!!  
Brooks and Dunn’s final CMA performance (retiring) with ZZ Top is a highlight!  
Still enjoying the show, but what the heck happened to the awesome hosting duo of Paisley and Underwood?Â  Seems like they haven’t been onstage together for a while.Â  And when they do reappear together, let’s can the jokes about Brad checking out Carrie’s looks behind the back of his wife, [Kimberly Williams-Paisley](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0931090/) – there’s just been too many of those jokes, and they’re stale.

What could be better than Martina McBride singing When Country Wasn’t Cool with Charlie McCoy on harmonica as a tribute to Barbara Mandrell to welcome her into the Country Music Hall of Fame?!?Â  That was GREAT!Â  That reminds me of an addition I must make to a fellow tangents.org blog about my favorite Christmas special – The Mandrell Sisters Christmas!  
Oh man…Â  the show started out the best CMA awards show EVER!Â  But then it slowly went downhill…Â  until the final award – Taylor Swift?!?Â  You’ve got to be kidding.Â  She is very talented and has done a wonder for attracting teen and tween girls to the country music genre, but…Â  What about the rest of us!?!Â  Let’s face it, she did have a heck of a time hitting some of those high notes…Â  Well, I’m not going to act like Kanye West.Â  Taylor Swift deserves her time in the spotlight, even if it did ruin the entire flow of the CMAs…

Oh, and judging by my total guesses correct, it’s obvious how much I’m allowed to listen to country music radio these days…Â  For me, it’s mostly KidsSongs and videos from the library (lately Shelley Duvall’s Fairy Tale Theater) in the car.Â  Whatever – no one could have seen that Taylor Swift Entertainer of the Year coming no matter what you spend your day listening to.Â  I don’t care if she IS the youngest CMA nominee for Entertainer of the Year ever – in my opinion, she should have had a lot more ground to cover before she won an award like that!Â  The show started out great, but I have to say, I am left disappointed, and not only by my terrible score 

### Comments

**taylhis**He's slowly feeling a little better :)  
**jamiahsh**And you won't be, either... hope you are doing better pal!  
**Chris**You won again! Once again I pull out to an early lead only to lose in the end. Humph! At least I am not dead from swine flu yet. :-)  
**jamiahsh**I KNEW AS SOON AS I PUSHED "Submit Comment" that that was coming ;) and it is mere coincidence, honestly.  
**taylhis**Wow... that's not a fan of a World Series winning team taunting a Cubs fan there is it? ;)  
**derek**No comment from me on country music. Oh wait... ;)  
**jamiahsh**nope... ah... there's always next year  
**taylhis**That's what I thought, but I didn't even have that option on my list? Anyhow, I didn't get that one...  
**jamiahsh**Start a Band is Event of the Year... sorry.  
**jamiahsh**Wwell... you were nearly .500 good job ;)  
**jamiahsh**very interesting fusion of the genres  
**taylhis**I LOVED the Mandrell Sisters variety show! Thought I put in something about that being my favorite Christmas special...  
**jamiahsh**they must be running long... I think I have seen Brad & Carrie once.  
**jamiahsh**Barbara Mandrell... Do you remember her variety show or do I age myself?  
**jamiahsh**saw the B&D pairing with ZZ Top... unusual but enjoyable.  
**jamiahsh**and I agree... I'm sure you would much rather be at your normal routine than in a self-imposed quarantine.  
**jamiahsh**Yes... Carrie is AWESOME! SORRY... JUST GOT in so haven't seen any.

# IT Is HERE

It’s official – there is a flu wreaking havoc in our house.Â  I don’t know if it’s H1N1, but all the signs are there.Â  Our middle-schooler came down with it Friday night, and she’s been in bed ever since.Â  She had to miss a birthday party and church this weekend, and she won’t be going to school tomorrow.Â  Today our 5-year-old and 1-year-old starting showing symptoms, and tonight our 3-year-old looks like she might be starting to get it.Â  And oh yeah – why would you think this one skipped Hubby, whoÂ  gets EVERYTHING that comes around?Â  Looks like it’s making an appearance in him tonight.Â  As usual, (except for the flu season when I was pregnant and was sick from Thanksgiving until Christmas – one bug after another) I remain the last one standing, as yet untouched by the virus (crossing fingers, knocking wood…)

So up goes this post, and down goes our family – I think a flu outbreak is a good reason to go to bed at 10, don’t you?Â  Here’s hoping and praying that it doesn’t hit us too hard and also that IÂ  may stay well enough to care for my family.Â  We are going to have to quarantine ourselves this week, which is a shame since we had plans for every single night.Â  Tomorrow will see a slew of phone calls made and emails sent to cancel everything.Â  Health comes first, of course.  
Best wishes to readers for staying healthy!!!

### Comments

**derek**I have had this cold for weeks now, but no flu symptoms to this date. I pray all of you are up and about again quickly!  
**jamiahsh**Of course... fingers crossed for you all. Guess this is one way to foster family togetherness... not a good way.

# Puzzling The Night Away

Our 3-year-old Disney is really good at puzzles.Â  Last night, she tried her first 63-piece puzzle, but she didn’t quite finish it:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/Disney-fell-asleep-doing-puzzle-11-7-09-0021.jpg)

She got a pretty good start – that puzzle is particularly difficult.Â  We were all enjoying a wonderfully peaceful evening since our little 5-year-old instigator had her first sleepover at a friend’s house.Â  She had a great time, and when she returned home today, the conflicts between siblings resumed immediately.Â  There’s always one in every bunch, I guess 

And today’s lesson in everyday life:Â  Coffee can dye a black dog brown.Â  Don’t ask me how I know that, but it was quite a mess.

### Comments

**derek**Sleeping- something I should still be doing for at least another hour, if only I didn't have to get up early to find work for today (which was successful I might add :) )  
**Phyllis Beyer**What an adorable picture of my little angel.  
**jamiahsh**Ahhh.... conflict between siblings? Wouldn't know anything about that ;) Just that it drives parents CRAAAAAZY!

# Just A Friendly Reminder

Take care of yourself this flu season!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/cat_swine_flu_11041.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**I stand corrected- I did know the so-called swine flu finally crossed over to actual swine, but I didn't know about the cat.  
**taylhis**Hilarious! But I actually found this picture attached to an article about the first confirmed H1N1 case in a house pet - a cat. As if we weren't worried about it enough... I couldn't resist borrowing the picture though, it's cute!  
**derek**(Psst... You're a cat- no worries about any ol' human bugs!)  
**jamiahsh**Is the cat's name Blanket or Prince Michael? /cute

# GOOD LUCK BEARS!

I don’t have any kids in high school yet, but when I grew up, high school football was a big deal, so I’ve been kind of following the local high school football team since we moved here, even though there wasn’t far to follow them…Â  until now.Â  Our Golden Bears will travelÂ  down to Columbus TONIGHT for their first high school football playoff game in school history!!

BEST OF LUCK GUYS – YOUR TOWN IS BEHIND YOU!!!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**And "at least they made it to the playoffs." yes... very good for the town and esp. the school. Something to look forward to the next few years?  
**taylhis**They lost 45-21. But it was so exciting for those kids and our entire town for them to even get there. They can borrow a quote from a Cubs fan "Maybe next year..."  
**Phyllis Beyer**As you know, I still follow your high school football team. We have so much fun at the games on Fri. night. I hope your hometown team does well.  
**jamiahsh**GOOD LUCK Bears!

# The Drama...

I’m going on my third month as a youth group leader, and while I always enjoy myself at church on Wednesday nights, in recent weeks I’ve also felt a strange kind of dread.Â  I couldn’t put my finger on it until last night.Â  There was a huge drama in our small group of 7th grade girls involving a friendship between two of the girls.Â  The situation made for a lot of tension and was also a huge distraction from our lesson.Â  After group, I mentioned this to the other 7th grade girls leader and the youth pastor, and neither seemed surprised, especially given the dramatic nature of a specific girl in my group – their words, not mine.Â  I came home around 9 pm last night with 4 of my own little kids to put to bed while feeling entirely emotionally drained.Â  I realized that even though I enjoy being a youth group leader for the most part, that strange sense of dread that I feel in the beginning of the week has to do with bracing myself for the weekly Wednesday night drama.Â  The more I thought about it, the more I realized that the other 7th grade girls leader’s attitude has greatly improved since the beginning of the year.Â  Also, a few weeks ago, two students were transferred into my group because their friends were in my group – so now I have the entire clique in my group, and I get to oversee and facilitate all of their various factions.Â  Wonderful.Â  I have a theory that the other leader was very discouraged and emotionally drained by these girls and their drama by the end of last year, and so when I showed up, I was given the clique and their dramatics for my group.Â  Ah, the joys of being the newbie.Â  I’m happy to help, and I’m glad the other leader seems much happier, but I really need to find a way to encourage these girls to shift their priorities a little bit.

Complicating the matter is the fact that we meet in the youth pastor’s office, so it’s really hard to supervise everyone at once, especially when there is drama.Â  I have girls wanting to poke through his drawers, lie under his computer desk, read his post-it notes and memos, and to sit on his desk.Â  I’m starting to feel more like a babysitter than a small group leader, and the girls in my group are turning 13; it’s not like they’re little kids (which is what I’m dealing with all day and at night AFTER youth group).

Don’t get me wrong; I do enjoy it; I’m just really frustrated right now.Â  I really like the fact that it’s something I get to do with my husband (the small group part is only about 40 minutes.Â  For the rest of the two hours, we get to do things together), and I like hanging out with the other leaders and the girls when they’re not acting crazy.Â  I’m just saying that those times are getting few and far between.Â  I need to find a way to focus the kids and also to get our group back to concentrating on the weekly lessons.Â  We can still have fun while we doÂ  that, but step #1 will probably be to get us out of the pastor’s office – I don’t even know where to start if not there.

When I signed up for this gig, I failed to realize that aside from the long-shot of the Chicago Cubs making the World Series, my two favorite yearly live televised events – the Country Music Awards and the Academy of Country Music Awards – air on Wednesday nights.Â  I cannot express how much I enjoy watching these shows, and it’s kind of like an athletic event – it’s not really the same to watch them after the fact.Â  One year, I even did a live blog while watching one of these awards shows, and it was hectic, but a lot of fun.Â  Tempted as I am to call in sick to youth group next week, I could not look seven 7th graders in the eyes and tell them that I missed our group to stay home and watch the Country Music Awards, especially after the major drama that was this week.Â  So next week, I will actually be avoiding cnn.com and the media from late Wednesday night until whenever I will get a chance to watch the recorded CMAs – which might not be until the weekend!!!Â  Yes, I’m pouting, but I’m going to put my best face forward and just do it.Â  But I reserve the right to complain about it all I want on my blog!!!!!

### Comments

**Chris**The positive is that your girls just love you! They trust you enough to share their problems with you. I think we need to find a way to get you out of Nate's office. Come on into my room. The boys can behave themselves!  
**taylhis**We also have questions that apply the lesson to their daily lives. Each question reminds each girl of about 3 stories she wants to tell. At least they usually do answer the questions - the ones we have time to get to around all the drama, anyway.  
**derek**Does the youth pastor give you any material to go over during small group time? I know with our 4th/5th grade ministry over here we have questions from the lesson we talk about, applying the lesson to their lives. Of course there is sometimes someone who just wants to do his own thing instead of listening, but we try to get them back into the discussion which isn't always easy and I have had to talk to parents in the past. I know with young teenage/almost teenage girls management is quite a bit different- just keep talking to the pros at your church and hang in there. I wish I could give you some more useful advice. Just remember to keep things Christ-centered as that's what all of you are there for.  
**jamiahsh**HEHE... Just DOOOOO IT! Catchy. 13 year olds lying under a desk? Must be girls. AAAAHHHH... the drama and it's not even theatre related ;)

# Our Poor Baby

One of my babies is sick.Â  It’s not one of the four children, thank goodness, but it’s still someone who is a part of our family and means the world to us – our beloved almost 12-year-old dog Charity.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/Princess-Charity-9-6-09.jpg)

Charity has an aural hematoma, which is basically when a cavity within the ear fills with blood.Â  It’s very painful for the dog, and poor Charity has been slowly sauntering around the house in a daze; I can’t stand it.Â  The good news is that we have a vet appointment tomorrow, and the really bad news is that it will cost a minimum of $150, more likely upwards of $300-500 to fix.Â  But how much money is too much to help our baby?Â  We adopted Charity as a puppy 11 years ago before we had any kids, and she’s been with our family through countless moves and other episodes in life, both good and bad.Â  I guess we’re all going to have to be a little patient while my husband picks up some extra work hours so we can pay the vet to fix all of her old dog ailments.

Please pray for Charity to get well.Â  She is an older dog, and I can’t stand the thought of putting her through surgery.Â  I really hope she feels better soon!Â  She’s been sleeping all the time, and there is no one to clean up all the food that the kids drop – the house is getting so messy!Â  And believe it or not, I actually miss her constant barking…Â  

### Comments

**jamiahsh**That's Great NEWS! Back to the constant barking!  
**taylhis**The procedure went very well, and we were able to bring Charity home yesterday - she felt so much better immediately! The bill was less than we thought (but still a lot!), and Charity came home with a bag full of medicines that would make any human senior citizen envious ;) THANKS SO MUCH for all your thoughts and prayers!  
**Mysmichelle**Good luck Charity. Her own love of her family will pull her through  
**taylhis**Know what that's like ;) Thank you all for your prayers and well-wishes. I might post an update after the vet visit.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Let's hope, not home, the same happens to Charity. It's been a long day.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I, too, am praying for Charity. I was worried putting Loopy through surgery last summer at age 12 but she has been like a new girl since. Let's home the same happens to Charity.  
**derek**As you requested, prayin'!  
**justj**So sorry to hear that, she is a very good dog and very much part of your family.  
**jamiahsh**AWW... CHARITY OL GIRL!! Please get better, soon. It is definitely hard watching a beloved pet get old.

# Taylhis' Most Wanted

During visits to the zoo, most kids will fantasize about which animal they would like to take home and have as a pet.Â  There are many reasons why exotic and wild animals should not be kept as pets, but being an animal lover, I guess I never grew out of the mindset of a kid at the zoo – I still think about which ones I would like as pets.Â  Well, actually, I’d like **all** of them as pets, but here are the top 10.Â  Since this is purely fantasy, of course I did not take rational things into consideration like cost or cleaning up after or housing the animals, where’s the fun in that?Â  While you’re at it, try putting your top few fantasy pets in the comments box below…Â  

Taylhis Most Wanted:

African Grey parrot – Ugh, another large bird?Â  Do I really want more bird screaming to rile up the kids?Â  But this is a fantasy list, so I’m going to build a huge tropical aviary with a little river for my birds, no problem.Â  Members of this particular breed of parrot are incredibly smart, and their ability for exact mimicry is hilarious!Â  I once posted a video of a little African Grey character named Silvia who did an awesome impression of Desi Arnaz (*Lucy, you got some ‘splainin to do!*) as well as sarcastically (and hilariously) delivering the line, “*Well loddy-frickin’-dah!*”

Manatee – My favorite animal; manatees are gentle and intelligent.Â  I find the manatee’s graceful movements relaxing and therapeutic.Â  Watching my manatee swim would be a great way to unwind after a stressful day!

Gorilla – HumansÂ  have much in common with these intelligent primates.Â  It’d be incredible to get to know one on a personal basis.

Sea Horse – Well, these guys mate for life, so I’d like a pair of seahorses, which would then turn into hundreds Â  But many of their behaviors are truly fascinating to watch!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-seahorse.jpg)

Sea Lion – Like an aquatic dog, sea lions are intelligent, trainable, and beautiful swimmers.Â  And so cute!

Goat – I’ve always loved goats; now that we live nearby many farms, this might be a possibility some day!

Huge Dog – Dogs are the greatest, and sometimes it seems like the larger the dog, the friendlier.Â  So for a dog-lover without limitations on house size, wouldn’t it be great to have a beautiful 150lb+ lap dog?Â  I was thinking St. Bernard, Great Dane or Mastiff type dogs.

Octopus –Â  A somewhat mysterious animal, though to be intelligent based in part upon its ability to manipulate items like jars and toys for food rewards.

Alligator – Huge reptiles with a bad rap; I would love the time to hand-raise and train a gator.

Tortoise – I really like tortoises, and it’d be really neat to create an exhibit to house one of those super-huge tortoises.

*Honorable mention:*

Marmoset – a cute furry little primate.Â  Cute as he is, smaller primates are known for being tempremental, so this guy is a runner-up.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/delete-marmoset.jpg)

So there you have it.Â  My husband commented on my list’s lack of felines.Â  True, I always blog about how much I would like a cat, but in the real world, all that’s stopping me from getting a cat or two or ten is my cat allergy, so that’s not really the point of the list – it’s more about forbidden animals.Â  Big cats would be too scary to play with – I had a little cat who passed away, but after watching how suddenly and completely her moods could change, I gained a whole new respect for big cats, so no thanks!

### Comments

**Mysmichelle**Been YEARS and YEARS since I was there but it was the best zooe I've ever been too. And I just wanted to say I read your blog every day and I don't know you at all personally BUT YOU COULD NOT BE LAZY, you make me tired sometimes just reading your posts!!!  
**taylhis**Oh yes, I'm quite lazy myself so the staff of zookeepers is a given. My job would be to play with the animals! :) Got to get to the Houston Zoo; that one's not on my list yet!  
**Mysmichelle**I visited the Houston Zoo in 1991 and fell IN LOVE with their bird atrium. I have always wanted one just like it. It had a bridge (that was covred in bird poo) and huge plants and lizards and the like living below but with trees that reached the bridge for the viewing of the birds. Awesome. Still want. I always wanted a pet tiger in my imagination but like you said not wanting to worry about being mauled in my sleep by anything I personally always wanted a zoo myself.........but two dogs is almost more than I can handle so I guess I'll amend my dream to I want a personal zoo that comes with a full staff of zoo keepers!!!  
**derek**Any low-maintenance animal that is pleasing to look at. Do any low-maintenance pets exist? Even fish require cleaning and refilling the tank periodically, cleaning filters, etc...  
**jamiahsh**I've always liked lions and tigers and (polar) bears.. no pun intended. And as a kid I always wanted a gorgeous Arabian Black Stallion (Now there are two movies I haven't seen in ages). An orca. A dolphin (FLIPPER!). that's all I can thin of for now.  
**justj**I just want 1 large well trained dog. I would like a dog to take out with me during my late night telescope sessions. The only problem is the dog can't go running after animals in the area, but it would need to alert me if something is near. I want to go out west to observe and I want to know if big predators are around. That's it.

# Fun AND Free!

What’s super fun for kids and free for parents?Â  Well, free for parents who live in most parts of the country, anyway…Â  AUTUMN LEAVES! Last week my kids had a blast playing with the leaves in the back yard.Â  It might cost time and money to dispose of the once beautiful fallen leaves, but before they become a nuisance, there’s no reason why they can’t provide hours of family fun!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/playing-in-the-leaves-oct-09-0292.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/playing-in-the-leaves-oct-09-029-31.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/playing-in-the-leaves-oct-09-029-16.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I remember playing in the leaves when you and Kim were little. It was loads of fun.  
**derek**She wouldn't mind for sure.  
**taylhis**I'm so glad your mom enjoys the photos - maybe one of these times we're in town we could bring the kids by for her to see.  
**derek**You do know these photos of your brood please my mother no end? Perhaps because I have no brood of my own... Yet another reminder that I have yet to rake the leaves here! ;)  
**jamiahsh**WOO HOOO! Leaf piles just do go running into one with a wet sucker ;)  
**justj**I remember all of the leaf piles, forts, homes that my girls made with all the leaves we get in the woods.

# It's A Little Late, But...

Another blog here on tangents.org who was describing [cool kids’ Halloween costumes](http://sublife.tangents.org/2009/11/01/that-october-holiday/" \t "_blank) reminded me of some high tech Halloween costumes I saw on the internet last week and forgot to post.Â  [Click on this link](http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/10/29/halloween.gadgets/index.html" \t "_blank) and enjoy, maybe get some ideas for next year.Â  I especially like the first one; gadgets and gizmos that make it seem as if there is a giant hole right through a person!

### Comments

**derek**Pretty cool, but expensive I'm sure.  
**jamiahsh**Awesome! I like the Cylon Pumpkin but couldn't we make it a KITT. The wings sound heavy to me... I'll stick with the vampire cape. I'll have to look at Death Becomes Her again.

# A Not-So-Perfect End To A Perfect Day

WHEW!Â  I have to admit that we totally overdid it on Halloween, but in a good way – at one point in the evening, my 5-year-old said “how many parties are we going to?!?Â  We threw a Halloween-themed game night on Friday, complete with things like spider venom, truth serum, and rat vomit for drinks and snacks.Â  Most guests wore costumes, and there was a wide collection of characters, from witches to fishes to Star Wars characters and a vampire – we even had a gay construction worker!Â  Fun was had, but as usual, we stayed up too late and failed to rest up for our huge day ahead –Â  HALLOWEEN!

We began Saturday by making the rats costumes and taking them to the pet store for a costume contest.Â  No word yet how they placed in the contest, but Bobby Jack dressed as a zebra while Oreo was a Pink Lady from Grease – the kids had a blast!Â  We tookÂ  the rats home and headed out to the ice rink for the annual community Halloween party – one of my favorite things about living here.Â  We get there right when it opens and head straight for the hayride, where we are driven around the huge park.Â  Occasionally, creepy creatures run from hideouts among the trees and chase the wagon!Â  Not as many people were in line this year, so we got to ride the hayride twice, and then the kids tried some of the games, the maze, and the bouncy castles, while Mom and Dad chatted with long-lost friends and sipped slushies and hot chocolate (everything at this party is free and donated by local businesses and organizations!)Â  We got our hot dogs to go this year, and they told us to take a huge pumpkin home – we still have to carve our pumpkins, so we were more than happy to get one more!

We were able to rest for about an hour, then it was time for trick-or-treating.Â  We moved into our neighborhood 3 years ago, and we learned the first year that it’s not good for trick-or-treating.Â  We love where we live, but come Halloween, it seems like many neighbors aren’t home, so we’d have to make the kids walk blocks for only a few houses with porch lights on.Â  So we drive across town and trick-or-treat in a friendly neighborhood where some friends live, and we started withÂ  their house.Â  Our little guy dressed as Barney, Disney was Dora the Explorer, Sammie was a princess, and Taylor was a bloody prom girl.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/Halloween-09.jpg)

Oh wait, you need to see Barney with his tail ðŸ˜‰

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/Halloween-09-5.jpg)

I absolutely love Halloween – of course I think my own kids were the cutest, but IÂ  love seeing all the kids dressed up.Â  An honorable mention goes to the 4 teenage boys who were dressed as the Teletubbies – my 3-year-old daughter was asking where the Teletubbies were all night, but we never did catch up to them…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/11/Halloween-09-15.jpg)

We took in quite a haul with the 4 kids, and after the second house, our 15Â½-month-old had the hang of taking candy from strangers.Â  Ok, that sounds really bad, but Halloween is a unique event, he was allowed, and it was really cute!Â  We got in the car after we were done trick-or-treating and headed over to a party at our friends’ church.Â  The kids had a blast there as always, and we made out like bandits in the raffle!Â  Years of not winning anything we entered apparently caught up with us on Halloween night because a few bucks in raffle tickets won us 2 value meals at Burger King and 3 really cool brand new toys for the kids!

But here is where things start to change from perfect to overwhelming – at the church we ran into my Kindergartner’s friend Hannah from preschool.Â  This child has many medical issues, and she’s been in and out of the hospital her entire life for brain surgeries.Â  Her mother was telling us how she doesn’t like her preschool anymore and how she’s been depressed because she doesn’t have any friends.Â  So who could possible tell this little girl “no” when she asked if she could come sleep over again?Â  Certainly not us, no matter how exhausted we were from the weekend’s activities…

After the church, we headed over to the community theater where they were having a Wizard of Oz party.Â  IÂ  was completely exhausted, and we had to hurry home to meet up with my daughter’s little friend, but I really enjoyed the Wizard of Oz party during the short time we were there.Â  They did an AWESOME job with the decorations, and there were so many neat Oz-themed games and activities – even a yellow brick road! -that I will forgive the inclusion of some things from Wicked.Â  I guess I should say for any readers who don’t know – I’m a huge Wizard of Oz fan, but it’s the movie that I really enjoy.Â  I don’t remember the book much, and what I’ve seen of Wicked did not impress me, to say the least, but that’s another blog post altogether…

So FINALLY we get home, and Hannah is waiting for us.Â  At this point, I was SO incredibly tired, not to mention my car full of garbage, pieces of costume, and spilled candy.Â  All I wanted to do was end Halloween my favorite way –Â  watching a scary movie with Hubby.Â  So we got the kids (all SIX of them, since two daughters had friends over) as settled as was humanly possible after I-don’t-even-want-to-think-about how much candy and were about toÂ  start our movie when Hannah comes down the stairs.Â  We sent her back up, and checked email and basically killed some time until we felt confident we could start a movie without any kids coming downstairs or calling for us.Â  Well, that never happened.Â  Somehow, we had forgotten that Hannah is a friend who is very needy and also one who outright REFUSES to go to bed.Â  We started the movie anyway, and we only had to interrupt it like 5 times (a late 80’s thriller called [I,Madman](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097557/" \t "_blank) – both hubby and I recommend it!).Â  But Hannah began one of her many descents down the stairs right during a climatic moment in the movie, which made my husband jump a mile high, which in turn made my heart stop and stomach drop.Â  And that was when IÂ  knew I wouldn’t be falling asleep for hours.Â  Hannah finally fell asleep when there was only 15 minutes left in the movie, but she outlasted every one of the other kids, and by then, it was 2 am!Â  I guess you could say I put my extra daylight savings hour to good use; I think it’s the only hour of sleep I got!Â  I had trouble falling asleep, then I had terrible nightmares all night and kept waking up –Â  one was about Hannah; I’m not even kidding!Â  I woke up early to the sounds of kids playing and couldn’t fall back asleep.Â  So here we are, the Sunday after Halloween, dead tired with a messy Halloween-themed house and a trashed car.Â  But at least our house once again contains only the 4 kids who live here, and the main trouble-maker has been sacked out all day – told you we overdid it!

Hope you had a GREAT Halloween!!!

### Comments

**taylhis**I am #11th in line at the library - shouldn't take too long, there are more copies circulating in the system than there are of Jaws 3.  
**taylhis**I loved that 50th anniversary special with Angela Lansbury, but it's been awhile since I've seen it. I've seen the Scarecrow's deleted song and dance before - outtakes would be cool. I don't buy dvd's either, but I wouldn't mind seeing that 50th anniv special again. Maybe I'll check our library, though who knows how long I'll have to wait. I've been on the list for Jaws 3 now for about a month!  
**derek**Most of it I skipped, but I did watch the featurette on the restoration (which looked very good by the way) and the 50th anniversary special with Angela Lansbury. There are also some outtakes and deleted scenes, a 5.1 surround sing-along, illustrated video storybook (a short reading with the book pages with illustrations being panned across the screen), and several more things. Among the deleted scenes was the full song & dance scene with Scarecrow's song that was pared down for the final movie. Is it worth it to buy? I have no idea since I don't buy DVDs typically, or even rent them except rarely- just check them out from my library.  
**taylhis**Are you asking if anyone has seen The Wiz, Jamiahsh? I haven't. Any super-cool features on that 70th anniversary dvd Derek?  
**jamiahsh**Has anyone here eased on down... eased on down the road with Michael Jackson and company? They were plaing the 70th Anniversary WoO at Wal\*Mart the other day while I endured the 1.5 hour oil change.  
**derek**I hope you made Hannah's day. :) I just happened to see the Wizard of Oz the other day- the new 70th anniversary DVD sitting at the library was too tempting to pass up. It's been such a long time since I had seen the movie, that there was \*a lot\* that I didn't remember. In fact, I think I really only remembered the basic plot and a few songs so it was almost new to me. Haven't seen Wicked though, or even the earlier Oz musical spinoff "The Wiz."  
**taylhis**It was a combination of the movie (right during one of those jumpy moments anyway), hearing a noise in the hallway, knowing it could be Hannah, and Chris jumping. Her name still gives me chills down my spine ;)  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like fun! Was it Hannah, the movie, or both that made you jump?!  
**taylhis**You would have been able to keep up with us if you saw how cute the kids were ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Oh my gosh!!!!!!!!!!!!! I could never have kept up with you. Sounds like you had a very fun day.  
**justj**I'm glad you had a good Halloween. It is one of my favorite times of the year. I didn't do much at all, but that was expected.

# Sometimes Just One Word Can Mean A Lot

Like in a newspaper’s picture caption.Â  Many locals make fun of our county’s newspaper; pointing out miscellaneous typos, erroneous information and errors, but today’s typo in the following picture caption is kind of a big oopsie:

*The line for the H1N1 virus snakes through the parking lot at the County Fairgrounds  
Wednesday afternoon.*

Obviously our county does not have people lining up to get the H1N1 **virus**; the replacement word here in case you’ve fallen asleep is *vaccine*.Â  *The line for the H1N1 vaccine snakes through…*Now **that** would be one nasty small-town rumor!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Not sure if he'll get to read it... he's not oing well in prime time from what I understand.  
**taylhis**Ok, so technically the article was worded correctly, but I still consider it an error because I don't think it was the proper caption for the picture. I also don't think it's what the newspaper meant to say and made for an amusing blog post. I did send it to Jay Leno for his headlines segment :)  
**derek**There are shot versions too, but either way yes, they are receiving the virus either alive through an inhaler or dead through a needle.  
**Chris**Well, since they are inhaling the virus into their nose I guess they literally ARE lining up to get the H1N1 virus. Hopefully the local doctors (see other Taylhis posts) know it needs to be a severally crippled one! Luckily the vaccines are not home-brewed... :-)  
**jamiahsh**Hmm... I would consider lining up for the virus (for about 1 millionth of a second)

# Quack Doctors - Take Two

Just a little update to let you know my mouth is finally feeling better and yesterday I was able to indulge in food and got to actually enjoy the feeling of being full for the first time in an entire week.Â  No thanks to our local doctors, though, my husband made me some sort of concoction from stuff we had around the house that I swished around in my mouth.Â  I don’t know if it was coincidence or if that’s what finally did the trick, but all I have to say to the doctor’s $300 mouthwash is **HMPF!** And it should be noted that we went to the doctor’s office again yesterday and sat there for an hour and half waiting for the doctor whom they said was out to lunch.Â  I didn’t want to pay to be seen again, but I wanted him to change my prescription to something that would help me and that I could afford.Â  Finally tired of waiting, we left with the nurse’s promise that she would call me as soon as he got back from lunch, but they never even bothered to call until this morning when I was finally feeling better.Â  Rude isn’t even the word for this, I was in agony!Â  And all that after 3 different nurses and Walmart told us like 5 different ways they could help me, none of which turned out to be true.Â  As my husband put it, it seems like at this medicalÂ  center, the right hand doesn’t know what the left hand is doing!Â  Kind of sounds like another local organization we’ve worked with, but that’s another blog…

I’m a bit concerned that this canker sore problem is something that I might have to deal with from now on in my old age.Â  Even though we think this latest canker sore outbreak was caused by hand, foot, and mouth disease, the doctor shrugged off our internet diagnosis since it’s so rare in adults.Â  So if he’s right and it was just canker sores, it might be something that I’ll have to deal with every once in a while, especially since it seems to be a hereditary problem!Â  Let’s hope not – my family can’t handle the stress of anyone else being sick!

On a side note, please pray for my little nephew who was admitted last night into the hospital with croup.Â  I’m praying that he gets well and thatÂ  it’s not H1N1 and that none of the other kids he was playing with (his brother and my kids!) last weekend get it.Â  I’m really really hoping we can dodge some bullets this flu season since there are six of us, thus six open doors for viruses to come into our household.Â  But for now, we’re hanging tough (groan!) and ready to party this Halloween weekend.Â  Don’t worry – I plan on getting the house scrubbed down for all of you coming to the Halloween party!Â  Can’t wait!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I have another more colorful description for our band-aid medical facilties, but this is a family blog. Curious to learn of your other problematic local organization (is it one I am seemingly coming less and less involved in?). Hope all goes well for your nephew and everyone else. Never ends... seemingly. CAN'T WAIT Til FRIDAY (and best of all... the WS is on a travel day not that a game would stop me ;) ).  
**taylhis**WOW! Glad you vented! So it's not just our rural band-aid box, as one friend calls it. Somehow that doesn't make me feel better about the medical care in this country. I even left out some of the other twists and examples of the "right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing" syndrome displayed by our hospital. Next time, I was going to go down the road to what is supposed to be the better hospital, but now I'm not sure... At least your doctor admitted that he was wrong. Thanks for sharing! And sorry about your ears. Maybe he's wrong this time too... Do they offer refunds on doctor-error surgery?  
**Mysmichelle**Had to chime in here. I live in Nashville TN and I work at one of the top hospitals in the country. You can google that if you wanna know which one. Our insurance here of course gives us a huge discount if we go here to a doctor. So on April 20 of this year my ear drum suddenly erupted. It was VERY painful but I waited until the next day and went to see my primary care physician. No problem......ear infection.......NOPE.......other ear drum preforates .........back to doctor OK to shorten this - that was April, in August the Ear Nose Throat Doctor operated on my sinus's saying it was a mass in my sinus'. All along they kept treating my sinus' I kept saying hey what about my ears. Well the surgery over everything corrected so yesterday at my FINAL followup appointment I"m like hey the surgery seems fine and all but WHAT ABOUT MY EARS, he had me go through the symptoms again........AHA........He looks me in eyes and says oh no I'm sorry I miss diagnosed this. It was this blah blah blah untreatable condition all along GRRRRRRRRRRR $30,000 surgery and six months and NOTHING - no help for my ear aches So frustrating. Sorry I needed to vent

# Freedom And Jeff

I received another touching email forward, and I have to admit that I [snopes-ed](http://www.snopes.com/photos/animals/freedom.asp) it because it sounded so fake.Â  It’s the story of Freedom the eagle and her friend Jeff – here is their story:

*Freedom and I have been together 10 years this summer.  
She came in as a baby in 1998 with two broken  
wings. Her left wing doesn’t open all the way  
even after surgery, it was broken in 4  
places.Â Â  She’s my  
baby.  
When Freedom came in she could not stand  
and both wings were broken. She was  
emaciated and covered in lice. We made the  
decision to give her a chance at life, so I took  
her to the vets office.Â Â  From then  
on, I was always around her. We had her in a  
huge dog carrier with the top off,Â  and it  
was loaded up with shredded newspaper for her to  
lay in.Â  I used to sit and talk to her,  
urging her to live, to fight; and she would lay  
there looking at me with those big brown eyes.  
We also had to tube feed her for  
weeks.  
This went on for 4-6 weeks, and by then she still  
couldn’t stand. It got to the point where the  
decision was made to euthanize her if she  
couldn’t stand in a week. You know you don’t  
want to cross that line between torture and  
rehab, and it looked like death was  
winning.Â Â  She was going to be put  
down that Friday, and I was supposed to come in  
on that Thursday afternoon. I didn’t want to go  
to the center that Thursday, because I couldn’t  
bear the thought of her being euthanized;  
but I went anyway, and when I walked in everyone  
was grinning from ear to ear.Â  I went  
immediately back to her cage; and there she was,  
standing on her own, a big beautiful  
eagle.Â  She was ready to live.Â  I was  
just about in tears by then.Â Â  That  
was a very good day.  
We knew she could never fly,Â  so the director  
asked me to glove train her. I got her used to  
the glove, and then to jesses,Â  and we  
started doing education programs for schools in  
westernÂ  Washington.Â Â  We wound up in the newspapers,  
radio (believe it or not) and some  
TV.Â Â  Miracle Pets even did a show  
about us.*

*[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-freedom.jpg)  
In the spring of 2000,Â  I was diagnosed with  
non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma.Â  I had stage 3,  
which is not good (one major organ plus  
everywhere), so I wound up doing 8 months of  
chemo.Â Â  Lost the hair – the whole  
bit.Â Â  I missed a lot of work. When I  
felt good enough,Â Â  I would go to Sarvey  
and take Freedom out for walks. Freedom would  
also come to me in my dreams and help me fight  
the cancer. This happened time and time  
again.  
Fast forward to November 2000, the day after  
Thanksgiving.Â Â  I went in for my last  
checkup. I was told that if the cancer was not  
all gone after 8 rounds of chemo, then my last  
option was a stem cell transplant. Anyway, they  
did the tests; and I had to come back Monday for  
the results.Â  I went in Monday, and I was  
told that all the cancer was  
gone.  
So the first thing I did was get up to Sarvey and  
take the big girl out for a walk. It was misty  
and cold. I went to her flight and jessed her  
up, and we went out front to the top of the  
hill.Â Â  I hadn’t said a word to  
Freedom, but somehow she knew. She looked at me  
and wrapped both her wings around me to where I  
could feel them pressing in on my back  
(I was engulfed in eagle wings), and she  
touched my nose with her beak and stared into my  
eyes, and we just stood there like  
that for I don’t know how long.Â  That was a  
magic moment.Â  We have been soul mates ever  
since she came in.Â  This is a very special  
bird.  
On a side note:Â Â  I have had people who  
were sick come up to us when we are out, and  
Freedom has some kind of hold on  
them.Â Â  I once had a guy who was  
terminal come up to us and I let him hold  
her.Â  His knees just about buckled and he  
swore he could feel her power coarse through his  
body. I have so many stories like  
that.  
I never forget the honor I have of being so close  
to such a magnificent spirit as  
Freedom.  
Hope  
youÂ  enjoy this.  
Jeff*

Awww, that eagle sounds so sweet!Â  So how did we get stuck with this big red jerk?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/Squawky-begins-bath.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Agreed... at least the humor is still there... even if he is a big jerk  
**taylhis**I've often wondered why they don't train service dogs to sniff out cancer and other conditions. I know they have tried it, but I wonder why there's not more demand for these types of service dogs.  
**derek**Animals can often sense these things. I recently read a story about a dog who could sense a seizure coming in someone who has regular seizures. She once could tell herself, but one day lost this ability. Eventually she found there were dogs who are often trained for this and sought one out. She found one who was actually past its trainable time, but it turned out that he (she?) was the right dog for her after all, brought to her by God- the dog was born at the time she lost her ability to sense the seizures. Just say it- God is awesome! And like C, I love your ending. :)  
**whatever**So sweet. And the ending, is hilarious! YES, HE IS SUCH A JERK!

# Quack Doctors

I know I promised to stop whining about my sore mouth, but it’s amazing how little focus I have for other things when I’m not eating – all I can think about is pain and food, but sometimes I think about food and pain.Â  The good news is that today when I woke up, the pain was loads less than yesterday.Â  Today marks the first day of improvement since this thing began last Tuesday.Â  But there is also bad news.

Even though I was feeling better, I decided to go to the doctor because this is totally and completely interfering with my daily life.Â  I can’t really talk, and it’s really hard to chat with, guide, or discipline my kids throughout the day without being able to talk loudly.Â  I can’t eat, and I can’t drink without pain, so my energy level is very low.Â  So the bad news?Â  The doctor told me it was canker sores after only looking at my tongue.Â  He prescribed me “Meyer’s Magic Mouthwash”, a concoction listed on a piece of paper unlike any prescription I’ve ever seen.Â  It looked like a cooking recipe, and my name was scribbled on top and the doctor’s on the bottom.Â  I should have taken a picture of it, but I was so anxious to get it filled.Â  The pharmacist used a word that I can’t recall at the moment, but she basically meant that they were going to have to brew it up like a potion.Â  It was going to take a few hours, at least.

I got through the day, made it back over to pick up the medicine where I learned that it would be $308 and insurance wouldn’t cover it of course.Â  Needless to say, I am not going to buy $300 mouthwash!Â  I’m angry that the doctor shrugged off the internet diagnosis without so much as a look or a test for hand, foot, and mouth disease.Â  I’m mad that he didn’t give me anything for the pain and that the medicine he did give me costs so much.Â  What a waste of time and money.Â  I had better things to do today than to sit at the doctor’s office – and who knows what else I picked up.

That reminds me, when I was at Walmart today stocking up on my favorite meal as of late, Equate shakes, I saw a lady wearing a medical mask.Â  I wonder if she was trying to keep something to herself or trying to keep other viruses away?Â  I wonder if mask-wearing will become more common as this swine flu business becomes even more serious?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**yes... you will get better soon. Rest (sure, I know) but suggesting ever hurt.  
**taylhis**I'm glad you didn't ask about it - I was trying to forget about it. And what if Walmart now has its own illness - they really are taking over the world!  
**derek**You must think me a jerk for not asking you about it this past weekend, but really, I forgot that you wrote about it- honest! I was in Walmart last week and I saw a little boy with a surgical mask on- is it a Walmart thing? :o  
**whatever**Poor Lisa. This has just been a disaster for her. It is so sad. You'll get well soon honey! By tomorrow you'll feel much much better!  
**justj**I've heard making sure you get extra B-12 helps, never tried it though. I always started eating more yogurt and cut back on acidic foods. Maybe some of the yogurt smoothies would work. The live cultures in yogurt is supposed to cut down some of the acid in the stomach. Not sure it will work for you, but the yogurt helped me in the past.

# In The Eleventh Hour, Evil Intentions In The Basement Of The Dead

As you may have read in my previous post, we took a trip to Illinois to visit withÂ  family and also tour the area’s haunted houses.Â  Well, I’m done whining about my painful mouth, soÂ  here’s a run-down of the fun parts:

Got to visit with lots of family in the short time we were there.Â  We had nice visits with one of my husband’s father’s only living blood relatives, his niece Lilly.Â  Lilly is a really sweet person whoÂ  has been going through a few tough life experiences lately.Â  We don’t get to see her often, so it was great to see her onÂ  Saturday.Â  We hope to be able to get her out to Ohio for a visit soon!Â  We stopped by my mother-in-law’s house where we also got to see my husband’s sister and her family.Â  Our kids had a ball playing with each other; there are 7 of them altogether!Â  After that, we also got to see where my Grandpa moved; it’s a very nice place with a cute little main street area for visiting, complete with ice cream shop.Â  We discussed the Chicago Bears (no comment as of the game’s unfortunate status right now in the 2nd quarter – poor hubby!) with my grandpa and told my grandparents of things like the kids’ awesome grades at school.Â  Afterward, we had a really great 40th wedding anniversary for my parents at my sister’s house.Â  The kids had such a great time that theyÂ  refused to leave – literally.Â  My sister’s family had to literally lock out my kids, which was slightly embarrassing, but mostly just a humorous result of their incredible come down from their awesomely fun weekend – also known as a fun-down.

The family stuff was Saturday, so Friday night we were lucky enough to be joined by 4 friends (3 all the way from Ohio!) for some haunted house fun!Â  We went all over the ‘burbs, with a goal to complete a huge square if you plotted our stops on a map.Â  Because of an hour-long line in a cramped basement tunnel in Elgin, we did not make it to the Aurora stop, but we cajoled my mom (even though it was her anniversary party) into watching all 6 kids on Saturday so we (along with fellow tangenteer derek who made the drive south for the second consecutive night) could go to the haunted house with my sister and her husband, who hadn’t been to a haunted house in probably about a decade – FUN!Â  Here is a run-down / rating of the Illinois haunted houses –Â  haven’t made it to any Ohio ones this year, don’t know that there will be time for that!

[Haunted Mansion and Asylum 13](http://www.ditkasportsdome.com/haunted/index.html" \t "_blank) – Bolingbrook IL – Saving the best for last would mean the worst is first, right?Â  This haunted house was definitely the worst of the lot.Â  It had lots of actors, not much else.Â  Average costumes, not much scenery, blasting music not relevant to the theme of the haunted house…Â  the only noteworthy and the most enjoyable part of the entire thing were the live chickens in the ‘crazy hicks’ scene.Â  Seeing [Drew Peterson’s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drew_Peterson" \t "_blank) house in Bolingbrook might have been creepier.Â  Grade: C-

[Eleventh Hour](http://www.eleventhhour.info/" \t "_blank) – Elk Grove Village IL – This haunted house is located at Berthold’s, a family-owned plant nursery and is actuallyÂ  4 attractions in one.Â  The corn maze is small but succeeded in losing us, even if for a short time.Â  The haunted house was actually a string of 3, but it wasn’t really clear when one ended and another began.Â  Eleventh Hour had some really cool haunted house concepts, along with the obligatory chainsaw guy and spinning tunnel to walk through.Â  The scenery was REALLY cool, complete with (SPOILER ALERT!!!) moving staircase and refrigerator door that both actually became passages to walk through!Â  And, they had a live zombie band performing in a separate room while we viewed them through little windows –Â  now that is something I haven’t seen in a haunted house before.Â  A very cool haunted house, and without all the same old tiresome gore.Â  Prize moment when an extremely creepy little girl made my husband scream like a…Â  well, that seems like a mean thing to say about a guy who’s been doing nothing but wonderful things to help out during my illness.Â  It was hilarious, that’s all I’m going to say.Â  Grade: B+

[Evil Intentions](http://www.hauntedillinois.com/reviews/2009evilintentions.php) – Elgin IL – This one also had a few very unique fright concepts, but they really need to work on the wait time –Â  we waiting in a dingy narrow basement hallway for over an hour!Â  After that, they separated our group of 3 guys and 3 girls into individuals and put us each into a casket!Â  Mary and IÂ  lucked out and got to share one since there were 6 in our group and only 5 caskets, but it was still terrifying knowing that they were probably going to do something sudden and scary to us in the casket.Â  SPOILER ALERT!Â  They pretended to show us a movie on a screen in the casket, but the screen went to colored bars and made the high-pitched beeping noise, which was creepy, but that’s all that happened.Â  They really should have lengthened the movie or banged on the casket or something, anything.Â  This, like a few of the other concepts in this haunted house, really needs to be better developed in order to heighten the fear factor.Â Â Â  You take a bunch of people and put them in a haunted house with only 5 caskets for them to queue thru, and of course you’re going to have a huge long wait to get in.Â  The makeup in here was average, there seemed to be a relatively low number of actors (all of whom seemed to have the same mannerism of getting right up in your face – how many times can that be scary?), and I would consider the scenery downright bare – they definitely could have highlighted the building’s casket company history in the scenery as well as they did in their marketing.Â  The guide ghouls are particularly fond of separating the groups of patrons, especially isolating the women from their men, a concept I sort of hated and also really enjoyed at the same time – it was weird.Â  If I factor in the wait time for this one, you don’t want to know the rating, so we’ll just pretend I’m rating this as if I walked right in like I did in the previous two rated houses.Â  Grade (not including wait time): C+/B- (hard to forget that awful wait time!)

[Basement of the Dead](http://www.42fear.com/" \t "_blank) – Aurora IL – Because we had to wait an hour for Elgin on Friday night, this one had closed and we didn’t make it.Â  But as I said earlier, my mom, dad, and uncle graciously agreed to watch the little ones soÂ  that us sisters, hubbies, and a friend could venture to downtown Aurora – a frightening experience in itself, haha.Â  Seeing the line outside was daunting, and one character said the wait would be at least an hour.Â  We were about to leave since my brother-in-law had just come off a double work shift and hadn’t slept in 36 hours, when intrigued by the totally awesome looking makeup on the characters wandering outside, my husband inquired about the wait time at the ticket window.Â  We took the gamble, and it paid off when we were admitted after only about 15 minutes.Â  During our stay in line, we were entertained by a few of the haunted house escapees; including a super-tall, slow moving dude who had a habit of very creepily and slowly inhaling the scents of patrons of his choosing.Â  The guy’s build kind of reminded me of an Ohio friend, but I won’t mention who, even though I know he’s not a reader of my blog.Â  There was a KISS rocker meets clown guy who succeeded at making his makeup and mannerisms really creepy also, and a blank face guy (a nylon stocking on his face, I would guess?), and a guy who moved quickly through the bushes on all fours, kind of like an ape.Â  When it was our turn to go in, the scary clown slob manning the door burped and blew it in my face which was not scary, just stupid and rude, and if I get his H1N1, I will consider a lawsuit.Â  Kidding, but it was still gross.Â  He made me go first into the haunted house.Â  Whatever, I would just let my husband ahead of me when we got in the door anyway, except that when I got in the haunted house, they shut the door on me and someone came running up and told me to go through it alone.Â  I flat out refused – I’m not going to PAY to do something I don’t want to do, and they reluctantly let in the rest of our group.Â  Sorry I foiled their plan, but I would not enjoy the experience alone; that’s not really my thing.Â  It was fun to see my sister and her husband in the haunted house since they hadn’t been in one in years, but we quickly lost them in the dark mazes and didn’t bother trying to find them.Â  We figured they wanted to hang back and enjoy the startles they would get if they weren’t so close to us.Â  WhenÂ  we got back outside, we waited and waited, but two groups emerged before the rest of our group, and when they came out, my sister was white as a ghost.Â  Hilarious, and IÂ  think they had fun – most people can benefit from venturing into a haunted house once in awhile, especially parents who can go without their kids – it’s nice to just have only yourself to worry about for a little bit Â  The makeup in this one was stellar, best I’ve ever seen.Â  Scenery was good, if a little dark for my taste since it was difficult to see some of the blood and guts.Â  Also a few good animatronics and lots of blood and gore, which was actually a a change of pace from the others we’ve seen this year.Â  Grade: A

### Comments

**derek**It was definitely a fun time. Being third in line in the group I wouldn't have rated the Aurora one as high as you did since most of the scares got you before I could see them, but I agree with you pretty much on the others. I should add that in the Elgin one the large length of time between groups allowed the actors to follow us around, and being the last one in the group again for at least some of the time the creepy factor was quite a bit higher for me. Also, I guess they didn't do it for your coffin, but they did open the doors randomly and scream inside. Unfortunately, having seen them do it once before I was put in the last coffin it didn't have the effect on me it could have.  
**Phyllis Beyer**You really had to twist my arm to watch the kids didn't you. I loved having them all.  
**mary911**Me three!! And I give the 11th hour an A++++++!!!! Seeing an 8 year old girl make C almost cry in fear was worth it!!!! ;) Great time! I'm getting ready to blog, so I'll end it there!  
**taylhis**Me too!  
**jamiahsh**WOW... wish we had stayed for the last one, but thanks again. It was sooooo much fun!! I'm sorry you missed out, too j :(  
**justj**so sorry I missed them.

# Outbreak

The flu season is upon us, and it’s obvious.Â  In our family, we are teetering between two outbreaks of illness.Â  Last week, it was hand, foot, and mouth disease (not to be confused with its fear-provoking counterpart, foot and mouth disease, which is only found in animals).Â  The kids had little bumps on their hands, and a general feeling of being unwell, known as malaise as I learned on the internet.Â  This is an extremely common (in children anyway) viral illness that usually runs its course in most kids.Â  When my mouth erupted in sores last week (it’s like having 10-20 large canker sores at the same time), I was shocked because it’s supposed to be very rare in adults.Â  We contacted 3 different health professionals to make sure that our trip to Illinois could go on as scheduled, and they all assured us that if there was no fever, we were not contagious.Â  We ventured across the state of Indiana, and I don’t know if I was more fearful of what we were bringing with us or what we were going to take home, what with the many recent flus reported in Illinois and elsewhere, H1N1 and otherwise.

More on the really great parts of the trip in the next blog post – I need to get this out of my system so to speak, haha – a sick post and a fun post.Â  So for the sick part…

My husband woke up today feeling awful – the flu.Â  My morning started pretty much like the past 2 or 3 mornings nowÂ  – tremendous pain in my mouth, worse than the day before.Â  One of my favorite things about visiting the Chicago area is the food – despite the city’s drawbacks: the aggravating traffic, the inflated prices, CROWDS; Chicagoans do have a talent for their intolerance of crappy Sysco food – ie, Chicago food is fantastic!Â  Last week, anticipating our upcoming trip, I remember thinking that it was only Wednesday, surely my mouth would heal by Friday so I could indulge in some of my favorite Chicago treats.Â  But alas, Thursday’s pain was worse than Wednesday’s, and Friday’s was worse than Thursday’s.Â  Actually, as I said before, it’s gotten worse every day since it started.Â  Somehow, I was miraculously able to enjoy my [Italian beef sandwich](http://www.italianbeef.com/" \t "_blank) Friday night, but pain-wise things just went downhill from there.Â  We had a wonderfulÂ  breakfast at the [Uptown Cafe in Arlington Heights](http://chicago.metromix.com/restaurants/restaurant/uptown-cafe-arlington-heights/147015/content" \t "_blank), quite possibly the best breakfast restaurant *in the country*.Â  They have the best eggs benedict I’ve ever had, but unfortunately I came very close to sinfully wasting my eggs benedict when IÂ  could not eat them (let alone carry on a conversation with relatives) without my eyes watering fromÂ  the pain in my mouth.Â  My little boy saved me from wasting half my order ( I knew I should have gotten soup or at least a half order of eggs benedict, but I literally could not resist – we get to this place less than once a year!) – but my toddler ate *half* my eggs benedict – he is his father’s son!

The weekend ended with my sister making us wonderful homemade lasagna, of which I had about 5 small very painful bites.Â  I did not try any of the appetizers, the steamed vegetables, the salad, the garlic bread, or any of the desserts   
I also did not get my usual crave case of White Castle cheeseburgers to bring back to Ohio, although generous relatives supplied us with some Chicago beef for sandwiches, homemade soup and Grammy’s out-of-this-world homemade spaghetti sauce, all frozen and ready to be thawed as soonÂ  as I’m better!Â  Talk about something to look forward to!!!

We ventured home at 2 am this morning, and arrived safely, however painful (and tiresome for my husband) the ride home.Â  And a special thank you to Officer Friendly of the Ohio State Patrol, who did not issue even a warning for my husband’s “hovering around 60 in a 55.”Â  I’m glad he seemed to take the 4 sleeping kids and the grumpy wife in the passenger seat into consideration – this police stop was completed very quickly and only blocks from our house.

This morning I awoke in a lot of pain, and it’s gotten worse throughout the day.Â  I think if it continues its trend and gets even worse tomorrow, I’m going to have my husband call the doctor to make an appointment.Â  I am so thankful that my kids seem to be over it, and as horrible as it’s been for me, I’m still happy I got the most of it in the family.Â  IÂ  pray for my husband, and I’m really nervous about swine flu, but he seems to be feeling better, unless he’s just putting on a braver face than I.Â  This illness for me has been characterized by bouts of severe pain sandwiched between constant regular pain.Â  In the past hour, twice that I’ve talked brought onÂ  the most severe bouts of pain and was enough to make me start typing on the computer and making my husband read it in order to communicate.Â  Whatever works, it’s amazing how easily the threat of tremendous pain can train a person to keep her mouth closed (like [Pavlov’s dog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_conditioning" \l "Pavlov.27s_experiment" \t "_blank)).Â  My husband joked that it’s the “shut-up disease”.Â  That brought a smile; it doesn’t hurt to smile – just the talking, eating, drinking, and sleeping.Â  And that reminds me, being in constant pain has made me an insomniac.Â  I couldn’t sleep in Illinois at our hotel and ended up listening to an hour-long Larry King interview with Suzanne Somers – even that did not put me to sleep.Â  Did you know that Suzanne Somers never actually had cancer even though 4 different doctors told her to get her affairs in order because they had mis-diagnosed her?Â  That’s a tangent that doesn’t need to be taken…

Well, anyway, that’s enough from me for now.Â  Sorry about the rambling, but this really sucks, and typing is my voice right now.Â  Hubby is watching the Bears game, so it’d just be rude of me to constantly interrupt by making him read my ramblings.Â  I wish I could take care of my husband while he’s sick, but for now we’re helping each other.Â  Let’s really hope this gets better – if I have to go to the doctor, I can’t tell them what’s wrong with me because I can’t talk, and I don’t really want to bring my family with me to the doctor’s – who knows what else we could get?!?Â  I guess I’d have to write a note, but I feel kind of silly…

A real Halloween horror treat tonight would be for us to watch the movie [Outbreak](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0114069/" \t "_blank) –Â  now that’s just TOO scary!!!

At least we have a good part of a week to whip these things and get ready for fun Halloween activities abound next weekend!Â  Super-fun blog post about the awesome parts of theÂ  Illinois trip – including haunted house ratings! –Â  to follow this depressing post, I promise!

### Comments

**derek**I pray your mouth gets better soon! And C's flu as well. I will have to remember that incident- I regularly drive five over out of habit.  
**taylhis**I don't really know what his name was, but he was awfully nice.  
**jamiahsh**YUCK! So sorry to hear that. I sent you an email before reading. But I thought Friday was a BALL! Hovering near 60 in a 55?! That is just CRAZY talk. Was the officers name really Friendly?

# Switching Planets

This year, I’ve decided to join my localÂ  MOPs group (Mothers Of Preschoolers).Â  We’ve only had two meetings, but so far, I really like it.Â  At this last meeting, we had a video speaker who discussed the move between “Planet Me” and “Planet Mom”.Â  It was discussed how important it is for moms to maintain some of their personality traits and hobbies, even though time might be lacking.Â  After all, as the video pointed out, the word “Mommy” sounds like “Mom” and “me” put together.Â  After the video, one of the discussion questions was “What are some of the activities you gave up when you moved from Planet Me to Planet Mom?”Â  Most of the women at my table agreed that we can no longer do our crafts, but we didn’t really have time to be more specific.Â  The crafts I used to enjoy before I really lost the time for them were oil painting and Legos.Â  True, I don’t really have a natural artistic knack, but I would get those paint-by-number kits (back when they were a little bit higher quality than they seem to be nowadays); I would complete them and they’d turn out so pretty that I’d hate to have to tell people that I painted-by-number.

Another thing I enjoyed before I had kids was sorting and building with my extensive Lego collection I amassed over the years.Â  It took just one curious toddler to make me abort that hobby, and the Legos got packed away years ago when my oldest began to toddle.Â  Little pieces are the most fun part of the collection, and we couldn’t risk her putting those little pieces into her mouth or who-knows-where-else.Â  So I packed away the Legos, and somehow the entire collection followed meÂ  throughout our moves around the midwest and resides with me today, albeit packed away in the basement.Â  There hasn’t been a shortage (blessfully) of little ones in our house for the past 10 years, so the Legos probably won’t see the light of day for at least a few more years – gotta wait until the little dude is old enough to play rather than destroy or get hurt with them.Â  So let it be known that I miss my Legos, but I am thankful to still have them and even to be adding to the collection whenever I can catch a cool set on a great sale – usually after Christmas.Â  Many empty-nesters turn their kids’ bedrooms into something of their choosing when the kids grow up and move away, like a gym, an office, or a rec room, but I already have plans for a Lego studio, where I hope to one day be able to build super-cool things like this:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-lego-house1.jpg)

I’d also like to build a replica of my house as well as a local historic building:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-courthouse.jpg)

Now that would be cool, but very difficult.Â  But if I had more time, the sky is the limit!Â  My favorite sets are house or city-themed sets, and I also really like vintage Lego sets.Â  Does anyone remember [Fabuland](http://www.fabuland.net/)?Â  It was a series of more colorful Lego sets that featured animals as characters rather than the popular and better known Lego “mini-figs”.

Just because I don’t have the room now to be able to spread out and work with my Lego collection, doesn’t mean that I can’t look at cool things other people have built online, especially now that I’ve officially and publicly declared myself a dork on my blog!

### Comments

**Jarvis Shaefer**I relished playing with Lego when I was littler and in the last year or so the games on PC. I think that it is the greatest toy of all time. The important thing about it is the amount of unique methods it can be arranged. This is a great example of how Lego can be employed. I will probably get my age-old Lego out now!  
**Lego**My kids love to play with Legos. I will be checking back to your site often to see what the hot items for Christmas are this year.  
**someone**Legos are cool! Nice site, you should check out my site too. Its about legos too.  
**taylhis**THAT IS COOL!!!  
**derek**Speaking of Legos, I just saw an interesting creation today- here's the video: [Lego Pop-Up](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYlA3NV0rFA)  
**Clearing the Kids’ Bedrooms for their Christmas Return from University | Bedroom Furniture**[...] Switching Planets | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**taylhis**Now video games I still try to make time for. I guess I just never outgrew the Legos like others did. I haven't tried any of the Lego video games. I'm still re-playing Zelda, stuck in the Water Temple now.  
**derek**Well, I would include those games too, but I don't have 'em! :)  
**jamiahsh**or Indiana Jones Lego game or Batman Lego. But I did enjoy building with Legos.  
**derek**The closest I get to Legos these days are my Lego Star Wars games for Nintendo. :P

# Help Me Find...

A while ago, I came across an extremely cool website – it was an alphabetical list of animals and which zoos in the world had the species on display.Â  My computer since crashed, launching my previous list of bookmarked sites into a cyberspace void.Â  I’ve been trying to find this site again lately, but to no avail.Â  I know some fellow tangenteers are good at doing research and also like a good challenging hunt.Â  The prize?Â  Getting to use the list to locate the zoo of any animal species you wish ðŸ˜‰

Oh yeah – and you win my thank you.

### Comments

**derek**On a cursory search I found lists of animals and lists of zoos, but not lists of animals and zoos. Maybe I'll find it on a bigger search. Any other clues you can think of about the site that could be useful as search keywords?  
**taylhis**Thanks for looking anyway... it's encouraging that it's a site I once had a hold of rather than one just imagined.  
**justj**No luck so far....

# That's A WHAT?

We visited our local zoo this weekend (to feed my zoo addiction, it had been awhile), and when IÂ  got home, as usual, I decided to research some of the animals we observed.Â  As I was researching these animals on the internet, I came across some ultra-cute baby animal pics, and I thought I might make a fun game on my blog of having people guess which animal is what type of baby – HAVE FUN!Â  Don’t worry about posting your guesses – other people can just ignore them or use them as hints if they get stuck.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-baby-p1.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-baby_liger1.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-baby-beaver.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-baby-parakeet.jpg)Here is an added picture of the same type of animal, a little older – per a request in the comments for a better picture:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-baby-keet.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-baby-tort.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/10/delete-peachick.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**I had two correct. :)  
**taylhis**Think most people have guessed, so here are the answers: 1. duck-billed platypus (it looks fetal, which is how you can tell it's a marsupial. And the duck bill is SO cute at this age - it looks like some sort of naked mini-muppet!) 2. Liger - I said it was a trick question because this is a man-made species. 3. beaver 4a. and 4b. parakeet 5. tortoises 6. peacock - I knew this would be tough since many baby birds look alike, but I think there were some correct guesses. Congrats to those of you with correct answers, and thanks for playing! It was fun for me to be able to share these super-cute baby animal pics!  
**derek**Any answers I would have said have already been guessed, so I think I'll just sit back and wait for the answers. :)  
**mary911**I'm just going to guess the first one....is it a duck billed platypus?????  
**taylhis**JustJ has significantly increased his percentage of correct answers, that's all I'm going to say... Oh, and I will also say that perhaps my intro is misleading - not all of these animals are found at our local zoo.  
**justj**#1 Oops that is too big for a mole Baby echidna? #3 Baby gopher Tortoise  
**justj**Ok, I was just hoping for a larger picture of #4, but now it looks like something in the parrot family. Seeing how small it was, maybe a parakeet? Trick question on #2 Ok then A tiglon or liger (depends on the mother I think) #6 --- baby peacock/peahen? Those are the ones I thought I guessed wrong, now I have to look at the other three to see which ones I guessed wrong.  
**taylhis**JustJ is also 1/6. I added another picture of the same species of #4 to help out since the creature blended into the hand. #2 could be considered a trick question. And #6 is a bird, but it's going to be difficult to pinpoint which one... I guess I could drop a hint, but I'll wait for more guesses.  
**justj**It looks like a Mole tiger beaver A bigger picture would help, but maybe a hamster?? Box Turtles A chicken? Some bird anyway. ;)  
**Chris**I got all but one. :-) The last one I did not get.  
**taylhis**1/6 for Mysmichelle... thanks for playing! I'll put up the correct answers in a few days.  
**Mysmichelle**platapus? leopard porcupine hmmm ?? turtles duck

# The Halloween Haunting Of Munger Road

Ok, so who had a haunted house in their neighborhood when they were a kid?Â  For us, it was a haunted road located in a Chicago suburb about 15 minutes away from ours.Â  Actually, my group of friends were from a few different area high schools, and weÂ  had all heard of Munger Road from kids at our schools.Â  Back in the ’90’s when such haunted tales were spun that made us actually want to visit, the road was a deceptively secluded partial dirt side street that ran through a forest preserve and connected two main thoroughfares.Â  At night, the road was dark, isolated, and spooky.Â  There were many rumors about the incidents that took place on Munger, but here is the basic story:Â  There was a little house right next to the railroad tracks.Â  The ghost story said that the man who lived in the house was mowing his lawn when he was hit by a train.Â  I can’t remember if the train supposedly derailed or if the man got too close or what happened, but his ghost was said to haunt this area, along with ghost trains.

It was a fun place for our group to check out while we were in high school, and we did note some strange happenings.Â  We would see mysterious headlights that would disappear (there was no place for a car to turn off the road!).Â  My friends had a police scanner in their car, aka, a fuzzbuster, and the thing would go berserk down Munger.Â  Because it was a dirt road, our cars would come out very dusty, but once there were distinct handprints on the trunk.Â  Now as an adult, I can think of scientific explanations for this, but at the time, it was scary!Â  There was also the time a cop came out of nowhere (we had been up and down the road several times and didn’t see him), pulled us over, but he was really nice about it and sent us on our way.Â  I found it odd at the time because we had about seven teenagers stuffed into my friend’s teeny little hatchback car, and the police officer didn’t even say anything about it, much less write us seatbelt tickets.Â  For months afterward, we would tell the story and call him ‘the Scooby Doo cop’.

In recent years, I’ve heard that the house has been torn down, and I wonder if kids still go there.Â  Unfortunately, there has been at least [one homicide](http://www.dupageco.org/sheriff/unsolved%20murders.htm" \t "_blank) around the area of Munger Road, which adds a whole new element to the fright.Â  During our haunted house tour in Illinois the other weekend, we drove within yards of Munger, but we didn’t stop – we wanted to see haunted house attractions!Â  Besides, I don’t even know if the area has the same sort of spooky appeal it had over a decade ago now…

I’ve found a little bit about Munger on the internet, including [these stories](http://hauntedillinois.com/phpbb2/viewtopic.php?t=855" \t "_blank), but I have yet to add my own.Â  Maybe next time we’re in town we’ll drive by, just to see how the area has changed and what has become of Munger…

So it’s finally Halloween, time to share your own ghost story, or tales of rumored haunts near where you grew up.Â  Add them to the comments section below, and have a HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!!

### Comments

# Halloween Whosits

Well, Halloween is just around the corner, and I have yet to pick out a costume.Â  Err, costume***s…*** um, for the kids, of course…Â  Ok, I’m caught – I dress up for Halloween.Â  However, I don’t go all out.Â  I take pride in wearing cool costumes that I can obtain on a shoestring budget.Â  For example, I’ve wanted toÂ  reprise my Kindergarten Halloween costume for years (“Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz”), but I have yet to find the dress for free in my size (I’m not about to spend money on my own Halloween costume when I have 4 kids I’d rather see dressed however crazily they wish).Â  I’m not too worried about my costume though; I always have a back-up Halloween costume plan.Â  I have a witch’s hat, complete with orange hair.Â  And I can wear almost anything clothes-wise, which will ensure that I’m warm and comfortable, no matter what the Halloween weather up here in Bufu Ohio.Â  Being a witch also means that my kids can do my makeup, however madly they would like to do it – all the more fun to add to one of my favorite holidays.Â  So, **my** Halloween bases are covered…Â  now I just have 4 little kids to deck out…

My oldest (going on 10) wants to be a ‘bloody prom girl’ (her words).Â  I say, go for it.Â  It may not be the most innocent of costumes, but it could certainly be worse (have you seenÂ  Mean Girls?Â  Remember the quote that begins, “Halloween is the one night a year when girls can dress…”Â  This is not the type of blog where I would want to continue the quote, but let’s just say that I both celebrate and am thankful for my daughter’s kid-inspired creativity.

Our second-born, who is 5, wants to be a princess.Â  Being a family with 3 little girls who love to play dress-up, that should be a cinch.Â  We have a couple of tiaras to choose from, as well as princess dresses.Â  The key will be to find one that she will agree to wear **over** her other clothes so she doesn’t freeze!

And our youngest daughter, who will be newly 3 by the time Trick-or-Treat rolls around, wants to be “Dora, and Boots, and Diego, and the Marshmallow Monkey.”Â  I don’t think she remembers what it’s like to dress-up for Halloween – I don’t have the heart to tell her that she can only be one character.Â  For now, we have aÂ  Dora costume ready and waiting, and we also have a back-up princess dress in case she decides she wants to be like her sisters.

The little dude will wear whichever costume I can find in the basement that is in his size – I’m thinking it’s a lion.Â  IÂ  know I also have a size 18-months Minnie Mouse costume, but I am **not** going to dress my little man as a female character – poor guy has 3 older sisters and is already concernedly obsessed with headbands and necklaces.Â  But that’s another blog altogether…

Happy Halloween!

### Comments

**taylhis**@harry ganske - I find it difficult to make posts regularly since I stay busy with my 4 kids. I find it especially difficult to weed through all the spam comments that I get on my blog.  
**Harry Ganske**Random question: I am starting my own blog to share my photography experiences. Do you find it hard or easy to post consistently?  
**derek**The only costumes I wear these days are on stage. :) Personal Factoid: laziest costume I ever came up with was a blue tarp, calling myself "creature from the blue lagoon." I think I was 12 and planned on not trick-or-treating until a friend said he wanted to go.  
**justj**I still have my Vampire Cape..... And the Indy hat. ;)  
**jamiahsh**I llove Halloween! You can even throw a sheet over yourself or go even further by doing the Charlie Brown trick of accidentally cutting too many eyes. Maybe that's why he ended up getting nothing but rocks for tricks or treats.

# Zip Line Zaniness

Autumn brings about a whole new breed of fun family things to do: pumpkin farms, hay rides, apple picking, playing in the leaves, corn mazes, haunted houses…Â  the list goes on and on.Â  A few weeks ago, during a visit to a local farm which boasts such fun fall activities as a corn maze, petting zoo, hay ride, and haunted corn maze amongst other things, my kids had a blast with the zip line.Â  It’s all fun and games, as they say, until someone gets hurt…

And while no one was seriously injured during the filming of the following video, my 2-year-old daughter has decided that the zip line is no longer for her.Â  When you watch the following video, you’ll see why.Â  Her 5-year-old sister goes first and has a blast, but poor little Disney didn’t fare so well.Â  Don’t worry if your instinct is to chuckle – she wasn’t hurt, just a little frightened.Â  After all, people must find these types of things funny.Â  Isn’t that the reason why America’s Funniest Home Videos became a show filled with video clips of people getting injured?

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**mary911**Aw, poor little thing!!!!  
**Mysmichelle**This made me think of George of the Jungle ha!! I laughed  
**justj**Looked like she was having fun right up until the very end. I remember doing that with my girls, but we didn't video tape it. One parent at the start and one at the end. Just to make sure that didn't happen. Smart on our part? Not really. When we first saw a zip line, we saw the same thing happen to a little kid. Only I think he was hurt more, he had a bloody nose at the very least.  
**jamiahsh**and still is on the air? Seriously, how many times can we watch people getting hit in the most uncomfortable of places before it is not funny? Me... I don't remember when I quit. glad she was not seriously injured.

# He Is A-Ok!

Our little guy had his 15-month check-up with the pediatric nurse the other day.Â  Yes, this is the same nurse who can be a harsh critic when it comes to things like sippie cups, bottles, and anything else she perceives as leading to bad oral habits in adults; namely smoking and drinking alcohol.

She gave our little Beeber a few age-appropriate skill tests, such as stacking blocks (he stacked them ALL, which is very impressive, even to the experienced nurse – might I consider sharing my Lego collection with a certain little builder in a few years?), following a flashlight with his eyes, and throwing and catching a tennis ball.Â  He did really well with all of them, but I felt badly for the little guy because he did everything that was asked of him, but after he performed the test with each toy, he seemed to assume that he would then have his turn to play with them.Â  But nurse Judy swiped them all away before he knew what was happening.Â  It all became too much for him when she started poking him with that nasty wood-tasting gag stick – who can blame him for crying; I could never stand that thing either!Â  And, in a true kid’s toast to irony, he began to cry the moment the nurse asked, “Is he always this mild-mannered?”Â  Then, “WAHHHH!”.Â  Hilarious!

Our 15-month old (and first boy of the family) is 31 inches long and 22 lbs. 11 oz.Â  He is in the 40th percentile for height and 25th percentile for weight.Â  This means that if you take a sample of 100 15-month-olds, my son is shorter than 60 of them and lighter than 75.Â  He is the first one of my kids to be under the 50% mark.Â  Two of the girls were around the 90-100% mark, so Beeber is a little guy!Â  That’s cool; you can be good at baseball if you’re on the smaller side ðŸ˜‰

Overall, he checked out very well and impressed the nurse with his development.Â  Although he gets into so much trouble at home with his constant climbing and desire to spill liquids and throw things, it’s still a blast to witness this stage of toddler-dom.Â  Case in point:

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Ride em cowboy! Way to go Beebs!

# You Haven't Heard Of Bulbo, The Wicked Witch Of The West's Dimwitted Son?

I found a big behind-the-scenes book about my favorite movie, The Wizard of Oz.Â  I remember getting this book as a kid, but I read the juicy parts (many of the rumors about wild Munchkin behavior are true), skipped the rest of the book, and forgot about it.Â  So I came across it as an adult; it’s one ofthe few things that somehow clang to us through more than a few moves throughout the midwest.Â  I’ve been enjoying reading many Oz secrets lately, and I’m currently on the chapter about the script.Â  In the ’30’s, MGM (the movie studio that made the Wizard of Oz) had salaried writers, so they would assign a few to write a “treatment” of a project, or a sample of script.Â  Several of the writers had some interesting ideas for L. Frank Baum’s Oz project; including bizarre characters.Â  For example, one writer created a son for the Wicked Witch of the West – a dimwitted guy named Bulbo.Â  She wanted to attack Oz with “ten thousand armies, 2 thousand wolves, and 200 flying monkeys” to defeat the Wizard and make Bulbo the king of Oz.Â  In another treatment, the cowardly lion was actually a man who was to marry a girl named Sylvia.Â  The witch wanted Sylvia for her son Bulbo’s bride, so she turned the man into the cowardly lion.Â  A couple of the writers who were working as a team decided that there shouldn’t be any death in their family-friendly picture, so they decided that when the house falls on the Wicked Witch of the East, she should turn into something less threatening; like a parrot or a white tabby cat.Â  That would have been silly!

While all of these possible Oz variations are fun to read about, I’m really glad that the Wizard of Oz ended up as the movie its legions of fans are familiar with – we love it just the way it is!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**fun video... someone better check on the coroner... he might need another one. Oh.. was that him snoring throughout?  
**taylhis**Nice. I used to collect those movie stills though - talk about things that did not make it through all those moves. Not sure how many I still have... I also came across this, a video with surviving munchkins, now in their late 80's and 90's. http://popwatch.ew.com/2009/10/06/wizard-of-oz-munchkins-speak/  
**jamiahsh**http://www.amazon.com/Anniversary-Collectors-Exclusive-Collectible-Character/dp/B002HMDNKS/ref=sr\_1\_1?ie=UTF8&s=dvd&qid=1255375399&sr=8-1  
**taylhis**Oooh... hadn't thought about 70th anniversary stuff! This book is from the 50th back in '89.  
**jamiahsh**Agreed! I may just have to ask to borrow this book in the future. Read about those little munchkins. Wonder what goodies the new 70th Anniversary Gift Set has in it?

# Finally, The Wedding!

I’m talking about the nuptials of Jim Halpert and Pam Beesly, of course!Â  If you’re not a fan of The Office, you can stop reading now.Â  But for everyone else, how about that special 1-hour episode the other night?Â  Hubby and I thought it to be amazing – I laughed, I cried, I laughed *until* I cried…Â  Thursday’s episode was heartwarming,Â  hilarious, and humongous with its 1-hour run time!

Now I will be the first to admit that some of the plot lines contained within this episode were so outrageous that they were almost silly.Â  But given this show’s talented cast and production staff, things that would normally be ridiculous on other shows instead made for some great tv in this case.Â  I won’t waste yourÂ  time with a recap; you can get that [here](http://www.tvguide.com/Episode-Recaps/office/Office-Episode-Recap-1010666.aspx) from the quick-witted tvguide.com writers.Â  But I absolutely ***loved*** this episode, so after much deliberation, here are my top 3 moments from The Office episode “Niagara”:

3.Â  Pam’s 80-year-old “Nema” saying, “I had to sit there while it happened to me.” – Pam’s grandmother is referring to the previous night in her hotel room when she couldn’t figure out how to get the tv channel switched from the movie “Bruno”.Â  Having been exposed to the same trash, her line echoed my sentiments exactly!

2.Â  This exchange was the one that had me crying laughing:  
Pam Beesly: Â Â Â  Â Hey hey! Where are you? Can you take Andy to the hospital?  
Jim Halpert: Â Â  Â What?  
Pam Beesly: Â Â  Â He tore his scrotum dancing.  
Jim Halpert: Â Â  Â What?  
Pam Beesly: Â Â  Â He is in my room icing his balls.  
Jim Halpert: Â Â  Â What?  
Oh, my – TOO funny, enough said!

And the best moment of the episode was…Â  (drum roll please)…  
1.Â  The wedding dance!Â  The attendants and attendees of Pam and Jim’s wedding danced down the aisle, imitating a popular youtube video.Â  I struggled deciding which version to post on my blog, the real one or The Office’s version, and IÂ  went with the original.Â  Not only is it entertaining toÂ  watch this happen at a real wedding (can’t believe they allowed this in a church, but if you look, the officiant is standing on the altar, grooving along!), but I decided not to post the clip from The Office because I think much of its entertainment value comes from being a fan of the show.Â  If you are a fan of the show, then you’ve already seen the musical montage in this episode set to Chris Brown’s Forever (shows what I know – after his arrest, I just assumed that Brown was another trouble-plagued hip-hop star, but this song actually has me tapping my toes.Â  Am I a Chris Brown fan?).Â  Non-Office fans wouldn’t appreciate all of the significance of the events that take place during this scene of the show, so I figured, why show it?Â  I LOVED this part; it’s the part that made me cry, albeit with happy tears, of course.Â  Every moment betweenÂ  Pam and Jim for the past 5 seasons has been leading up to this moment, and despite all of the anticipation by fans and viewers, it did not disappoint!Â  I won’t say much more – don’t want to spoil it for fans who haven’t yet watched, but let’s just say (assume Comic Book Guy’s voice from the Simpsons):Â  “Best. Episode. EVER.”Â  One I will be watching over and over, laughing and crying each time.

The original version of the Forever wedding dance (this couple also made a parody of their own wedding video with them doing the Forever dance in court during their (fake) divorce proceedings if you want to check it out):

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**taylhis**Oh, yes... both are classics and were difficult to leave off my list. I began the list with 5 top moments, but then I realized, the entire episode was worthy of top moments lists, so I cut it down to 3. Andy's "banana split" was on the top 5!!! I loved how well-written Jim's toast was. It was an incredible speech, until he stumbled, then it just went downhill from there, no thanks to Michael, of course!  
**jamiahsh**I loved it, too. How about the toast at the pre-wedding dinner? But the dance was GREAT! And Andy's daNcing mishap was CLASSIC!

# Why I Loathe Fundraisers - 2009 Edition

If you’re wondering why my blog post title sounds familiar, look no further than this – a blog post I wrote about the same subject almost 13 months ago, the original *[Why I Loathe Fundraisers](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2008/09/15/why-i-loathe-school-fundraisers/" \t "_blank)*.Â  Consider this part two of an ongoing, once-a-year series, I guess.Â  And the inspiration for part two?Â  Again, my oldest daughter brought home a school fund-raising catalog, except there were two differences this year:Â  1)Â  they seem to have waited longer than the second day of school to hand it out.Â  I don’t recall exactly when it was given out, but I think it was a little later this year, so that’s good.Â  2)Â  I did not go out and ask everyone I know about ordering stuff this year.Â  I sent an email to the closest family asking if they wanted to order, and then our family decided to order a little something this year – I do want to be supportive of the school.

Let me back up a little bit.Â  If you’ve read part I of my Loathing Series, then you know that I treated myself to a subscription of US News and World Report, which I can now say turned out to be a bust.Â  First, the magazine comes at odd times (and it’s STILL coming!) – it came weekly for a few weeks, then I forgot about it cuz it didn’t come for a month or more, then it started coming every *few* weeks…Â  I gave up trying to figure out the pattern.Â  Especially because after 3 or 4 issues, I realized that this is not the magazine for me.Â  I thought it would be about current events, but it turns out that US News and World Report chooses the most boring news topics to write about – especially politics.Â  I am a current events / news junkie, but when it comes to politics, it’s difficult for evenÂ  breaking news to catch my attention.Â  During the whole Bush-Gore undecided election story of 2000, throughout the counting of votes, the analyzing of dangling chads, missing chads, dimpled chads, and the entire chad movement, my husband was glued to the news while I could barely force myself to take notice.Â  SoÂ  anyway, after realizing that I was not a fan of this magazine (anyone want me to save you some US News and World Reports?Â  I won’t think you’re boring, honest!), I realized that I had gotten a magazine appetite whet.Â  So, for my daughter’s fundraiser this year, we decided to try People magazine for me.Â  I’ve always enjoyed People; I used to buy it before long flights (back when I used to fly), and sometimes friends and relatives give me their old issues to peruse.Â  So the other day, we received our fundraiser order in the mail.Â  Well, this was a nice change of pace –Â  apparently the days are over of spending an hour on a Saturday in a crowded gym picking up fundraiser orders – thanks to the internet.Â  Instead of an issue of People for me, there was a voucher in the box.Â  I just had to choose my magazine (thought I already chose?) and send it in.Â  Tangent for a minor complaint – if you don’t have internet, you’d have to pay an additional $.44 to send in your voucher without the company even warning you first!Â  Would it really be that difficult to make it postage paid, I mean, come on!Â  And now for the major complaint – People magazine was not on the list of choices!Â  Sure, I could have a subscription to People En EspaÃ±ol (my Spanish isn’t THAT good!) or People Style Watch, but I am so not into style AT ALL!Â  I could not care less.Â  I barely care about the celebrity gossip in People; I ‘m mostly entertained by their inspirational stories of every day heroes or just quirky things (they once had an article about a lady who turned an airplane into a house for her to live in!Â  Now that is some cool news and worthy of my leisure time), so what the heck would I want with People Stlye Watch?Â  Yech.Â  I feel like they tried to scam me.Â  I wish I had kept that catalog!Â  Well, I emailed the company, so hopefully they’ll fix the problem.Â  If not, stay tuned for Why I Loathe Fundraisers – Part 3!

### Comments

**mary911**We really didn't do fundraisers when I was in school. I think that came about more in the 90's. I'm glad for that! The only thing I can remember going and out and soliciting for was sponsorship for St. Jude's annual bike-a-thon. I don't know, maybe it's a repressed memory.....but I seriously don't think we did that stuff!!! I ordered NEWSWEEK from my niece about 5 years ago....one of those 6 month subscription things. I think I got my money's worth...I just now stopped getting copies!  
**taylhis**I feel like we got better junk when we were the kids selling the fundraisers... it seemed like better junk and there was more of it. My daughter ending up selling 3 items and got one of those half-a-bouncy-ball-things-that-pop-when-you-turn-them-inside-out, basically it's just a choking bowl for her 15 month old brother. She only sold 3 items, but the thing is, for her to earn the next prize, she would have had to sell MANY more items just to get ONE more piece of junk! Good point, Mysmichelle - not the way I would choose to teach my kids about community support!  
**jamiahsh**or pretty good for the aforementioned one ZILLION sales.  
**jamiahsh**I never liked them growing up and the rewards were often cheap things that ended up discarded or broken witinh days. I know my parents didn't think too much of them either.  
**Mysmichelle**I have a simular bad taste in my mouth for school fundraisers. Never has anything I've ordered been up to par and then they tease my kid with prizes that she would have to sell 10 zillion things to get. Not how I wanted my kid to learn about community support. Glad I'm not the only one  
**jamiahsh**WOW... two Fundraising Loathings in one year?! Fun to read, not so fun for you to need to post Regular People not included (even if it was?). My brother got such a ribbing back during the B/G saga... I KNEW it was his fault.. no coincidence they are called "chads"

# New TV!

Last night, my husband and I decided to visit an old friend we haven’t seenÂ  in some time – The Redbox.Â  You all know the Redbox – the dvd rental machine that sits like a swollen ATM at many Walmarts, Meijers, Walgreens and the like.Â  Dvd rental at the Redbox is $1 per night, and one of the perks of the Redbox is lack of selection.Â  Yes, I said **lack** of selection.Â  In this day and age of rushing from here to there, who has time to actually make an extra stop to go into a video store and browse hundreds of selections?Â  We really enjoyed our Redbox summer, renting a movie almost every night and exhausting pretty much the entire Redbox collection.Â  Now the kids have been in school for a few months already, and time has gone by without us having time to think about our long-lost Redbox bud.Â  So anyway, last night, with the cold wind howling outside, we thought it to be the perfect night to stay up a little too late with a random Redbox horror movie.Â  It was [Seventh Moon](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1052040/" \t "_self), and it seemed to actually be pretty scary, except that it is a ‘dark and shaky’ type horror movie – the camera moves around a lot, and the entire movie takes placeÂ  in the dark.Â  We turned off our lights in the house, but we still couldn’t really see.Â  Remembering what a repairman had told him once, my husband suggested we take the front panel off the tv and dust a little mirror inside – supposedly we would get a brighter picture.Â  Thinking it sounded easy (?), I agreed and we began to unscrew our tv.Â  We get the panel loosened and discover that there isn’t any dust on the screen!Â  And, you’d be surprised at how much empty space there is in a big tv!Â  But anyway, we started to put it backÂ  together when CRACK!Â  Uh, oh.Â  Here’s a hint –Â  if you ever decide to tackle a home improvement project on the suggestion of someone else, no matter how small the project, always remember *who* told you to do *what* so that person can be held accountable!

So we are trying to put the tv back together, and we were thinking that at this point, we would just like to go backÂ  to our movie, however dark it might be, we just want to be able to WATCH the movie on a working tv.Â  But then my husband sees the small mirror at the bottom that is FULL of dust!Â  I rigged a paper towel rod with a dust cloth, and reached in there and dusted off that little mirror.Â  We tried again to put the tv back together, encouraged and excited by the fact that we might have actually been able to fix it.Â  We put the tv back together, but we had cracked something, so it’s not really properly lined up and is now missing a few screws, oopsie.Â  BUT…Â  the picture is SO much brighter!Â  Not only were we able to see the rest of the movie (which was a nice ‘n suspenseful creature feature), but now we can actually watch tv during the day!Â  Oh, if only we had discovered our new tv during those bright summer days months ago when the Chicago Cubs were still invited to play baseball…

### Comments

**jamiahsh**da Bears have a bye week? Oh, my.  
**taylhis**Funny you should say that - ironically, we can't test it out on a Bears game until next week since this is a Bears bye-week. But, everything that's on is more enjoyable. Funny how not being able to see the headlines on CNN Headline News made me feel like my eyes were really starting to fail - glad I was wrong about that!  
**justj**Wow, just in time for the Bears' games... ;)  
**jamiahsh**Oh, yes. If it was me... I would have literally had to get a new tv when I was finished tearing it apart.

# Geez, You Can't Even Put Your Kid In A Box For A Ride On Top Of The Car Anymore

Often I write about laws and regulations that are intended to help parents decide what is right for their child because sometimes these laws overstep boundaries.Â  There was a story a while ago about a woman who was arrested for leaving her sleeping toddler in the car while she walked with her other daughter to donate change to a Salvation Army bell-ringer less than 50 feet away.Â  I, like many others, couldn’t help but wonder if perhaps the police overstepped their boundaries in that case –Â  it was probably traumatic for all those kids to have to watch their mother getting taken away by the police in handcuffs.Â  I wish that parents nowadays could just be trusted to do what is best for their children – but then there are people like this woman from Alabama:

*ALBERTVILLE, Ala. (AP) — An Alabama woman has been charged with endangering the welfare of a child after police say she let her daughter ride in a cardboard box on top of their van. Albertville Police spokesman Sgt. Jamie Smith said the 37-year-old woman was arrested Sunday after police received a call about a minivan on a state highway with a child riding on top.*

*Smith said the woman told police the box was too big to go inside the van, and that her daughter was inside the box to hold it down.*

*Smith said the mother told officers it was safe because she had the box secured to the van with a clothes hanger.*

*The 13-year-old daughter wasn’t harmed and was turned over to a relative. A jail worker said the mother was out on bond Monday.*

Thank goodness the child was not physically hurt.

### Comments

**derek**She has an odd idea of what is safe, that's for sure!  
**justj**I just can't believe the stupidity of some people. A box with a child in it, secured with a coat hanger? I'm glad the child wasn't hurt, but the mother should be taken in for a psych eval.  
**jamiahsh**yes... thank goodness for that. I wonder if someone surfing on top of a moving hardware store van would be inappropriate ;) sorry, bad taste

# Ready, Set, Relax!

A few years ago (3, I think?) an organization in our county enacted a yearly event called “Ready, Set, Relax!”.Â  Every year, on the first Monday of October, families in the county are encouraged to take off and set aside everything outside of family: no work, no meetings, no private lessons, no practices, rehearsals, games, homework, tv, nor internet.Â  Every local entity takes part; ie, the teachers don’t assign homework and various civic groups (the Girl Scouts, the local city councils, etc.) reschedule their meetings for this day.Â  The idea is that for at least one day, families can enjoy each others company.Â  IÂ  think it’s a great thing, and even though I feel that our family is blessed with much more “together” time than most, we enthusiastically participate in “Ready, Set, Relax!” each year.Â  This year, we made sure to have a sit-down family dinner together (which can be surprisingly difficult to accomplish when you have 4 kids of different ages!), then we took a long walk together.Â  When we got home, the two eldest planned a carnival for us parents and their youngest siblings which included a puppet show, dancing, playing games, and story time.Â  It was so much fun!Â  Even though we are blessed enough to be able to spend a lot of time together as a family, “Ready, Set, Relax!” gives us just another excuse to enjoy each other.Â  It’s definitely something we will do year after year, and something I hope might catch on for the rest of the country!

### Comments

**taylhis**Actually, the tv is supposed to be off... The program is sponsored by a local group called Community Advocates for Healthy Families - I think it's intended for families with young children. Singles like you can volunteer to spend time with kids whose parents just can't get off work. :)  
**derek**It does sound like a good idea- but what about singles like me? Just stay in and watch TV? Hmm.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Sounds like a great idea and something every family should enjoy.  
**justj**Dang, I knew there was a reason not to go to theater try outs. I forgot all about relaxing....  
**jamiahsh**hasn't started here, but I think it is a great idea. I've enjoyed your eldests' puppet shows on more than one occasion as well as their view master movies on the wall... very imaginative... and transporting 30 odd years ago.

# He's Walking!!

My son will be 15 months old on October 11, which makes him due for his next check-up with the doctor.Â  I made the appointment today and found out that all 15-month appointments are made with our pediatric nurse rather than our regular pediatrician, whom we really like.Â  We like the nurse also, but some of her ideas about health care are a bit extreme for our tastes.Â  For example, she thinks sippy (sippie?) cups are just about the worst things ever invented.Â  Her opinion is that a child should be weaned off the bottle around 1 year of age and that he or she should be given a regular cup with just a little bit of water in it.Â  No juice, nothing but water and milk with meals.Â  Ok, that’s fine, but once the baby becomes a toddler, the nurse teaches that they should only be given a glass of water at the sink, several times a day.Â  No bottle, and certainly no sippie cup ought to be carried around the house or elsewhere.Â  I personally don’t have a problem with my kids drinking (especially if it’s water!) away from the sink or out of a sippie cup – I don’t really have the time to be cleaning up even more spills around here, which is what would happen if my kids didn’t graduate to sippie cups from bottles.Â  I have three kids who have weaned off of sippie cups just fine.Â  So anyway, the nurse is nice but can be kind of a stickler about certain things…

And as for the newest milestone – he’s walking!Â  He’s been walking for awhile now, but before Sunday, it was only a few steps at a time.Â  Then he started walking with little push-toys, and he was really good with those; he would make push-toys out of things that weren’t even supposed to be push-toys, like my daughters’ step-stools, strollers, etc.Â  He’s gotten so good at maneuvering the push-toys that he can practically run while pushing, and by now, he’s also great at steering them.Â  We took a walk today, and instead of putting him in his stroller, I let him push his push-toy down the sidewalk, and he was off and running!Â  He got so excited that he took a hand off the push-toy, raised it in a wave, and yelled “Hi!” to the kids playing in the schoolyard we passed.Â  But aside from all of these awesome first steps (pun intended), he really officially started walking yesterday.Â  Yesterday was the first day he began to take lengthy jaunts across the house on two legs without the assistance of a push-toy.Â  He was on a roll;Â  he’d walk over, pick something up, and then straighten up to throw or pass the object rather than flopping down onto his knees and going into a crawlÂ  as he would have done weeks ago.Â  So, my son is taking baby steps to learn to walk, haha.Â  But we think that yesterday was a big breakthrough, err, a big **step** for his learning to walk, and I would bet that by this time next month, he will be walking and running around just like a full-fledged toddler…Â  wonder what the nurse will say about that when she has to chase him all over the room?

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Way to go Christopher! Just in time for Grandma's visit. He'll be running by this weekend. You and your sister drank from sippie cups and I think you turned out okay. I'm all for them.  
**Mysmichelle**Awww it is a big STEP it makes a person mobile.........yeah good job little guy. I have a 15 month old daughter. http://www.myspace.com/mysmichelletheoutlawlady  
**justj**Just think of all the places he will go. And very quickly too, for once they learn to walk, running soon follows.  
**derek**As the VeggieTales say: [Keep Walking!](http://www.imeem.com/safier/music/BC75-y42/veggie-tales-keep-walking/) You can't read this yet of course Christopher Jr., but good job!  
**jamiahsh**Way to go , Big GUY! I have 7 nieces/nephews who have all gone from bottles to sippie cups, to regular cups (what about drinking with a straw?) and I think they are relatively normal, relatively speaking. I'll have to ask who Alyssa and Sydney's ped. nurse is and see if you have them in common.  
**whatever**Beeber is walking! :-) "Come on Dude!"

# 80s Toys

All that talk of California Raisins on my blog the other day got me to thinking about many of the toys I used to play with when I was a kid growing up in the 80’s.Â  I was a big fan of Fisher Price’s Little People back then, and I generally liked playsets of any kind.Â  The internet is a cool thing for many reasons, and it’s fun for stirring up nostalgia now and then.Â  I remembered this set of wind-up skill games they had in the 80s that were really small.Â  After a few minutes of google searching, I found them:Â  [T.H.I.N.G.S. by Milton Bradley](http://www.inthe80s.com/toys/things0.shtml) (**T**otally **H**ilarious **I**ncredibly **N**eat **G**ames of **S**kill – who remembers these?) .Â  It’s funny how most of these little toys look like just your everyday junk from China when you’re an adult, but when I was a kid, I had the Sir-Ring-a-Lot game and wanted all the rest of the T.H.I.N.G.S.

I was also really into [Nerfuls](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://hmmmk.tripod.com/nerfulsbrochure6.jpg&imgrefurl=http://hmmmk.tripod.com/nerfuls.htm&usg=___3adhIv9pNmK6Dg0NP8O_HHLzrk=&h=305&w=582&sz=37&hl=en&start=1&um=1&tbnid=f8GZgmH9wplEJM:&tbnh=70&tbnw=134&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dnerfuls%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DX%26um%3D1) after sending away for one (visor guy) in exchange for cereal UPCs.Â  These were little 3-piece figuresÂ  – a body, a ball for the head, and a hat or hair.Â  Some came with vehicles and the coolest parts were the stackable Nerfuls houses.

Legos were also really cool (still are!), and I’m thinking of getting my 5-year-old some of her own sets for Christmas this year.

Added link to [Weebles Mickey Mouse Clubhouse.](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.plaidstallions.com/hasbro/mm2.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.plaidstallions.com/hasbro/mickey.html&usg=__-I3JenS7tltgWGWzSrmHw4QOaJI=&h=700&w=530&sz=56&hl=en&start=1&um=1&tbnid=rLrdkh6Y9rqYCM:&tbnh=140&tbnw=106&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dmickey%2Bmouse%2Bclubhouse%2Bweebles%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-US:official%26sa%3DN%26um%3D1)

### Comments

**Trenton Rotter**I downloaded Halo Wars a couple of weeks ago and, even though its a"dusty" game, its the best PS3 game in my opinion ;-)  
**derek**Oops, forgot the smiley after the first line. Here ya go J: ;)  
**derek**You write that not realizing your comment in fact has two links, not one... I wonder if Rubik's always owned the snake, or whether they bought out another company.  
**jamiahsh**weird... didn't realize we were limited to one link per comment.  
**jamiahsh**How about Rubik's Revenge? www.inthe80s.com/toys/rubikrevenge.shtml I seem to recall another such puzzle with interlocking colored rings but the name escapes me. Nowadays we have Rubik Revolution http://www.rubiks.com/Shop/Products/Rubiks%20Revolution.aspx  
**taylhis**Comment #41: The snake I'm talking about IS Rubik's, but I only know this from looking it up. Mine didn't say Rubik's on it either, and I don't even remember opening the box or what the box looked like. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubik%27s\_Snake Technologically advanced Rubik's Cube doesn't sound quite the same, but then again, I never got into the cube since it was too difficult for me as a kid. Haven't tried it as an adult.  
**derek**Good grief- 39 (now 40) comments?? I think you'll hold on to this record for a while! Was the Snake Rubik's? I remember having a snake (I think it was an official version) and it didn't say Rubik's at all. I did have a Rubik's Magic, and the Deluxe version as well. Did you know there is a new $150 cube that replaces the stickers with lights and touchscreens? That's right- it doesn't twist. You glide your fingers over the surface to "rotate" it.  
**taylhis**Loved Merlin... How about Rubik's Snake? And regular Rubik's, of course, but I liked the snake better.  
**whatever**I loved I Vant to Bite Your Finger!  
**jamiahsh**k... enough for me for now. n-z to go sometime  
**jamiahsh**Merlin... http://www.inthe80s.com/toys/merlin0.shtml remember "borrowing" it from my brother  
**jamiahsh**http://www.inthe80s.com/toys/ivanttobiteyourfinger.shtml I Vant to Bite Your Finger? New to me.  
**jamiahsh**my cousin had the magic set then graduated to another one... the name escapes me.  
**taylhis**oh yes - remember the Hippity Hoppers. I always wanted one, never had one.  
**jamiahsh**Hippity Hoppers... very similar to the toys your girls have that you bonce on... everything old is new.  
**taylhis**Don't remember Turbo Teen, but Hubby and I share this as one of our favorite toys (and we forgot to mention it!): http://www.thisoldtoy.com/L\_FP\_Set/toy-pages/900-999/999-fisherpricemagicshow.html  
**jamiahsh**I remember Rubik's Cube and Turbo Teen and the Littles!  
**jamiahsh**hey if not for you... this post wouldn't have started... thank YOU!  
**taylhis**Sorry, not into the Gummi Bears at all... LOVED The Littles! Who remembers the Sat morning cartoon - Rubik's Cube?  
**jamiahsh**couldn't remember if they had Gummi Bear toys or not.. powered by gummibeary juice.  
**taylhis**LOVED ALPHIE!!! THANKS for the memory! http://www.inthe80s.com/toys/alphie.shtml  
**jamiahsh**I had the walking mickey, too!  
**taylhis**Ummm.... Balls Of Lead? Something tells me that's made in China ;)  
**jamiahsh**well... have to see what exorbitant amount they charge on my next trip.  
**taylhis**Looked it up... apparently Monchichi was a tv show FIRST, then a toy? And the toys are still available (as of '08) at Japan in Epcot!!! As if I needed another reason to cross the lake besides the best snow cones in the world!  
**jamiahsh**Madballs were cool. pogo ball accident waiting to happen = more fun  
**whatever**MONCHICHI - I remember that commercial and that little thing.  
**whatever**WWF guys - Yup!! But, look at my list.. Anything else look really fun?  
**taylhis**MONCHICHI! I remember those! And like many toys of the 80's, the tv show they made of it. I had a Monchichi and also a knock-off... now I have to look those up...  
**jamiahsh**This is too fun!  
**jamiahsh**Alphie the robot.  
**jamiahsh**C, WWF plastic figures and ring? And Taylhis, I had the MM talking phone, too! I loved that thing.  
**whatever**Can you guess which of the toys I listed was my favorite?  
**taylhis**Jamiahsh - I added a link to the post just for you. This link also contains a pic of this MM phone that I didn't remember I played with until I saw it. I must have been 2 or 3 when I had it - I love dredging up memories like this! Hubby remembers the same phone!  
**jamiahsh**Monchichi? Rockem Sockem Robots?  
**taylhis**Ah, yes, lots of great toys listed there... but I chose more obscure toys to describe in my blog since I didn't want to ramble on, and on, and on... But I'm glad for the reminders! There was also My Pet Monster, or for girl toys, there were Charmkins and Sweet Secrets... too many to name!  
**jamiahsh**BNI + Batteries Not Included Sorry, should not comment so quickly  
**derek**Oh, thanks a lot C! You just \*had\* to post between my forced two-part post, didn't you? :P :D  
**derek**(split from previous post due to my comment being "spammy" according to Wordpress...) As for Legos, my brother and I had many sets growing up. Now I have [Lego Star Wars](http://www.mobygames.com/game/windows/lego-star-wars-the-video-game) (also [II](http://www.mobygames.com/game/windows/lego-star-wars-ii-the-original-trilogy)) for my Gamecube. Can you tell my idea of a toy is a bit different from yours? :D Oh yes, T.H.I.N.G.S.- I vaguely remember them. I could link to more video games here, but the entire concept of video games has to do with skill, so...  
**whatever**I remember Garbage Pail Kids, Madballs, Transformers, the rubber WWF (now WWE) Wrestling Figures and Ring, Pogo Ball, Nintendo, Stretch Armstrong (was this 80s?), Little People, Balls of Lead, YoBall, Cabbage Patch Kids, Verbot, Omnibot...  
**derek**I don't remember Nerfuls, but Nerf balls and such I do. I also remember the game [Nerf Arena Blast](http://www.mobygames.com/game/windows/nerf-arena-blast) from 10 years ago. Fun game. I do remember Little People, but particularly the pre-pre-Sims game [Little Computer People"](http://www.mobygames.com/game/c64/little-computer-people).  
**taylhis**Jamiahsh - NI = ? And JustJ - still have those Legos?  
**jamiahsh**WOW... I had the Mickey Mouse Weebles playset. IT WAS REALLY COOL. I was thinking more along the lines of electronic toys with the BNI addendum but you can call it a reference to the movie, if you like. I never saw it but don't think it sounded very good... thoughts? I also thought that Jabba's Floating Sail Barge would be a cool toy, but I don't think it ever was made.  
**justj**I didn't play with too many of the toys in the 80s. My nephew had all of the Star Wars and Transformer toys. My oldest girls had weebles, Rainbow Brite, Care Bears and Legos, We really had the Legos. I don't remember Nerfuls or T.H.I.N.G.S.  
**taylhis**Liked Weebles too - grandma had those at her house, including the Weebles Mickey Mouse clubhouse which I remember being pretty cool. She also had this Playskool McDonald's that was pretty neat. Nerfuls were produced by Parker Brothers, who had the Nerf rights at the time, but their bodies were made of vinyl, not Nerf foam. I remember that Jabba's Palace looked really cool, but I didn't have any Star Wars toys. Of course it's an excuse for me to play with Legos again! No, actually, I think she'd really like them - she loves puzzles. There are lego sets for all different ages, so with a little shopping around, I think I could find one that would not frustrate her. batteries not included\* Is that a reference to the 80's movie?  
**jamiahsh**"Weebles wobble but the don't fall down." Nerfuls... were they associated with all things Nerf? How about the Ewok Village playset or Jabba's Palace complete with trap door leading to the Rancor Pit; however, the trap door was on the Hutt's stand (unlike the movie) so you had to move him and the Rancor was sold separately. And we have of course the everything old is new again category of Transformers. Lite Brite and Spirograph. Legos are the best but for your 5 year-old nerves of steel (unless that is an excuse to get some for you to create ;) And don't forget all things "Some assembly required" or "Batteries Not Included."

# Science Probably Could Have Given Us Something More Useful Than This

…Â [giant puppet, but I found it](http://www.ireport.com/docs/DOC-337120) pretty cool when I came across it the other day.Â  Check out the frenzied movements of the puppeteers in red – there are lines of men, and they take turns running and jumping to pull the ropes to move the huge puppet.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Ok.... I agree with that

# Blast From The Past

Being a child of the ’80’s, I definitely remember the California Raisins – they were 3D-ish Claymation figures of singing and dancing raisins, mostly famous for their rendition of “I Heard It Through The Grapevine”.Â  Thinking about this as an adult has me wondering if this was a successful ad campaign.Â  I guess successful is not quite the word I’m looking for…Â  I mean, of course it was ultra-successful in a sense; everyone in the ’80’s knew about the California Raisins, but did they really make kids want to eat more raisins?Â  Later they began to do commercials for Post’s Raisin Bran (Post only chooses the plumpest, juiciest raisins!), so maybe they helped to sell more boxes of cereal.

In the ’80’s, the California Raisins were celebrities and they had their own line of products that ran the marketing gamut: lunch boxes, stuffed toys, tv specials, t-shirts, Happy Meal toys, you name it.Â  This is precisely the reason why I came across a California Raisin figure the other day at the thrift store.Â  I had stopped in to get myself a few more little Halloween figurines for my front hall shelves (had an empty shelf after finally packing away the figurines of the bears playing baseball after the Chicago Cubs were eliminated from MLB’s post-season – that is ALL I’m going to say about THAT!), and at this particular thrift store, you get a free Happy Meal-type toy with every $2 spent.Â  My husband and I did just spend 5 hours gutting out the girls’ room and donating most of their toys last week, but I couldn’t resist picking out a toy for my favorite little shopping companion – my 3-year-old daughter Disney.Â  So anyway, we were pressed for time, and I found the California Raisin, so I grabbed him and gave him to Disney, promising her we would watch a movie of her raisin dancing and singing on the computer when we got home.Â  True to my word, I loaded up youtube and found some great clips of California Raisins, which went over really well with Disney.Â  She giggled and covered her mouth, and then she put her raisin on the computer to “watch” the other dancing raisins.Â  He’s been a presence in our household since last week, and of course her little brother likes him too.Â  He is small enough so that I can put him in our “emergency” car box (full of toys, snacks, band-aids, etc) when the kids tire of him in the house (the raisin, not the little brother!).Â  He even makes a great bathtub toy!Â  So anyway, while resurrecting the California Raisins last week, I came across this cute littleÂ  commercial that I hadn’t thought about in the 20 years since it was made.Â  Enjoy this blast from the past!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I like them both and yes, I fondly remember the Raisins.  
**derek**I haven't thought of these things for a long time. Dunno about anyone else, but they didn't increase my taste for raisins. I prefer the unshriveled variety, thank-you-very-much, also known as grapes.  
**Lauren London S Baby « Popular People**[...] Blast From The Past | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# Boys Are Gross!

It’s becoming clear to me why little girls think little boys are gross.Â  They have a point – little boys ARE gross.Â  Case in point: my almost 15-month-old **boy** was playing on the stairs today.Â  When I went to retrieve him, he had taken half of his diaper off, and…Â  well, I really don’t want to get too technical or disgustingly detailed, so let’s just say that he had gone #2 in his diaper and that it was a precarious situation and made for a difficult maneuver to get him off the stairs and cleaned up without spreading the mess.Â  Leave it to the boy…

Not going to comment on my now 5-year-old daughter’s ‘painting with poop phase’ she had when she was a toddler –Â  that was far worse, but just a phase.Â  Our boy seems to live to get into things he’s not supposed to, whether it be splashing in the dog’s water bowl, dumping the dog’s food (he does each of these activities 2-3 times a day!), wanting to play with wires, throwing food, smearing food, squeezing food in his fist, dumping drinks, playing in the toilet, the list goes on…Â Â Â Â Â Â Â  BOYS!

### Comments

**justj**I'm not so sure it is just boys. I only had girls, and sometimes they were just gross. Someday, when it will embarrass them the most, I will have to share a story or two.  
**jamiahsh**WELL... HMMPF! Comment too short? That should do it. LOL!!!

# Jon And Kate, What About The 8?

You may have heard all the brouhaha about the TLC reality show *Jon and Kate Plus Eight* that’s been in the news lately.Â  If not, a quick re-cap:Â  Jon and Kate Gosselin were a young couple who had a set of twins and a set of sextuplets, giving them a grand total of 8 kids before either one of them had even hit the age of 30.Â  They filmed a show for TLC chronicling their lives with all the little ones, and the special was such a success that they soon found themselves celebrities with their own reality show.Â  Apparently the sudden mega-stardom caused too much strain on the family, and the marriage did not survive.Â  Amidst accusations of infidelity and other ugly, yet very public issues, the couple filed for divorce earlier this year.Â  Scarcely a move has been made by either party since without full coverage from the media.

I watched a few episodes of the show back when the Gosselin’s were one big happy family, mostly because it was interesting to watch such a large family function as well as they did, err, as well as they seemed to function anyway.Â  But ever since the big family fall-out, things have been getting increasingly worse for the clan.Â  TLC announced yesterday that Jon would no longer be a major part of the show, and they were re-naming it Kate Plus Eight.Â  Ouch.Â  There are millions of people who follow the plight of the Gosselins; there are Kate fans and there are Jon fans, and then there are people who are mainly concerned for the welfare of the 8 kids.Â  The media has certainly vilified Jon, though it’s difficult to determine how much of it he has done to himself.Â  No matter how much the accusations about Kate’s controlling and domineering nature tend to be proven true by her behavior, she is always able to appear to be the better person through her public statements.Â  Maybe she really is the better person of the two, or perhaps she is more intelligent or has a better spokesperson advising her than Jon has.Â  But whatever the case, one thing is clear – those 8 kids they created together should not have to be caught in the middle of all of this, it’s disgusting.

The reason I decided to join in on the media storm and write about this is because of the latest chapter that broke yesterday – when TLC kicked Jon off the show.Â  His response?Â  He legally banned all production crews from the house he still co-owns with Kate, where the children live and the parents take turns visiting.Â  He has threatened to slap TLC with criminal charges if they come onto his property.Â  He hasn’t said whether this includes a ban on filming the children, but one can guess, based upon his actions, that it’s no longer ok with Jon that his kids star in a reality show.Â  It’s completely understandable – many people, including child psychology experts, etc, were constantly saying how unhealthy it was for the 8 kids to be filmed on a daily basis.Â  But Jon (along with Kate, back when they actually agreed on something) was always a staunch defender of the show and the fact that he and Kate had the kids’ best interests at heart.Â  But now that Jon got himself kicked off the show, it looks like he’s decided that reality tv is no longer a healthy lifestyle for his children.Â  And that’s fine and even makes sense, but one does have to question his intentions when his legal action to stop the show comes the very day that news is released that he is no longer a part of the show himself.Â  As a well-written gossip column stated, “Jon is acting like the kid who didn’t get picked to be on a team for the neighborhood baseball game, so he’s taking his ball and going home.”Â  Whatever his intentions, I am among the many former fans who just want what is best for the 8 kids while the rest of it goes away.Â  But before that happens, I am very interested to hear the spin Jon puts on his reasons for his actions – all of them.Â  He is giving a live interview on Larry King Live tonight on CNN, and I’m almost ashamed to admit that I will be watching (the midnight replay of course – there is no way this would ever take precedent over a new episode of The Office).Â  Then again, why bother watching the interview when I know the “highlights” will be shoved down our throats for the next few days – or at least until Jon’s careless behavior provides enough fodder to make yet another story…

### Comments

**mary911**The whole thing is horribly sad. I never watched an episode, because I didn't (and don't) feel it's right to profit off of your children as those two "adults" have done. It's a shame that they were willing to risk their relationship on making a fast buck. Now look at them. The only ones suffering are their children. Ugh....I'm stepping off the soapbox.....  
**jamiahsh**You mean you actually got to watch a new episode of The Office as it happened? No spoiler but big episode next week. As for the ever invasive in your face reality shows, "real life" intrusive shows are rarely if ever good, especially for the children involved. Will there be a Kate Plus 8: 20 Years Later?

# Bee Vs. Me

Yesterday I became unwittingly involved in a duel, but at least I was the winner!

I was standing outside throwing out our old bread for the birds with my 3-year-old when I bent over to pick up some doggy-doo.Â  I noticed a few bees hovering about, but there have been a lot of them lately, and I’m never too worried about bees since they don’t usually sting away from their hive unless provoked…Â  unless you happen across a bee who is a little off his rocker or something.Â  So anyway, I went inside to wash my hands, and that’s when I got stung on the back of my neck.Â  Out of instinct, I slapped the little pest, and then I ran outside to get my daughter to safety away from the other bees.Â  When we got inside,Â  the bee was on the floor and still alive, so I triumphantly took it hostage.Â  I looked up how to treat a bee sting (it hurt!!!), as well as what they eat – I had not captured the thing to torture it, but I certainly didn’t want to let it go…Â  I wasn’t sure what I was going to do with it, but I didn’t want it starving in the meantime.Â  After finding out that it was indeed a honeybee, and that he would probably like some nectar before he passed away as a result of his stinger being torn from his behind (and implanted intoÂ  my neck).Â  I guess I just kind of wanted to see if what I thought was an old myth was true – do honeybees die after stinging?Â  From everything I read as well as my real-life example (he passed away last night), it seems to be truth ratherÂ  than fiction.Â  So goodbye to the bee that stung me yesterday, and farewell – I’m sorry it had to end this way.Â  The good news is, other than a marble-sized lump on the back of my neck, I don’t have many ill effects from the sting; the pain is gone and the itching is tolerable.Â  I traded my story with everyone I ran into yesterday because who over the age of 30 still gets stung by bees?Â  Surprisingly, it’s more common than I thought, and not just something that happens to reckless kids whose curiosity and carelessness often pave the way to childhood wounds and ailments.Â  After trading bee stories yesterday, I learned that a friend and her husband were stung by what they said were sweat bees while riding their motorcycle, but after further research and thanks to the Schmidt Sting Pain Index I found on Wikipedia, I’ve concluded that neither their nor my bee stings could be the work of sweat bees.Â  Honey bees are more likely the culprit, as the pain from their sting ranks much higher on the scale.Â Â  Since my husband found the pain index so interesting (and began looking up bullet ant stings on youtube, yeow!), I’ve posted it for your reference as well.Â  Yet another thing I love about living where I live –Â  we don’t have all the varieties of nasty stinging insects as are found in tropical climates, and the ones we do have at least give us a break over the winters.Â  I’m glad for that because after the pain I went through yesterday, it’s going to be difficult to let my little ones play outside until the bees are gone – thank goodness this happened to me and not them!Â  Oh, and if you don’t cringe or at least wriggle your toes when reading the following descriptions of types of pain, there is something wrong with you!

RIP, Bee!

**Schmidt Sting Pain Index**\* 1.0 Sweat bee: Light, ephemeral, almost fruity. A tiny spark has singed a single hair on your arm.  
\* 1.2 Fire ant: Sharp, sudden, mildly alarming. Like walking across a shag carpet & reaching for the light switch.  
\* 1.8 Bullhorn acacia ant: A rare, piercing, elevated sort of pain. Someone has fired a staple into your cheek.  
\* 2.0 Bald-faced hornet: Rich, hearty, slightly crunchy. Similar to getting your hand mashed in a revolving door.  
\* 2.0 Yellowjacket: Hot and smoky, almost irreverent. Imagine W. C. Fields extinguishing a cigar on your tongue.  
\* 2.x Honey bee and European hornet: Like a matchhead that flips off and burns on your skin.  
\* 3.0 Red harvester ant: Bold and unrelenting. Somebody is using a drill to excavate your ingrown toenail.  
\* 3.0 Paper wasp: Caustic & burning. Distinctly bitter aftertaste. Like spilling a beaker of hydrochloric acid on a paper cut.  
\* 4.0 Pepsis wasp: Blinding, fierce, shockingly electric. A running hair drier has been dropped into your bubble bath.  
\* 4.0+ Bullet ant: Pure, intense, brilliant pain. Like fire-walking over flaming charcoal with a 3-inch rusty nail in your heel.

### Comments

**sweat bee sting | SWEAT**[...] Bee Vs. Me [...]  
**jamiahsh**Interesting coincidence, I went out to my brother's house this morning to wait for pest control who was to arrive between 8 & 8.30 to determine where bees are getting into the house.

# Mental Floss

CNN.com links to a blog called Mental Floss.Â  Usually involving tidbits about pop culture in a top-10 format,Â  these articles can be quite entertaining.Â  For example, I came across a few the other day about fast food:Â  *[Who Approved That?Â  7 Food Promotions Gone Horrible Wrong](http://blogs.static.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/25060.html?cnn=yes)* and *[10 Secret Menu Items at Fast Food Restaurants](http://www.cnn.com/2009/LIVING/wayoflife/09/28/mf.10.secret.menu.items/)* and enjoyed both of those.Â  Note the NY Yankees reference in the failed Pepsi promotion in the first article (sorry Jamiahsh!).

Mental Floss has featured other lists in their articles that have interested me; of note is *10 Homeschooled Celebrities* (Agatha Christie, Mozart, Alexander Graham Bell, to name a few), *10 Things That Have Deflated the Macy’s Parade*, and *5 Weather Events Worth Chatting About*.Â  It’s a well-written, entertaining blog (like this one, haha) – Just thought I’d share it!

### Comments

**More Mental Floss | My Food Chain Gang**[...] while back now, I made a blog post about a site called mentalfloss.com, which is a collection of interesting, somewhat useless but [...]  
**justj**Fun stuff, I may have to visit more.  
**jamiahsh**8 Strange and Different Restaurants! Hilarious, but one or two sound fun (provided one could afford them, of course. I will let others read it and not ruin it for all.  
**jamiahsh**Pepsi SUCKS! Wonder where that promotion took place... obviously not locally.

# Time To Blog...

I think I could use a Tivo.Â  That way, I could Tivo Dr. Phil and watch it when I fold laundry – that would certainly be better on my ears and more entertaining than the screaming parrot.Â  Well, actually, I don’t know how Tivo works – I could probably only watch what I ~~tape~~ record (I grew up in the 80’s – we “taped” our movies and our music) on the tv that has the Tivo, right?Â  But anyway, I could pause it when someone needed a diaper change or help with something or a snack or a drink to be able to watch more tv instead of just never getting to commit to watching shows (except really good ones like The Office) because of my lack of time and my lack of Tivo.Â  I wonder how much they cost; I have no idea.Â  It occurred to me that I don’t watch much tv anymore; a hobby I really liked as a kid.Â  It’s not a bad thing, really, I’m busy doing other more worthwhile things.Â  But I do miss getting to watch Dr. Phil – my tv has been hijacked by the likes of Dora, Diego, and Max and Ruby in the morning when it’s on, and I don’t like not being able to watch the Office until it’s available online.Â  We try to watch The Office when it airs on Thursday night and without fail, all hell always breaks loose with the kids even though it’s on at 9 and they should be in bed.

I got the movie Mr. Mom from the library for the kids toÂ  watch.Â  I figured since my husband and I liked the movie as kids, we should show it to our kids – after all, they *loved* Annie (the 1982 version, the update is awful).Â  But apparently Mr. Mom came out before the MPAA came up with the PG-13 rating – there were a few scenes (funny how neither one of us remembered they were in the movie) I would rather not be in the type of movies my children enjoy.Â  At least we were able to skip over the strip club scene without them even noticing, yikes.Â  I surely don’t remember **that** from watching that movie as a kid.Â  Maybe there was an edited-for-television version…Â  Anyway, all this got me to thinking that they should have a function for dvd players where you can edit the movie to play while skipping certain parts of your choosing.Â  Maybe this already exists, but I don’t know a lot about the latest gadgets and such.

Well, anyway…Â  sorry for the randomness, just had a little time to blog for a change, so I just wrote what was on my mind at the moment!Â  Maybe I’ll check into that Tivo…

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Or Dish or if I'm not mistaken most cable cos now have DVR. We have a good deal here... you can have more than one link going whereby it IS possible to record something from another tv in the house and watch someting entirely different on another. Unfortunately, it doesn't help with your problem at 9PM Thursday nights when you want to watch The Office as it airs. And given the choice between the two, I would also choose the 1982 Annie or better still... the 1992 EHS version.. NOT the 2001 FCF production ;)

# Outlaws And Hideouts Revisited

All of this talk of hideouts and outlaws (see my previous post about Robber’s Cave) makes me think about a really fun card game we’ve recently discovered – it’s easy to become a Bandits junkie!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/delete-bandits.gif)

[Bandits is a card game by Buffalo Games](http://www.buffalogames.com/products/card_games/?tx_ttproducts_pi1[backPID]=16&tx_ttproducts_pi1[product]=155&cHash=e1d41c2718), and it’s fun for the entire family.Â  It accommodates 2-6 players and is recommended for ages 10+, but we’ve found that our 9-year-old daughter and her friends can learn it and play quite easily.

Basically, a player begins with a hand of six cards, and he has 3 options on his turn: start a gunfight, draw a card, or stash loot in his Hideaway.Â  Many shoot-outs and much thievery ensues until the deck runs out of cards, and players count their stash in their Hideaways to determine the winner.Â  Those are the basics – there are many other fun cards that offer various twists on the game play (double-crossing lawmen and outlaws, booby traps, backfires, to name a few), and I’m just skimming the surface of the game; you really should play to appreciate it.Â  I don’t know that I’ve ever played such a fun card game (I like [Pit](http://thehouseofcards.com/retail/pit.html) a lot, but it’s another type pf game altogether), and each game of Bandits is unique dependent upon the number of players – a 2-player game plays out much more differently than does a 4-player game.Â  I’d like to try it with 6 players, but we can never haul it out at game night since we always have more than 6 players.Â  However many players there are, Bandits is definitely worth playing and highly recommended by this game collector!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yep.... fun times

# Lincoln Legends Part II - Robber's Cave

Living in Lincoln Nebraska was really cool; it was interesting to be in the western part of the midwest and away from the Great Lakes region – there are differences both in culture and in topography.Â  The story of Robber’s Cave in Lincoln interested me for a few reasons, but especially for the wild-west themes; sandstone bluffs, outlaw hideouts – ok, so I’ve eaten dinner at one of Al Capone’s old hideouts in the Chicago area which is now a steakhouse, but I was talking Jesse James-type outlaws…Â  Hmmm, interesting, old Lincoln had outlaws, and old Chicago had gangsters, there’s one comparison…

Back from the minor tangent and onto Robber’s Cave – the entrance is a now a sandstone bluff located behind a Subway restaurant.Â  We did get a chance to visit it and found it quite easily, but by 2002 when we were there, it had been sealed.Â  In the 1970’s, there was a little old lady who would open up Robber’s Cave for explorers who paid the admission fee.Â  You would then follow her down a small rickety staircase and be on your own to explore the cave.Â  I’ve read various reports on the internet about people who grew up on Lincoln and used to go down into the cave all the time –Â  one person even talks of having kids’ birthday parties down there!Â  There are tunnels, rooms, a well, and even a natural fireplace with a chimney!Â  There are also legends of western outlaws (like Jesse James, supposedly, though his presence at the cave hasn’t been proven) that used to use Robber’s Cave as a hideout to count their loot and evade law enforcement after robbing trains, stage coaches, etc.Â  Before the outlaws took over, it’s said that Native Americans used the cave for spiritual ceremonies.Â  Robber’s Cave also carries legends of being a stop on the Underground Railroad, an underground brewery, and a tunnel that connected the state penitentiary with the State Hospital for the Insane.Â  Hmm, that almost sounds TOO haunted to be true – supposedly patients and convicts would use the tunnels to escape.Â  Then again, when we were there, I did note the State Penitentiary within view of the entrance to Robber’s Cave.Â Â  And speaking of Nebraska’s death row, I’ll note that NE is the only state in the country to still have the electric chair as the exclusive means of carrying out the death penalty.

But anyway, Robber’s Cave is a neat place, steeped in many decades of history.Â  And the reason I’m bringing this up now?Â  [Robber’s Cave is for sale!](http://www.loopnet.com/property/14532756/S-10th-St-and-High-St/) Well, at least the lot that includes the sealed entrance is for sale – I’m not sure if that then entitles the owner to free roam of all the caves or not if they continue onto other parcels underground.Â  If you’d like more details about the legends of Robber’s Cave, [this is an interesting read](http://www.prairieghosts.com/robber.html).

### Comments

**Jake**A couple of weeks ago we found another entrance to it, and I have to say it is one of the coolest things in Nebraska that I have ever seen.  
**derek**Ah, a little bit of history. The only cave I've ever been in is Eagle Cave in Wisconsin (I think? It's been a long time). This was when I was in boy scouts.  
**jamiahsh**that IS really cool... it would be really neat to go exploring

# What's That Called?

A while back, a tangenteer (tangents.org blogger) wrote ab0ut a type of obstacle course based upon cause and effect relationships between different objects.Â  You know, like the board game Mousetrap – a ball rolls and falls into a bucket, which triggers another ball that goes down a ramp, etc.Â  I forgot what this is called (and who blogged it!Â  Was it me or derek?), but I think it’s a Japanese word.Â  Anyway, I came across [this website for a Dutch department store called Hema](http://producten.hema.nl/), and they have an animated one of those obstacle course thingys using their products on their website.Â  Just follow the link above and watch to see what happens!Â  It’s pretty creative, and I thought people might like it!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**ooops... that was already mentioned, but it is 4.49AM  
**jamiahsh**BACK TO THE FUTURE!!!! Remember Doc Brown's contraption that gives Einstein his food... however...  
**taylhis**Well, thank you, and yes, I find my life very interesting. But not because I make it that way, I can thank my 4 young kids and menagerie of pets for that! Thanks for reading my blog! I think Pee-Wee's Big Adventure also opens with a Rube Goldberg contraption... Can anyone think of any other movie that has them?  
**Mysmichelle**I actually have a mad scientist friend and he goes ON about rube goldbergs contraptions. It's funny because I always tell people he reminds me of the scientist in the 'back to the future' movie.......and that movie actually opens with a rub goldberg contraption. I love your blog. You have a way of keeping the common interesting. I hope that is true in your life as well :-)  
**jamiahsh**put whatever's site after site? He has been racking up the posts lately. Way2go admin! I just knew it was not my site... scientific posts are not my speciality. I thought it might be Pavlovian but wasn't that a dog experiment?  
**derek**Google is your friend ;) Just remember to add "site:tangents.org" to your search to limit the results to just this site. Of course you can put whatever site you want after site: to search just that site.  
**taylhis**That's it! Thanks for the research D! I thought it was my blog post, but I wasn't sure... I've gone off on over 500 tangents, it's hard to keep them straight!  
**derek**Was this the blog post you were thinking of L? <http://taylhis.tangents.org/2008/05/21/japanese-inventions/>  
**taylhis**Yes, you're right Mysmichelle - Rube Goldberg. Pretty far off from the Japanese word I was looking for, ha! Thanks for your help and your comment!  
**Mysmichelle**I've always known those sorts of things as Rube Goldberg contraptions see link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rube\_Goldberg

# The Informant!

I haven’t reviewed a movie on my blog in awhile – mostly because movie-watching was a favorite summer activity this year, so I saw too many to mention.Â  I don’t think I’m going to start reviewing them now, but today’s experience at the movie theater (saw The Informant! with Matt Damon) is worthy of mentioning.Â  Not for the movie itself – it seemed to be an interesting enough plot line, but I couldn’t follow the entire trail of corporate deception and greed, so I dozed a little.Â  And I wasn’t the only one.Â  The guy two rows behind us began snoring very loudly in the middle of the movie!Â  It was distracting, and he began by breathing heavily, so first we were worried about him (seeing a man drop dead at a Chinese buffet will make you a little paranoid).Â  But then he started the snoring, so we knew he was ok; but then it became obnoxious.Â  So we tolerated that for the rest of the movie, and then he woke up during the last scene with a loud “BURP!”.Â  Well.

We go to the movies almost every week and I’ve never heard someone so full of rude noises, including teenagers!Â  I feel badly for the guy, but mostly, I just want to know why he paid $6.50 to take a napÂ  – the movie theater seats aren’t *that* comfy!Â  As for **my** dozing, it wasn’t really a nap, and I was (mostly) entertained during two hours of The Informant.Â  I don’t know that I would recommend it – if you like toÂ  unravel these kinds of movies, then go for it.Â  But I sometimes find myself zoning out, and by the time I’m back to the movie, something has happened or there are two many characters who look alikeÂ  for me to be able to follow the plot, as both were the cases here.Â  I did find Damon’s character, Mark Whitacre, quite entertaining, as was the narrative style of the movie.Â  It kind of reminded me of a Coen brothers movie – you know, greed gets the best of people, a plot to gain money unravels, and people get killed, except The Informant was decidedly less violent – rated R only for language, in fact.Â  An entertaining two hours for some, but apparently not for all!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I though the previews looked like it would be a different part for Mr. Damon and he reportedly had to put on a bit of weight for the role.

# YEEOWWW!!!

Darn it, I am sick of this!Â  Some time last week, I came down with a nasty canker sore.Â  I don’t remember what day it was, but I remember that by Friday, I was already sick of it.Â  We took the kids to the county fair and the demolition derby on Friday, which was great fun, but I was in a lot of pain and couldn’t enjoy the fair food in the slightest.Â  In fact, the location and intensity of the pain has kept me from enjoying many of my favorite activities since last week – talking, singing, eating, drinking, even smiling…Â  THIS SUCKS!Â  I’ve never had a canker sore this painful!Â  I feel like that big grumpy bear with a toothache from some old cartoon.Â  It’s really hard to think about anything else, and since I can’t really do anything in daily life without aggravating it and causing more pain, I think I’ve been kind of crabby.Â  I’ve been looking up remedies incessantly on the internet (and no, I didn’t find any cases of fatal canker sores, which is why I vowed to stop looking up medical stuff on the internet after we scared ourselves silly about my husband’s stomachache), and none of the remedies I’ve tried help.Â  Since I can’t really eat anything, I’ve been living on water and Tylenol for the past week!Â  The Tylenol barely works, so I finally went to Walmart yesterday and got myself some Benzocaine stuff to put on it.Â  It works wonderfully; my entire mouth goes numb, and there is a substantial amount of drooling and slurring of words, but no pain.Â  The only problem is that it only lasts for about 25 minutes.Â  But for those 25 minutes, I am so high on my own endorphins from finally not feeling intense pain that it’s wonderful.Â  But then the pain returns, and it’s almost worse than before I took the medicine because I actually got to experience life pain-free, even for just a few minutes.Â  I think I’m going to have my husband hide the benzocaine from me before I become addicted – it’s really hard to stop putting it on there when I’ve had constant pain for a week!Â  But I read that if you use too much benzocaine, you could develop a serious condition called Methemoglobinemia, among other things, so I’m really trying to limit that.Â  I’ve read a lot of things about canker sores, but like I said, nothing has really helped.Â  Experts are not even entirely sure what causes the darn things, but stress is the top suspect.Â  That makes sense; I’ve had a ton of stress lately between family stuff (Sammie is back in a phase among other things) and just being so busy all the time, and I don’t always handle stress in the best way.Â  Guess I need to find better ways to deal with stress than to internalize it, but I can’t deal with learning that right now – everything is hard to do with all this pain!!!

I can’t help but think what a great diet this is though – it hurts to eat anything, and I’m really surprised certain Hollywood types haven’t paid someone to discover how to give them canker sores just so they can’t eat.Â  People are crazy that way; I used to work at a frozen yogurt shop in an upscale suburb of Chicago, and these rich housewives would come in with their jaws wired shut wondering what kind of fat-free yogurt they could still get into their mouths.Â  Not that any of them were terribly overweight to begin with…Â  But anyway, I hate this!Â  I guess there’s not much more to write about it, but I have to say that it feels good to be able to “talk” without the pain increasing…Â  Time to take more meds!Â  YEOWWW!!!Â  

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**As you know Lisa, I get a lot of canker sores and have had some pretty painful ones in my lifetime. The thing that works best for me is "Colgate Orabase paste". You can get it at WalMart. If you put it on just before bedtime, it coats the sore and helps the healing process. Another remedy, is when you feel one coming on, take the vitamin "lysine". Actually I take 2 of these each day (1 in AM and 1 in PM) as a preventative. It helps keep my canker sores to a minimum. I used to get 4 or 5 at a time almost constantly. Good luck! They are horrible.  
**derek**Here's hoping you get better ASAP!  
**justj**I really meant for that smiley to be a big O shock face not the grin.. OOPS  
**justj**I get some nasty ones too. Here are some remedies I've used and/or heard of. Note -- I think some of these are meant to cause extreme pain, so the normal pain feels less intense. :o Rinse mouth with salt water or mouthwash (both painful). Ora-Jell (Baby teething jell works too) Shot of (choose your hard liquor) rinse and swallow (can hurt, but...) If you can find it Aspir-Gum (Gum with Aspirin in it) or chew baby aspirin/Tylenol. Rinse with Ice Water And finally as a bit of a preventative, this will occasionally work, when you notice you are getting a canker sore take the recommended daily dose of any antacid for two days. This seems to lesson the severity of the sores, especially if caused by stress. I'll have to look, but there is a medicine that is a pain reliever/coating. It seems to last longer than anything else and actually coats the sore long enough to eat a meal.  
**jamiahsh**Ditto! I hate those things, too. And for a week! YUCK! Hope it goes away soon :D  
**Chris**I am so sorry honey. I hate to see you in pain. It will go away soon -- and, now you have another reason to not stress yourself!

# And I Thought The Sky Safari Was Cool!

The [Sky Safari](http://www.kidszoo.org/rides.htm) is an aerial ride at the Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo in Fort Wayne, Indiana.Â  It’s like a chair-lift at a ski resort, but lose the snow and add views of zoo animals; including zebra, ostrich, wildebeest and lions.Â  I rode on it earlier this summer with my daughters, mom and uncle, and we all loved it.Â  Speaking of travel, I’ve heard from a bunch of my Ohio friends about how beautiful the Hocking Hills area is in the southeastern part of the state.Â  We probably won’t have a chance to visit this year, even though I’ve heard that it’s just gorgeous in the fall.Â  It might have to go on the “to-do” list though after I found out they have [this](http://www.hockinghillscanopytours.com/pricing.html); a 2-hour zip line tour through the treetops!Â  Check it out – the first part of the video is the training and orientation, they really get going around the two-minute mark if you want to fast forward.Â  But it looks like something I think I would try!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**def looks like something I would enjoy  
**justj**Knowing the area fairly well, this could be a very exciting trip. With wonderful hills, gorges and waterfalls in the area, a two hour zipline tour would just scratch the surface. I could see setting something like this up for multiple day trips.  
**derek**2 \*hours\* on a zipline!? Doesn't sound all that zippy to me, but I'm sure it's fun! I'll have to watch the video. The zipline at our camp is a mere 15 seconds or so in comparison...  
**justj**Roadtrip!!!!!! Looks like fun.

# I'm A Winner!

Apparently, my email address was chosen to “win” a prize: US citizenship!Â  This is no joke – a scam, surely, but the following is a copy of the actual text contained within this email.Â  It’s one of the most ridiculous things I have ever read, although I have to admit that the “disclaimer” text at the bottom (in italics) seems very authentic – despite the numerous spelling and grammatical errors in the email!Â  SoÂ  Happy Constitution Day – according to my 4th grader, anyway – celebrate by reading this B.S. email and laughing out loud (and praying for the poor people who are actually victimized by this garbage).

**CONGRATULATIONS YOU ARE A WINNER!!! U.S. PROGRAM OF GREEN CARD LOTTERY-YEAR 2009/2010**

**We are here to inform you that you are among people selected thatÂ  have won US Green Card lottery.Â  Your email was selected so you are now citizen of United State of American. USA president has offerd you free ticket to United state of American. Live, Work and study in United States.**

**Kindly contact your claim agent Dan GoldÂ  usafis\_organization\_green\_card@live.com on more details of how to get your traveling documents and free air ticket to USA.**

**Congratulations once again.**

**Sincerely yours,**

**Lisa David**

***USA Department Of State Â Â  Â From the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Visa Services:  
The congressionally mandated Diversity Immigrant Visa Program is administered on an annual basis by the Department of State and conducted under the terms of Section 203(c) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). Section 131 of the Immigration Act of 1990 (Pub. L. 101-649) amended INA 203 to provide for a new class of immigrants known as “diversity immigrants” (DV immigrants). Alien petitioners for the Diversity Visa Program will no longer be permitted to submit a petition by mail. Instead, the Department will require that all petitions be submitted to it in an electronic format, using an Internet website dedicated specifically to the submission and receipt of Diversity.***

### Comments

**Margery Vanvalen**Not good for Blago. The jury unanimously found him guilty of one count, albeit the least harsh count, and hung on the other 23. That means he's officially a convicted felon, can't claim victory or vindication by a jury. He also has to face another trial with no money, possibly different lawyers and a pissed off U.S. Attorney. Not much to be happy about if you're the Rod  
**taylhis**Now that was a well-placed Morat reference, haha! Maybe I'm starting to miss the guy... Nah. :)  
**jamiahsh**Wooly sheep, Morat he a got one a just like a dis in box of email. EVERYONE WINS!  
**derek**Yes, Chicago is still representative of the US (even with the infamous Chicago politics), unlike some certain cities/states that seem to be from another planet, let alone country... Just sayin'! (no, not a dig at OH- I have some other places in mind)  
**taylhis**HAHAHA... deported back to Chicago - that is hilarious, but only because it's a joke - if there were a real threat of that, then it would just be scary!  
**justj**Cool, now you don't have to worry about being deported back to Chicago. Oh yeah, that is in the US isn't it. ;)

# Disney Vs. Universal - Round 1,642

As a frequent visitor to Orlando Florida, the United States theme park capital, the following news stories caught my eye.Â  Disney World and Universal Studios have been competing in an epic battle for tourists for a few decades now, and as a result, us tourists are the real winners!Â  Check out the two new additions to each park!

[Universal Studios is adding a Harry Potter-themed world](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1213793/Harry-Potter-theme-park-Universal-unveils-details-Wizarding-World-Harry-Potter.html)!Â  I’m not even a fan of the series and the pictures and descriptions of this place excited me!Â  I might have to read a Harry Potter book or see some of the movies before I check it out!Â  This answers the question I posed in a previous blog post – What will happen to Marvel Superhero Island when Disney buys Marvel?Â  Answer:Â  who cares?Â  Universal will have the Wizarding World of Harry Potter!

Not to be outdone, Disney has released that they are doubling the size of their current Fantasyland area, adding a Little Mermaid attraction, among other things.Â  If the rumors on [this blog](http://thedisneyblog.com/2009/07/17/magic-kingdom-fantasyland-expansion-plans-leaked/) are true, it seems to me like Universal is going to win this time.Â  More meet-and-greet space at Disney?Â  Yawn!Â  Bring on the thrill rides!Â  But if I know the folks at Disney, they have more than doubling Dumbo and adding more Disney princess meet-and-greet up their sleeves and just haven’t leaked that part of the expansion to the public yet…Â  So stay tuned!

### Comments

**derek**That definitely sounds interesting, and I don't mean the Disney Princess, yours or the theme park expansion.  
**jamiahsh**YES, YES, YES! I read about the Magical World of Harry Potter a year or so ago. And it opens this spring!  
**justj**Hmm Hogwart's thrill ride or meet a Disney Princess. Well, since the Princesses will all be on the young side for me, I guess I'll take the thrill ride. ;) Now if I could get to meet one of the Evil Queens!!! Sounds like fun, just don't eat the apples or get them mad.

# One Of Those Days...

I knew it was going to be a busy day today before I even woke up, and I was dreading having to get up early.Â  I am very lucky (thanks to my wonderful husband) that I don’t have to get up early every day; I’m not a morning person.Â  But today there was an early morning dentist appointment and someone also had to be here for the plumbers (more on that later).Â  So I had begrudgingly set my alarm, but someone nearby decided to mow their lawn early this morning, there were dogs barking (turned out to be ours, of course, doh!), and a weird smell in the house (like someone had just gotten a perm, yuck).Â  So I got out of bed a half hour before my alarm even got a chance toÂ  make a peep.Â  And when I went downstairs, I found this where our downstairs (and most popular) bathroom used to be:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/downstairs-btrm-floor-torn-up-9-16-09-001.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/downstairs-btrm-floor-torn-up-9-16-09-002.jpg)

Well, ok, so it wasn’t a complete shock.Â  We had scheduled the plumbers to come today to fix [our bathroom floor bulge](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/06/14/battle-of-the-bulge/), but I wasn’t expecting the bathroom to be **missing**!Â  And obviously the plumbers’ estimate of the work is going to be way low (and the estimate was frightening enough in the first place!) since much more of the floor was affected than they originally thought even before they tore it to pieces.Â  Tomorrow we find out if the plumbing itself is “worse than they thought” as well, which would add yet another day to this project and who knows how much money, yikes!Â  Plus we still have to get a new bathroom floor; to be installed by a different contractor all together –Â  how much is **that** going to cost?Â  Did I mention I’ve had a headache all day?Â  The plumbers’Â  drill isn’t helping; it seems like they’re drilling my head open…Â  All this after we put a bunch of money into house stuff earlier this year when my husband sold his software which we considered a blessing at the time (more on that later).Â  We got rid of our humongous, room-sized furnace and put central air in the house, and then ironically it was the coolest summer on record and we barely needed the new air conditioning system.Â  We have the strangest luckÂ  sometimes.Â  IÂ  wouldn’t go soÂ  far as to call it bad luck; after all, the irony is born from good things we’re receiving, so how can that be bad?Â  I do get a new bathroom floor out of this, at some point anyway – we might have to try the ~~primitive~~ classic wooden look for awhile…Â  And while I’m venting about the frustrations of today, let me just go off for a bit about how darn inconvenient it is to get things done while sharing a house with a few (extremely talkative) plumbers who are tearing apart the bathroom!Â  Not only do I have to keep the kids away from there, but I have to bring the whole gang (of kids – not the plumbers of course!) with me upstairs every time I need something from the bathroom!

And back to the stress of my husband’s work right now…Â  Back in the spring when his business deal went through, we were ecstatic that we would be able to pay some bills, fix some things on the house, and most importantly, spend the summer as a family without having to worry about work as much.Â  It was a great summer, but now we have come to find out that a major company wants the software that was sold and is willing to pay much much more than for what it was sold just months ago.Â  In short, if we had waited to sell the business for just a few months, we would be…Â  let’s just say ‘in a very good financial place’ right now.Â  I’m learning a bit about the lessons of patience and greed (ain’t human nature grand?Â  Just months ago we were perfectly happy with the business deal the way it was, and now I think about regretting selling because it’s worth so much more money), but it’s frustrating; especially on a day in front of little sleep and after the destruction of my beautiful bathroom.Â  Does this make sense?Â  I feel like I’m rambling a little bit…Â  I stopped in the coffee house drive-thru on the way back from the dentist appointment, and it’s been a while since I’ve had a White Lightning, so I kind of feelÂ  like I’m all over the place…

But anyway, I should get the kids out of here and away from the busy plumbers (imagine that, a gaping hole in the bathroom floor attracts kids like flies to… well, I won’t go there.Â  At least the drive this morning to the dentist through the NW Ohio countryside at the beginning of the beautiful fall season relaxed me a little.Â  If only there was time for a nap before I go and try to lead a group of 13-year-old spastic seventh-graders…

### Comments

**Random Thoughts » Just strange ads**[...] Something weird is going on with the ads I see on many sites. I’ve been getting bombarded with ads for ‘bidets’. Now I would understand this if I had been making comments about toiletpaper, toilet humor, bathrooms, plungers or the like. Or even if I was doing a search to replace various plumbing fixtures. The only site I know of that had something to do with bathrooms, was the repair blog over at taylhis’s site. [...]  
**justj**I know somebody who does tile. ;)

# Many MOPs Are SAHMs

I’m not going to pretend to know the latest texting lingo.Â  I know ASAP and TTYL and even oic, but that’s about the extent of my in-house texting-acronym dictionary.Â  Not that I care too much – it doesn’t even make me feel old or out of it because texting itself is amusing to me; not when texters are behind the wheel though, that’s just scary.Â  I saw that graphic UK public service video with the girl who was texting and crashed her car.Â  Awful stuff, I DO NOT recommend you watch that; it was incredibly disturbing.Â  But anyway, I **do** know the acronyms I need to know for my chosen profession as a SAHM = **S**tay **A**t **H**ome **M**om.Â  And last night, I officially became a member of MOPs = **M**others **O**f **P**reschoolers.

It was really different and very nice – after dinner I left the house **alone** for a change.Â  Poor hubby got left with all 4 kids and a messy room to get cleaned.Â  I didn’t feel guilty; I knew he could handle anything without getting so frustrated he would melt down for the rest of the night, which is more than I could promise for myself.Â  And after all, I had been waiting for my turn to go out ever since Hubby was in his last community theater production and I got stuck home with kids during his rehearsals.Â  But that was a year ago, and in the meantime, there was just never anyplace to go that would have not been more fun with my entire family.

So last night, Hubby fared well; the room was cleaned (sort-of), but the most important thing is that no one was stressed out, and 2/4 kids were actually *asleep* when IÂ  got home – BONUS!Â  As for the MOPs meeting itself; it was different than I was expecting…

I was expecting a few women from our church who I know have young children, but when IÂ  showed up, the parking lot was full.Â  I went in, feeling a bit intimidated since everyone else seemed to be with a friend or two.Â  And there were about 60 women, dwarfing my prediction of 5 or 10.Â  Not only that, but there was a sign-up table, where I learned that you were supposed to sign up ahead of time in order to be assigned to a group.Â  Oops – guess whoÂ  hadn’t signed up?Â  So I crashed a group, but I knew at least a few of the other women from church, so it wasn’t really like crashing.Â  Our poor friend Jeremy, the teaching pastor at the church, was there to make a church-related announcement, and I’ve never seen a man look so out of place.Â  He stood before 60 women in a room *oozing* with femininity – an endless sea of scrap-booking supplies, flowers, chocolate, and scented candles… And he looked like there was *anywhere* in the world he’d rather be; it was hilarious.Â  He gave his spiel, left in a quite a hurry, and then we snacked, chatted about our families, and made our scrap-booked our place mats which will be at our tables every month during our meetings.Â  Overall, a very fun evening, and we even got to take home some cute little fall trinkets.Â  I found out that childcare is available, so next month Hubby can have a break too while the kids play.Â  I learned that many MOPs are also SAHMs like me, so we have kind of a girly little community.Â  And that reminds me; I was really amused when the coordinator asked, “Does anyone have any special announcements?Â  We have gifts for any of our members who are expecting or adopting.”Â  I guess in a room full of dozens of women in their child-bearing years who already have young children, asking if any are expecting doesn’t really come from left field.Â  So of course, not one, not two, but *three* women came up to share their blessed news.Â  Then we also heard from two who had recently had babies and brought them to the meeting – talk about a dose of baby-itis!Â  But for now it’s fun to talk about our kids and our lives – I’m the only one in our group with more than 3 children; which surprises me –Â  I thought large families were making a comeback?Â  But for any other moms out there who want to join a fun Christian-based peer group, checkÂ  out [this link](http://www.mops.org/) for a MOPs group near you!

### Comments

**justj**Glad you had a nice evening out. I remember when my girls were young, my dear wife always called that "Adult time". I wondered about that, since all of her adult time was also spent away from me. ;)

# Lincoln Legends

Just in time for the Halloween season, as I mull over costume choices for myself and my two youngest, haunted places have come up in conversations recently.Â  These recent topics have reminded me of a few such places in Lincoln Nebraska…

Back when we were a little family with only one toddler, we lived in Lincoln for a year.Â  It was a great city – large yet rurally isolated and without the sprawling suburbs we had grown accustomed to after growing up in the Chicago area.Â  After a few months in Lincoln, I was charmed by the city and began reading up on local history, which is where I found out about the interesting stories of Charles Starkweather and Robber’s Cave.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/delete-charles-starkweather-and-carol-fugate.jpg)*(Caril Fugate and Charles Starkweather before the murder spree)*

Charles Starkweather was a young, lower-class, James Dean wannabe who dated a younger girl named Caril Fugate in Lincoln in the 1950’s.Â  There is some debate about Caril’s role in the horrific events for which the pair is known, but Starkweather was convicted of the murders of 11 people in Nebraska and Wyoming during a 1958 eight-day-long murder spree.Â  Starkweather was executed by the state in 1959 at the age of 20, while Caril served some time and is now presumably living a quiet life.Â  I think it would be interesting to see an interview with the now 68-year-old Fugate, but like everyone else involved in the horror, she deserves her privacy and probably guards it.Â  So anyway, Starkweather is buried in a large, beautiful cemetery nestled amongst rolling hills in the heart of Lincoln called Wyuka Cemetery, and has the unusual (however macabre) distinction of being buried in the same cemetery as some of his victims.Â  Caril’s dilapidated house (where the first murders, those of her family, took place) no longer stands.Â  But Starkweather had a huge grudge against upper class folks, and the beautiful house of the Ward family, a wealthy couple who along with their maid fell victim to Starkweather’s massacre, still stands.Â  Also interesting are the many works of pop culture inspired by the rampage; movies such as Natural Born Killers (though this one is very loosely based), Badlands, and books: characters in both Stephen King’s *The Stand* as well as *Outside Valentine* are based upon Starkweather, Caril and some of the victims.Â  Interestingly, the author of *Outside Valentine*, Liza Ward, is the granddaughter of the wealthy couple that were victims of Starkweather in 1958.

So anyway, if you’re into that kind of thing, plenty to see in Lincoln based upon the Starkweather case alone, but that was actually a super-huge tangent that took me away from the original reason I wanted to write this post!Â  Guess I’ll save Robber’s Cave for my next post…

### Comments

**justj**And I thought this was going to be about the President. I can't wait for the Robbers' Cave post. I've always liked stories like this. Thanks  
**NASCAR » Blog Archive » Prostitutes Thieves : Kashmir Sentinel**[...] Lincoln Legends | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# FOOTBALL! Time To Blog, Except...

…Â  I’ve gotten engrossed in another video game.Â  And because I’m a mom of 4 and don’t have a lot of extra time, my blogging frequency is going to suffer while I divide my spare time with mindless gaming, oh well.Â  With the start of the NFL season and back-to-school-time, I will have more time at home for my favorite quiet activities like reading the newspaper, blogging, and playing video games while my husband watches football (Go Bears!).Â  I thought I’d be rolling out blog posts, but then my husband put an N64 emulator on my computer, distracting me with what is quite possibly the best video game ever made – in my opinion, anyway:Â  The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.Â  It’s an adventure game, which is my favorite genre of videoÂ  game, but I’m very picky – there has to be large 3D worlds to explore, as well as a variety of puzzles peppered with the perfect combination of inventory, fighting, and weaponry.Â  This version of Zelda has everything, and this is actually my second time playing it through.Â  Currently I’m in the second dungeon (Dodongo’s Cavern) which is probably my least favorite in the entire game.Â  Once I get past it though, I have lots of fun ahead – there are plenty of areas left to explore; including an underwater colony and the inside of a volcano.Â  This game also skips ahead 7 years, and you get to see what Hyrule (the country you are defending) looks like in the future when your character has grown into a young man from a little boy.Â  Here is a screen shot:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/delete-zelda.jpg)

…which makes me want to get back to it so I can kick some Dodongo a\*\*!

GO BEARS!!!

### Comments

**Football » Blog Archive » Chadcrg Images Blog Â» Blog Archive Â» Football Time Again - Chad …**[...] FOOTBALL! Time To Blog, Exceptâ€¦ | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# Four Day Weekend, Already?

But didn’t school JUST start?Â  And wasn’t the kids’ first weekend a THREE day weekend?Â  Yes and yes.Â  But to be **fair** (pun intended), this 4-day weekend was not planned in advance, well not entirely, anyway.Â  It began with Monday being Fair Day for the kids – our county fair opens tomorrow, and the kids are off school on Monday to go to the fair and also because many of them have 4-H projects that will be judged at the fair on Monday – that was a planned day off.Â  So then today, my husband was driving our daughter to school, when he realized he was the only one on the road and at the school.Â  At least, that’s what he thought -it was so foggy they couldn’t see much of anything…Â  so they returned home only to find that there was a two-hour delay because of the fog – our phones had been turned off so we didn’t get the early morning call…Â  So anyway, the 2 hour delay turned into an entire fog day because the dense fog would not clear early enough for the school district to send the buses into the country to pick up the kids.Â  Fog Day on Friday + Fair Day on Monday = the first 4-Day weekend of the new school year,Â  taking place on only the third weekend of the new school year!Â  Luckily our student calender is set up to include 5 calamity days, and in NW Ohio, early morning fog is considered a calamity, I guess!Â  What will we do when the 5 yearly calamity days are taken out of the calendar since the governor’s plan calls for calamity days to be phased out?Â  Wait and see, I guess…

And now I have to totally rearrange my dayÂ  –Â  so much for advance planning!Â  I’ll have to juggle the not-4-kid-friendly errands I have with my husband’s planned business call – keeping 4 kids quiet and out of the way for that?Â  Good luck to me!Â  These are the times when I wish he had his own office…Â  The benefits of working at home outweigh the negatives of him working at an office of course, but on days like these, ugh!Â  It’s funny because I’m not native to NW Ohio and so both fog days and fair days are new to me – man, would I have loved these as a kid.Â  As an adult…Â  not so fun.Â  Maybe we can have another calamity day later this year when we have nothing planned and we can just sit inside and watch movies and play games all day…Â  Then, let it snow!

### Comments

**taylhis**Just an example of regional culture, I guess. They do the judging on the kids' 4-H projects on Fair Day, guess there's too much other stuff going on the weekends. Most other county fairs are in the summer, but ours is one of the later ones, so it interferes with school. Don't know why, but I enjoy the cultural differences for the most part.  
**derek**So, um... why can't the kids go to the fair on the weekend? :?:  
**jamiahsh**"The benefits of working at home outweigh the negatives of him working at an office." Sounds oddly close to a wise axiom of an ancient alien race: "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few." Surely very wise and you say that you are not a Trekker. But that is hilarious just another difference between where you grew up and where you chose to raise your wonderful kids.

# A Whim? It Was The 19th Pregnancy Test!

I’ve blogged about the [Duggar family](http://www.duggarfamily.com/) before – they are famous for having a TLC reality show about their large family of 20.Â  That’s two parents and eighteen natural offspring – no adoptees, no foster kids; just two people who don’t believe in birth control and who have the utmost faith in God and their marriage.Â  I blogged about their daily routine (involving a cool-looking, specially outfitted custom-built house for a large family – think industrial size kitchen appliances and 4 washer / dryer sets) that seems to be successful in keeping their 20-member household functioning smoothly.Â  I also linked to their website, which had pictures of the interior ofÂ  their custom-made house.Â  They had their own buffet line built into one of the kitchens, and their dining room has a drink station with cups for each of the 18 kids.Â  As a parent of 4, I find their larger family way of life fascinating.Â  Actually, some of their practices have changed since the eldest Duggar offspring is now moved out, married, and expecting a baby of his own.

Not to be outdone, his mother Michelle is pregnant withÂ  her *nineteenth* child.Â  She says she took this latest pregnancy test “on a whim”, which is difficult for me to comprehend when she’s had probably around a dozen and half positive pregnancy tests in her life.Â  She said she was nursing, and her infant grew fussy – in the past, a fussy nursing infant meant that mother’s milk had pregnancy hormones, so that’s why she took the test.Â  I can’t imagine having kids close enough in age to be able to find that out once, let alone to test it over and over like a theorem.Â  And another thought on this –Â  when Mrs. Duggar gives birth to child #19 (wonder what personality traits canÂ  be attributed to #19 according to the psychologists who specialize in birth order?Â  Do the books go that high?), she will have spent roughly one-third of her 42 years on this Earth pregnant.Â  I hope for her sake she doesn’t go through a pregnancy withdrawl when her body is done having kids.Â  But for now, the family seems happy as can be, and what’s interesting is that Michelle’s first grandchild will be about 5 months older than his or her aunt or uncle.Â  And let it be clear that I’m not putting these people down – they have a solid family and all these kids seem well cared for by two loving parents who are still married, not to mention LOADS of siblings…Â  more power to them!

### Comments

**derek**Definitely a blessed family. I definitely appreciate the family Bible studies. I must say- that is on huge house. I wouldn't have minded some of what they have growing up, like the indoor slide, arcade machine, and pop dispenser.  
**taylhis**Oh, hehe - no... And if it were me, it's not like it was the 19th POSITIVE test! Just 4 of those...  
**jamiahsh**Your title fascinated me. Thought you may have taken YOUR 19th test on a whim. But yes I think the Duggar's have really taken the "be fruitful and multiply" quite literally.

# Another Installment of Cute

I realized that I hadn’t emptied my camera in awhile, so when I finally did, I found some great pictures!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/9-6-09-0041.jpg)*Told you it was a busy Labor Day weekend!*

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/Princess-Charity-9-6-09.jpg)*The girls dressed Charity up like a princess – her blue eye always gets photographic red-eye, but she actually let the kids dress her up!Â  Wonder what kind of food they enticed her with…*

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/Beeber-climbing-in-laundry-room-002.jpg)*The “baby” has been climbing everything in sight.Â  Here he is on top of the folding table in the laundry room.Â  And he’s been running while using his walker-toy; he went right from crawling to running!Â  Guess it’s time to start calling him a toddler!*

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/Toledo-Zoo-9-5-09-008.jpg)*Here are all 4 four kids in the same cart at Menard’s…Â  awww!*

*[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/09/Beebers-first-time-in-the-tunnels-9-7-09-004.jpg)And this is the ~~baby~~ toddler’s first time going all the way up in the tunnels at the McDonald’s Playplace – he loved it!*

### Comments

**Carol**Your kids will have such great memories of growing up. Too precious!  
**jamiahsh**Whatever do u mean, j? Looks like the next to youngest is getting better at the tunnel thing. I recall a tunnel episode in which it took a bit of doing to get her to come out. But yes.... AWWWWWW!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Adorable pictures.  
**justj**I would say too cute, but that one in the front of the McDonald's tunnel looks like trouble is written all over her face... ;)

# Putting The Fun Into Labor...

Well, it was a last-minute attempt at a Labor Day outing with friends, and even though we strayed from our original idea of going to a Lake Erie-area haunted house and drive-thru zoo, we had LOTS of fun!

We went to the Toledo Zoo, always a great zoo, even if this Labor Day Saturday of 2009Â  equated to being one of the most crowded we’ve ever seen that zoo.Â  It was just over 80Â°, so the animals weren’t all that active, but we did get to see Louie, the “baby” elephant (who is now 6 years old and awaiting the completion of construction of his very own zoo exhibit area) lying down and taking a break, which was cool.Â  We also saw one of their huge hippos swimming in the underwater hippo-quarium, which is always a treat because you can see a humongous hippo swim right past up close.Â  After the zoo, we ate at one of our favorite places in the Toledo area – Nick’s Cafe on Reynolds (not sure if it’s actually Toledo or the suburb of Maumee).Â  But the place is just north of Ohio’s turnpike, I 80/90, and they have great food and almost *unimaginable* portion sizes – are they used to feeding GIANTS?!?Â  Unfortunately for Nick’s, the place was empty, but this is (just) one of the reasons we go to Nick’s whenÂ  we’re in the area – they have GREAT food.Â  Besides, **you** try withstanding the crowds to get a table at the Olive Garden on a Saturday evening, especially with 4 starving kids!

After dinner, we were going to head to another nearby Toledo suburb for a free exotic animal / magic show, something right up our alley.Â  But the combination of the big weekend, crabby kids and crowds at the zoo caused our driver and his wife to veto that great idea, so luckily we hadn’t told the kids since it sounded like fun and they would have been disappointed (no matter their exhaustive state) to miss it.Â  But we’ve learned that over-doing it with little kids along is **always** regretful, and so we happily prepared for our journey home after we gorged ourselves and piled leftovers into boxes at Nick’s.Â  But we grew distracted by a strip-mall across Reynolds from Nick’s Cafe, and that’s how we finally discovered what Nickel World of Toledo really is…

We had seen it in the strip-mall before, but we had always busily assumed that it was the 2009 incarnate of the early 20th century 5 and dime store.Â  On Saturday night, we discovered that Nickel World is actually a family entertainment place, filled with **many** arcade, skill, and video games!Â  They have a unique business model – they charge an entrance fee of $2.50 per person, and then they sell $5 bags of nickels for use on the games.Â  Most of the games are just one nickel to play, some are two, and there’s even a large selection of FREE games!Â  The place is so cool; what a great concept!Â  For about $25, our party of 4 adults and 5 kids were easily entertained for at least an hour, PLUS the kids took home quite a bounty of prizes with the 5,000 tickets they were able to rack up in just that hour!Â  Nickel World has just about every type of video game you can think of – twoÂ  types of Skeeball, multiple Crane Games, ball-roller games, basketball shooting games, racing games, Bozo Buckets, even air hockey as well as FREE! vintage arcade games like X-Men, Bust-A-Move, Dueling Dragons, and many more…Â  We had a GREAT time, and Hubby and I are dying to return on a date night to fight, race and out-shoot each other without distraction from the kids!Â  The only thing is that they are closed on Tuesday nights when we have our date nights…Â  oh well, perhaps we can reschedule.Â  If **you** are in the Toledo area, you **have** to check out Nickel World on Reynolds (US 20) – a rarity for an awesome value in family entertainment in this day and age of recession!Â  And while I’m on the topic, Nickel World reminded me of another cool arcade-type place in South Bend, Indiana.Â  [Megaplay](http://www.mega-play.com) has two indoor mini-golf courses, as well as lots of video games (some of the classics are free) and even an inflatableÂ  jousting area where they hold tournaments.Â  I’ve never had the pleasure of participating in something like this, but it looks like lots of fun.Â  If only I had discovered this sport before my sense of balance expired…Â  I did see an indoor inflatable jousting space at another place in Toledo that we visited a few months ago.Â  This place was pretty cool – they had adult-sized bouncy slides and ladders to climb, and my husband and I bounced down the slides and ran around like little kids until the unfortunate voices of reality (muscle strain and fatigue) made it loud and clear that we had better take it easy…Â  But I can’t remember the name of that place or where exactly it is, and I can’t find it on the internet.Â  Probably a bad sign that we were the only ones there at the time, I hope it hasn’t closed down, but that’s a lot of why it was so much fun – my kids weren’t getting run over by eager older kids, and hubby and I weren’t laughed out of the place by nasty teenagers…

So…Â  back from my tangents.Â  We had a really nice and safe Labor Day weekend free from any of the [speed traps we encountered in previous years](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2008/09/02/pedal-to-the-metal/).Â  Hope yours was safe and fun also!Â  God Bless!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I caught the double meaning, as well.  
**justj**Late night this, but am I the only one who saw more than one meaning in your post title? Kind of sorry I missed that. I had a good time with my daughter.  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like fun. Nick's is the home of the one lb. sirloin(?) burger is it not? Nickel World sounds like a blast! Sorry I missed it.  
**Putting The Fun Into Labor… golf bar**[...] View original post here: Putting The Fun Into Labor… [...]  
**Carol**An awesome day with fun people!

# Supressing My Whim For Another Parrot...

Believe me, I am definitely not expressing that parrots are pets to get on a whim, not that any pets should be obtained on a whim.Â  But I wouldn’t really even recommend parrots, the loud and moody (however beautiful and insanely smart) creatures as pets, except to the perfect parrot owner – which might just be as rare as the gorgeous birds themselves.Â  Due to a set of circumstances that transcribed long ago, we’ve found ourselves adapting to a be a parrot family.Â  Years ago we adopted Squawky, as a needy unwanted baby, a Scarlet Macaw, who is now somewhere just older than 8 years old.Â  He is finally starting to calm down just a tad, but he still makes me think of putting him in a more unused room of the house on an almost daily basis.Â  That being said, it’s time to share with you the video of a bird who re-kindled my childhood desire (not that I ever really lost it, but 4 kids and little sleep will certainly give one pause about adding any new pet to theÂ  family) to raise an African Grey Parrot – the type of parrot known more for their uncanny impressions and ability to reason than for their beautiful feathers.Â  As a kid, I read a book that made me want the parrot in the first place.Â  It is called *Harry’s Mad* by Dick King-Smith (this author also wrote the story that the movie [The Water Horse](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0760329/)‘s screenplay (good movie!!) is based upon), and it’s a great read for young adults (and maybe regular adults too?Â  Might be basic, but fun – haven’t tried it as an adult).Â  And as for the video that made me again want an African Grey, despite the daily blows to my eardrums from the Scarlet Macaw?Â  See for yourself; her name is Sylvia, and I especially love her Rhett Butler and Desi Arnaz impressions!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**LUCY... you've got some 'splainin' to do... OMG... HILARIOUS!

# Legitimate School Interruption or Propaganda?

Because I have two kids in the local city school system at the same time, I receive double the school memos.Â  So while Friday’s after-school-folder-clean-out yielded the usual classwork, homework and doodles, there were also some notices clearly indicative of these times in which we’re living: a list of ~~swine flu~~ H1N1 symptoms and (what I thought at the time anyway)Â  to be a routine parental notice with optional exclusion form.Â  You know the type –Â  *I would not like my son / daughter to participate in the following school activity (fill in the blank, field trip, sex ed, open lunch, etc.), signed (parent’s name).* This time the form was in reference to an address by Barrack Obama, the President of the United States, to the students of the country.Â  When IÂ  received the memo, I was all in favor.Â  I would not be one of the parents who declined my child the opportunity to be involved with current events and history in the making.Â  I thought it was great that the President was making an unprecedented, concentrated effort to make a positive influence on America’s youth.Â  But then I read CNN.com and the other news outlets, and I saw that some people seemed to be using this as a political soundboard, and I think it’s just sad that some people use everything our President does as a reason to bring up racial tension.

I would like to steer my blog from most politics, however, I am a parent of two kids who are in American public schools, so this is an issue that hits close to home.Â  So whether you watch the Obama student address or not, whether you approve of the President and/or his message to students, consider the significance of the Presidential address taking place this Tuesday, September 8, 2009 for what it is – history in the making.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Agreed. I do see both sides of the speech. However, there are those students who will see it as an excuse as a break from the normal routine and sleep through the entire thing. Remember Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign aimed at school children... not sure how much of an impact that had in the '80s. But taylhis, the parental intervention is the mark of excellent parentage.  
**Chris**It's all politics. Was the speech basically a mandated Democratic Party propaganda stunt... Yes. Are the Republicans making much-a-poopoo about nothing... Yes. These are impressionable kids, and Obama is a very engaging speaker who will definitely connect well with the kids. Some kids may be inspired and work harder -- others will enjoy the break from boring class and write notes to their peers. For most kids, it will just be another day at school. This feels like one of those things that is "for the kids" but ends up having much more 'meaning' for the adults.  
**justj**I don't have a problem with the president addressing the school children. What I did object to was the almost mandatory participation that was associated with the initial press release. It came complete with questions to ask the students after the speech. This tone has been softened after the initial outcry and schools can opt out of showing the speech. Good for a president to speak to school kids, yes! Force all the schools, students and teachers to participate in the speech, no! The perception of this happening may have been a bit of hype, but it seemed more serious when all of the major news outlets were reporting the same thing.  
**taylhis**Like I said in the post, I don't really think it's fair to judge the President's intentions. I think it's neat that the kids get to hear directly from our leader, whether us adults like him or not, and I think kids should be taught to respect others, especially the President! That being said, my problem lies in where my kids would look up to him - I am opposed to his views on abortion and some of the bills he's passed to give teenagers access to abortion, birth control, and the morning-after pill without parental consent - but that is a good example of why parents need to be a positive influence in their childrens' lives as well. They can respect the President, but they don't have to emulate him or live according to his viewpoints.  
**jamiahsh**Reverse permission slips? I agree from what I have heard the address is going to be a plea to our nation's youth to stay in school. On the local news, one of our areas school systems has actually refused to show the speech... although it was reported that the school may have second thoughts before Tuesday.  
**Legitimate School Interruption or Propaganda? | Swine Flu Outbreak**[...] See more here: Legitimate School Interruption or Propaganda? [...]

# Tale Of Tartar

I did not go to Walmart yesterday, but I still have enough of a complaint to sit and write a blog post about the place!Â  In case you’ve missed my other (many) Walmart rants, I’ll save you the search and link to a few of the various episodes depicting the times they wronged me.Â  Like [this time](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/01/23/me-want-cookie/).Â  And [this time](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/02/07/i-know-who-to-blame-for-this-economy).Â  And [this time](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/04/06/my-bad-day), to name a few…

So anyway, back to last night – I needed tartar sauce for dinner and didn’t realize it until after the kids got home from school, so I ran out (for what I thought was going to be) really quick to get some.Â  I went to Walgreens first, but they don’t carry tartar sauce, so I went across town to Dollar General, and they don’t carry tartar sauce either.Â  Is this a side effect of living in a small town – it’s hard to find the things I need last minute if needed?Â  If so, I will gladly take it in exchange for the traffic, air pollution, and the general stress that exudes from larger cities (see [hubby’s blog post](http://whatever.tangents.org/2009/09/02/and-people-wonder-why-we-left/) about a recent news article about the most stressed cities – ew).Â  But most likely the apparent lack of tartar sauce in rural NW Ohio is due to scenario #2 – ever since we got a Super Walmart a few years ago, the competitors have phased out certain grocery non-necessities like tartar sauce.Â  Why should they carry old crusty tartar sauce when no one buys it there because everyone shops at Walmart?Â  I begrudgingly include myself in that category – you can read those previous posts of mine if you really want to know more about my Walmart paradox and why I shop there.Â  (At least my kids were never [slapped by strangers](http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/09/02/georgia.tot.slapped/index.html), and I haven’t shown up [here](http://peopleofwalmart.com/) – yet.)

If you’re still with me – I’ve linked all over the internet in this post, so I wouldn’t be surprised if I’ve lost some people –Â  I’m going to blame Walmart for my lack-of-tartar-sauce problem.Â  And in case you’re wondering how it all turned out, it really wasn’t a problem after all.Â  We just convinced the kids to try ranch dressing instead of the tartar sauce, and they actually liked it – well, until the ranch dressing came out too fast and spilled and incited a tantrum that caused a chain reaction that ruined dinner, but that’s another post!Â  And before my comment board lights up with healthy eating advice, I’m already aware that the kids really shouldn’t grow up so sauce-dependent.Â  But in these parts where the kids outnumber the adults, you must adapt to survive, and “pick your battles” is essential parenting advice!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**jar, squeeze bottle, we sell 'em both.  
**mary911**I didn't know you could buy a jar of tartar sauce.....I thought it was something you made....like Carol said, relish and mayo. Huh, the things you learn.... ;)  
**justj**taylhis --- famous is my mother's BBQ sauce. ;) I make an imitation of that sauce or one of my own. Never the same, but I always like it.  
**taylhis**Carol - good idea, maybe I should try that sometime. And JustJ - what could be something we could serve at game night that would require accompaniment from the famous homemade BBQ sauce?  
**Carol**Have you ever tried making your own? You mix mayo and sweet rellish and half. That's how we made it at Brownie's. I think they carry those two at DG. I know how it is when you are out of something but using ranch was a great idea.  
**jamiahsh**HMMMM,,,, BBQ Sauce... AHHHHHH!  
**justj**Hmmm, kids on the sauce. Now that would be a blog. ;) In our house it was ketchup or no sauce. Silly kids didn't even like my homemade BBQ sauce.  
**jamiahsh**Ranch dressing also exceptionally well for french onion chip dip deprived youngsters

# Quite Possibly My Worst Nightmare

Did you hear about [this](http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/09/02/frog.pepsi.can/index.html?iref=mpstoryview)?Â  Seems a man settling back for a quiet afternoon in his ***tiki bar*** (that’s a whole ‘nother story, I guess.Â  Us Midwestern folks can’t really identify…) when he opened his can of Diet Pepsi, took a big gulp and began to gag.Â  His wife came over, and to make a long story short, found a blob in his pop can that was tested and discovered to be a *gutted* frog or toad.Â  For more of the gory details, click the link above, and you can find out how (and this is a direct quote from the frog-drinker’s wife), “what started out as a normal afternoon in our tiki bar has blown up into this crazy thing.”

I titled this post appropriately because while I love all animals, I’m scared of frogs and toads.Â  It’s a weird thing and I won’t go into it (more scared of the “ugly” harmless ones than the pretty poisonous ones, go figure), but the only thing I can think of worse than finding a gutted amphibian in my pop is to find a live one or even a dead one that still resembles its living form.Â  That being said, in all seriousness, my true greatest fear is something bad happening to my family, but I thought this made for interesting reading anyway.Â  I smellÂ  a lawsuit.

### Comments

**justj**I could say so much, but I'm not going there. Ewwww!!  
**mary911**Ya know, I try to read all of your blogs....but it didn't take me long to realize that I was NOT going to read this one.....Yuck!!!! Sorry!  
**jamiahsh**HMM... found after it was opened. WATCH OUT PEPSI! That really would be freaky. So much for the Enchanted Tiki Tiki Bar... or is it Room. One of those Disney attractions that I've never done. Very close yo Pirates which I would do ad nauseum.

# Redbox Junkies

Now that the kids are back in school (2 out of 4 anyway), I have some (stress on the *some*, not a lot of) extra time to sit and blog again –Â  something that wasn’t made a priority over our busy summer.Â  Among our summertime fun and adventures were many trips to the [Redbox](http://www.redbox.com/).Â  Surely you know what I’m referring to, for if we have such futuristic technology here in the NW Ohio boonies, then it must exist in most places.Â  The Redbox is a machine (about the size of a gas station ATM on steroids) that distributes $1 one-night dvd movie rentals.Â  You can choose a movie for $1 from any Redbox location (our small town has 3, just an example of how they are *everywhere*), and then you return your movie to any Redbox location by 9:00pm the next night.Â  We first got hooked on the concept when we were on the way back home from Florida and the kids got sick of the movies we had brought for the car dvd player (poor things!Â  Who’s with me from the days when we were lucky enough to bring our Walkman on the trip with a couple of tapes!) .Â  SoÂ  anyway – we stopped at a Redbox at a McDonald’s in Tennessee, the kids watched the movie a few times, and we returned it at a Walmart in Ohio – for just $1!Â  Ok, this is quickly and unintentionally turning into a plug…

So anyway, my husband and I got kind of hooked on the Redbox this summer, watching a movie almost every night – seriously!Â  We went through a horror phase and watched many of a series called After Dark Horror Fest: 8 Films To Die For, and even though many of the movies (there were 8 movies in the series, but the series ran multiple years) in the series were low-budget, many were actually worthy of the recognition and worth watching.Â  Among our favorites of the horror genre was Hack! starring none other than Danica McKellar, Winnie from the late ’80’s / early 90’s tv show [The Wonder Years](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0094582/); as well as [The Hamiltons](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0443527/), a surprisingly great-for-what-it-is little horror flick.

Somewhere within the mix was a forgotten (though I liked it slightly more than my husband did) [Michael Moore parody](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1190617/) (making fun of Michael Moore movies, not done by Michael Moore) and the best Redbox movie **ever** called Sunshine Cleaning.

I highly recommend [Sunshine Cleaning](http://www.sunshinecleaning-themovie.com/).Â  Don’t let its similarities with another movie called[Little Miss Sunshine](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0449059/) get you confused.Â  The two movies share the word *Sunshine* in their titles, an actor (the late Alan Arkin, wonderful in both roles), and some producers – but neither their plot lines nor their characters intersect.Â  You can checkÂ  out Little Miss Sunshine for yourself if you haven’t already – I recommend that one as well.Â  But Sunshine Cleaning is less mainstream and my husband and I enjoyed it immensely.Â  It stars the talented Amy Adams as a single mom who, along with her flighty sister (Emily Blunt, also a really good actress), start a cleaning business, though it’s not your normal, everyday cleaning business –Â  they are hired to clean up extreme biological hazards, ie, crime scenes.Â  What follows is a heartwarming tale which takes many entertaining and at times, comedic turns.Â  The characters are well developed as is the plot, and the movie just makes for a well-spent evening – especially for just $1.Â  Again, I’m at risk here for sounding like a plug, but oh well!Â  Go get Sunshine Cleaning from your local Redbox – you can even reserve online for pickup before you go!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**OK... hooked again. Always appreciated. I must do as you just go to the redbox and pick a movie at random.

# What Will Happen To Marvel Island?

From the Financial Pages today – business news is not something I usually write about, but you’ll see why the following story would interest me:

***[Disney To Acquire Marvel Entertainment](http://corporate.disney.go.com/news/corporate/2009/2009_0831_disney_and_marvel_entertainment.html)***

Our family frequents the Orlando Florida area, home of Disney World and also their major competitor – Universal Studios.Â  For those of you who don’t know, at Universal’s Islands of Adventure (the newer and more thrill-ride oriented of Universal’s two Orlando parks), there is an entire area called Marvel Superhero IslandÂ®.Â  So my question is, now that Disney, Universal’s biggest competitor and business enemy, has bought Marvel, what will happen to Superhero Island at Islands of Adventure?Â  I can’t imagine that Universal would want to keep the same characters, now owned by Disney, at their park.Â  And I can’t imagine Disney letting Universal keep the characters at their park, unless the price was right, of course.Â  But based upon the competitiveness that is obvious to the tourists flocking to the area, Disney’s superhero lease price would probably put Universal out of business!

[Marvel’s Superhero Island](http://www.universalorlando.com/amusement-parks/islands-of-adventure/map.html) currently contains (click the link for an interactive map – Superhero Island is on the left side of the park, just left of the main gate) the following attractions:Â Â  The Amazing Adventures of Spiderman, The Incredible Hulk Coaster, Doctor Doom’s Fear Fall, and Storm Force Accelatron, which we’ve always skipped since it seemed like Universal’s answer to Disney’s Teacup ride.Â  We always skipped Doctor Doom also since it’s a free-fall ride and I’m afraid to go on those.Â  I think my husband went on this one however, but I don’t remember him saying it was any different from the rest of these types of rides.Â  In short, it probably won’t be much of a problem to rename these two rides.Â  The Hulk coaster is an awesome coaster and should also be able to withstand the re-themeing, although it might need a paint job to change its current green/purple Hulk theme.Â  The Adventures of Spiderman is another story.Â  This ride is awesome!Â  There really isn’t anything else like it in either of the two parks.Â  It’s basically like taking a thrill ride *into* a 3D Spiderman movie.Â  I guess they’d have to choose a new character and make a new movie.Â  Whatever they do, I hope it’s as good as the original Spiderman ride!Â  Also complicating a theming switch would be the superheros and villians that walk around Marvel’s Superhero Island.Â  I guess all the costumes would be sold to Disney.Â  Perhaps Disney will build a superhero section – my guess would be at ~~MGM~~ Hollywood Studios if I had to pick a place.

And Universal would have an entire area to theme and fill.Â  Hmmm, imagine the possibilities….  
Let’s see, would they coincide the new area withÂ  a new movie coming out (Smurfs (sorry Carol), Jetsons – not sure if those are Universal movies)?Â  Or would they take one of their existing franchises (Simpsons – they’d have to move that super-cool new ride from the Studios park to the Islands park!, NBC land (The Office – The Ride!)) and create a whole new world?Â  Any ideas?

**\*\*UPDATE\*\* – From orlandosentinel.com:** *“…theme-park rival Universal Orlando will likely retain the park rights to its four Marvel superstars, including Spider-Man and the Incredible Hulk…  
…Universal’s contracts apparently gives it exclusive U.S. rights east of the Mississippi River for theme-park attractions built around certain of those characters, notably Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk, X-Men and Dr. Doom.  
Universal Orlando said Marvel characters will remain a staple at its parks.  
“Marvel Super Hero Island at Universal’s Islands of Adventure and the Marvel characters are an important part of the Universal Orlando experience. They will remain so,” said Tom Schroder, a Universal spokesman. “Our agreement with Marvel stands for as long as we follow the terms of our existing contract and for as long as we want there to be a Marvel Super Hero Island.”*

So in response to several comments from blog readers, there are a separate set of rights for the Marvel characters in question – theme park rights.

### Comments

**Laser Etching Machine :**Universal Studios is still one of the best film studios and you can also visit their offices `  
**derek**From news to non-news by the time I got to reading this post. :D  
**jamiahsh**I'm assuming that Universal will do the L.A. Jetson movie since they produced The Flinstones movies.  
**taylhis**Agreed... I don't know how long it will take for Universal to get sick of essentially plugging Disney!  
**jamiahsh**THAT IS AWESOME! I dunno tho... it can't be that simple.  
**taylhis**FYI - I found some more info on the subject and added an update - thanks for your thoughts and comments!  
**taylhis**I've heard rumors of a new live big-screen version, so that's what I was referring to - maybe Universal will do the new one since they did the animated 1990 movie. Interesting point about the characters, but the rivalry down there between the two is intense, so I'm sure there's going to be some sort of struggle with it. Whatever happens, it will be interesting to see!  
**jamiahsh**The animated big screen Jetsons movie from the 80s was Universal, I believe.  
**jamiahsh**Excellent point, j. I was wondering the same thing when I saw the news at noon. Guess we will see how this legal mumbo jumbo plays out. But boy... Superhero Island was one of my favorite parts of the trip last October and not just for the characters themselves. The rides were AWESOME! It would be very hard to top the Spidey trip! Does Six Flags have a deal with DC comics since Batman and Superman based rides are there? But the Hulk could easily be renamed.  
**justj**I'm not sure about Spiderman since that was a Sony/Columbia studio picture, but the TV show and both of the Hulk movies were Universal products. I'm sure they still have rights to the characters based on the original movie rights.

# Match.com - For Gorillas

See if you enjoy this as much as I did – a group of female gorillas is given posters of their prospective mate.Â  How did they react to it?Â  Read:

*From [cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/europe/08/28/uk.london.zoo.gorilla/index.html):  
by Nick Hunt*

*So when three female gorillas at London Zoo heard that they would soon be visited by a brooding French hunk — well, they went a bit bananas.*

*The latest development in Anglo-French relations sees Yeboah, a 20-stone 12-year-old, leave his current home at La Boissiere Du Dore Zoo, Pays de la Loire, northwest France and head for the British capital by the end of the year.*

*There he will be greeted by gorilla trio Zaire, Effie and Mjukuu, who were given posters of their prospective boyfriend for the first time Thursday.*

*One female gorilla shrieked in delight, while another wedged the poster in a tree to stare at it.*

*A third, clearly overcome by emotion, held the photo close to her chest — then ate it.*

*Their reception was somewhat unsurprising. The zoo has been without a male gorilla since the demise of Bobby, a silverback, in December.*

*Tracey Lee, team leader at London Zoo, put in a good word for the hirsute lothario on the London Zoo Web site, saying Yeboah is “a very charming, fun loving and intelligent gorilla.”*

*But whom will Yeboah choose to charm first?*

*Zaire, at 34, is the oldest female gorilla and has been at London Zoo since 1984. The zoo says she’s “happiest when she’s taking down and rebuilding her nest in various spots around the island. She loves to play with fabric and often drags it around with her all day. “*

*Then there’s Effie, 16, who “enjoys seeing toddlers and often makes her way over to the glass when they come to see her,” according to the zoo Web site.*

*Finally there’s 10-year-old Mjukuu, or “Jookie.” Dan Simmonds, a keeper at the zoo’s Gorilla Kingdom, says she “has this ‘butter wouldn’t melt look’ to her, and she gets away with murder.”*

*“The other two females get along with her very well; she seems to have them all wrapped around her little finger.”*

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/delete-gorilla.jpg)

Above is a picture of the gorilla who hung up the picture of her new beau.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**keep us "posted" :D  
**taylhis**I hope there is an update on this story once the "hunk" arrives!  
**jamiahsh**Rolling on the Floor Laughing can be dangerous.  
**derek***"A third, clearly overcome by emotion, held the photo close to her chest â€” then ate it."* ROTFL at this one!  
**jamiahsh**WOW! How cute. Took one look at him and ate it?! I'd watch out for that one.

# At Least She's (Physically) OK

There’s really not much to say about the following article – someone did something extremely stupid, and I thought I’d share.Â  At least no one was seriously hurt…

***CAR SET ABLAZE AFTER JOLIET WOMAN USED LIGHTER TO CHECK GAS CAN LEVEL  
By Lee Filas | Daily Herald Staff***

*A 27-year-old Joliet woman is suffering from second-degree burns after using a lighter to check the fuel level in a gas can she was filling while the can was resting inside her car.*

*Police officials said the woman drove into a 7-11 gas station at 1609 E. Cass St. at about 10:30 p.m. Tuesday night and climbed out of her car.*

*She then placed the gas can on the passenger seat of the vehicle, pulled down the nozzle of the pump, and began filling the can.*

*About halfway through, the woman ignited a lighter to shine some light on the gas can, apparently to see how full the can was, officials said.*

*The can ignited from the lighter’s flame and exploded, setting the vehicle’s interior ablaze, officials said.*

*After the fire started, the woman pushed the car away from the gas pumps to apparently ensure the fire didn’t spread to the gas pumps itself.*

*Officials said, when police and fire officials arrived on the scene, the car was located about 5-feet from the pumps and was completely engulfed in flames.*

*The woman was transported from the scene to Silver Cross Hospital in Joliet with nonlife threatening injuries to her wrist and thigh, authorities said.*

And is it any wonder why it doesn’t list the woman’s name?Â  I can’t decide if it’s a nice thing that the press spared her the humiliation or if they should have included her name so the rest of society can watch out for her!Â  I don’t really understand how someone could do something that dumb, and then turn around and remember to push the car out of the way so it didn’t ignite like the gas can!  
Thank God there weren’t any kids in the car!

### Comments

**taylhis**DA = ?  
**derek**That would be it, yes. I wonder how long it will take for this story to appear on the DA website?  
**taylhis**due to death or dismemberment from being caught in a self-imposed explosion?  
**derek**Not eligible for a full honor, but sounds like a [Darwin Awards](http://www.darwinawards.com/) honorable mention! (Full honor requires inability to pass on genes due to death or...)  
**justj**Wow!! I have heard of stories like that. I'm not sure if it is true, but I remember hearing about a guy from around this area heating gasoline on his stove because he had 'fuel line freeze up'. According to the story, his house burnt to the ground.  
**jamiahsh**WOW! Was she really that intelligent? And she pushed the car away? All without being severely injured. HMMMM

# Random Night Of The King

On a random note, I decided at the last minute to kind of theme-up game night a little bit last week.Â  I went to the library to find some background music to put in the kitchen CD player during game night, and the first thing I found was a Garth Brooks Greatest Hits collection – and not one of the two that I owned back when I was a huge fan – one of the reasons why Garth Brooks became intolerable, what a sell-out.Â  But he has some really good songs, and I thought it’d be great to hear some of them again.Â  Realizing I’ve tortured enough unwitting souls with my love of country music, I looked through the regular music.Â  But it was the adult section of the library, and I had two of the kids with me, so I was in a big hurry and all I could find was an Elvis greatest hits collection.Â  Thinking about it on the way home, I remembered a recipe I had come across months ago and put aside – Elvis’ favorite sandwich in a cookie.Â  What was Elvis’ favorite sandwich?Â  Peanut butter, banana, and *bacon*.Â  So I made the peanut butter, banana, and *bacon* cookies, we rocked to Elvis, even though he ruined more than a few people’s careers in the *[Mafia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mafia_%28party_game%29)*, I think.Â  I didn’t come across anyone all night who was ecstatic about my Elvis cookies, but they were more for the experience of emulating Elvis (this would have made a fun dress-up version of game night, haha) than they were for people to find delectable.Â  I, for one, found them tasty, but not great.Â  I’m not a big cookie person anyway, and I found the combination of bacon and banana quite interesting, though in a good way.Â  Coincidentally, I found out that 3 days before our game night was the 32nd anniversary of Elvis’ death, so it ended up being a tribute of sorts, I guess.Â  I like the idea of themed game nights once in a while, especially if it doesn’t require much extra dough (pun intended) or work.Â  How about we light up the comment board with suggestions for possible future game night themes?

\*\*\* – Here is some bonus footage – the Elvis cookie recipe.Â  Enjoy and let me know any alterations and feedback you have!  
From the article where I read about it:  
â€œGo with your gut â€“ not your head â€“ on this one; the combination of peanut butter, bacon, and bananas really is delicious.  
ELVIS COOKIES  
Makes 30 cookies  
1 cup smooth peanut butter  
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
1 large egg, lightly beaten  
1/4 cup all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 cup crumbled cooked (very crisp) bacon (about 6 strips)  
1/2 cup diced firm banana

Heat the oven to 350F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. (I did some research because I didnâ€™t want to buy many extras like parchment paper, so I just greased a cookie sheet with margarine and it worked fine. So in place of the parchment paper, lightly grease a cookie sheet.) In a large bowl, combine the peanut butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar. Use an electric mixer on medium to beat until well combined. Beat in the egg until just combined and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour and the baking soda. With the mixer running on low, add the dry ingredients, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Gently mix in the bacon and the bananas, trying not to mash the bananas. Using slightly wet hands, roll rounded teaspoons of dough into balls and place on the prepared baking sheets, leaving about 1 inch between them. Dip the tines of a fork into water, then use it to flatten the cookies until they are about 1.5 inches around. Bake on the middle rack for 11 minutes. Cool the cookies on the baking sheet for 2 minutes, then remove with a metal spatula to racks to cool completely.

NOTE â€“ a guest commented that he wished there was more bacon!

### Comments

**mary911**Though unusual, they weren't bad! I don't think I'm going to ever be sitting at home and start craving them.... Travis ate several and I've heard them mention them to people a few times..... Very cute idea...I loved the theme night! I'll try to think up some more fun themes....maybe a British night? You could play the Beatles and the rule would be we all had to speak in a British accent all night? Or a hippy night would be fun.....  
**taylhis**YES!!!  
**derek**Is that a hint? :D  
**taylhis**Maybe we will make them next time you vist!  
**derek**Hmm. I'd be interested to know just how these cookies taste.  
**justj**No, she has a friend who thinks anything is better with bacon.  
**taylhis**From the article: "Go with your gut - not your head - on this one; the combination of peanut butter, bacon, and bananas really is delicious. ELVIS COOKIES Makes 30 cookies 1 cup smooth peanut butter 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar 1/2 cup granulated sugar 1 large egg, lightly beaten 1/4 cup all-purpose flour 1 teaspoon baking soda 1/2 cup crumbled cooked (very crisp) bacon (about 6 strips) 1/2 cup diced firm banana Heat the oven to 350F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. (I did some research because I didn't want to buy many extras like parchment paper, so I just greased a cookie sheet with margarine and it worked fine. So in place of the parchment paper, lightly grease a cookie sheet.) In a large bowl, combine the peanut butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar. Use an electric mixer on medium to beat until well combined. Beat in the egg until just combined and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour and the baking soda. With the mixer running on low, add the dry ingredients, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Gently mix in the bacon and the bananas, trying not to mash the bananas. Using slightly wet hands, roll rounded teaspoons of dough into balls and place on the prepared baking sheets, leaving about 1 inch between them. Dip the tines of a fork into water, then use it to flatten the cookies until they are about 1.5 inches around. Bake on the middle rack for 11 minutes. Cool the cookies on the baking sheet for 2 minutes, then remove with a metal spatula to racks to cool completely. NOTE - a guest commented that he wished there was more bacon!  
**taylhis**Not because of the raving reviews from her dad, I take it? ;) I will post it after I finish getting my nails done :0 What a great idea, post the recipe I blogged about - duh.  
**justj**That reminds me, my oldest daughter would like that cookie recipe.  
**jamiahsh**I agree on the cookies, interesting in a good way. Of course, coming from parents who are Elvis freaks, I knew about the anniversary and the fact that ge died the year of my sister's birth, Game night themes hmm.. movie tunes (or since we are thaetre people... show tunes, but just a suggestion). or decade night... not one specific performer. Not only did the King ruin some player's games, someone blatantly called attention to themselves and was quickly eliminated. Still not sure why. One thing is for sure, he will think twice about wearing his watch.

# Poults

I actually ran out of room in my previous post to talk about my little ones, my non-schoolers, so it’s time for an update!

The baby, soon to be toddler, Christopher (we call him Beeber since that’s what his big sister used to call him) is getting so big and is now probably closer to toddler than baby   
He walks while holding onto things, and climbs onto anything within reach!Â  He has recently learned where his tongue is, and if you ask to see it, he will stick it out – awww!Â  He still loves most kinds of fruits; his favorites are strawberries, peaches, pears, and oranges, but he really doesn’t like cantaloupe nor tomatoes.

Disney is just about the sweetest thing imaginable.Â  Of course, she is still 2, so occasionally she gets loud, whiny, and insistent.Â  But she is a very thoughtful little girl, and a very unselfish 2-year-old.Â  Case in point:Â  the other day, the girls made macaroni necklaces at our church carnival, and a piece broke off of Sammie’s after we got home.Â  Sammie was launching into a tantrum, when all of a sudden, Disney jumps off my lap and starts to take her own necklace off, saying, “Here Sammie, you can have my necklace.”Â  I can’t imagine any other 2-year-old capable of such sweetness!Â  Add that to her little pageboy Buster Brown – as Carol calls it – back-to-school haircut, and she is a living doll!Â  Oh, and I forgot to mention, Disney is much admired by her older sisters for her ability to whistle!

Having the two of them together during the day is so fun!Â  A lot of busyness and some mild frustration, but only because of the many messes Beeber makes and the fact that they’re both still in diapers.Â  I really need to work on Disney’s potty-training.Â  She has her little potty and likes to go in it, but it’s not always a priority for her…Â  One of the secrets to harmony in a family with more than a couple of small children is *divide and conquer*.Â  My children are so much better behaved when they are broken into groups of two or sometimes even three.Â  It’s really neat to give each sister the chance the be the BIG sister, and Sammie the Kindergartner gets her chance with Disney in the morning before her afternoon Kindergarten, and Disney gets to be Beeber’s big sister while the two older girls at school.Â  Back to school time is so fun, and my oldest daughter is really excited about attending her first football game Friday night!Â  I was a little hesitant to let her go; especially after Wednesday evening when I hung out with a pack of 10 seventh grade girls (a new endeavor of ours – we will be leading youth groups on Wednesday nights!Â  More on that later; I’m still grasping the um, entirety of the situation).Â  Seeing that my daughter is only 3 years away from the ages of these boy-crazy, cellphone-obsessed, “like”-spewing, makeup-toting ‘tweens tempted me to buy the **totally** [awesome house on the way to Fort Wayne](http://www.homes.com/listing/82466773/10629_Sr_37_HARLAN_IN_46743) and lock my 9-year-old daughter in the top of the turret!

But I love where I live and wouldn’t dream of leaving, no matter how cool that house is (or how far it would leave us in debt).Â  The bottom line is, my daughter is a great kid, and I have to learn to trust her to hold her own – she’s not going to be *that* type of kid!Â  She acts mature and logical most of the time; helping her little sisters and brother and she deserves to get away from all the little kid stuff in our household to step out with her friends.Â  Perhaps volunteering with this (insanely girly) group of girls (have you ever noticed that if you close your eyes, you can mistake a group of pre-pubescent girls for a gang of wild turkeys??) will prepare me for what’s ahead with my 4 home-grown tweens and teens.Â  At least that’s what I’m hoping…

*(In case you’re wondering about the title of this blog post…Â  Poults = baby turkeys.Â  I have 3 daughters and one son.Â  Within a decade, my house will no doubt sound something like a turkey farm!)*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**agreed... i think the best of parents are those who take an interest in what their kids are doing... it shows they care. And T is a very right, responsible young lady which at this point is a testament to her loving parents.  
**Phyllis Beyer**It sounds to me like you already have a handle on how to get thru the teen years. The key is to stay involved with your kid's friends and always know where they are. You're right....Taylor is a very smart girl and I think she knows right from wrong.  
**jamiahsh**Sorry... never had the pleasure.  
**taylhis**Yes... you really have to experience the inside of a girls' locker room to get the full effect - YIKES!  
**jamiahsh**Interesting... never thought about what the sound of a pack of insane tween/teenage girls would sound like.

# A Note To Add To That Last Post...

I will be one of those frantic parents in the Walmart checkout line on the first day of school.Â  I’ve never been there to witness them myself, but I know they exist; I’ll find out for sure tomorrow when I join them.Â  Yes, I planned ahead well enough to buy the necessary school supplies, but what I failed to do was to supervise the middle-schooler who was excitedly stuffing her new backpack, apparently ignoring the direction to “pack what’s on your list”.Â  Not really her fault – like I said, I should have been supervising her more carefully.Â  But as a result, our 4th grader now has a locker full of 4th grade school supplies AND Kindergarten school supplies (she brought them to school last Friday during orientation), while our Kindergartner has an empty backpack.

We could follow our oldest daughter into her new middle school tomorrow to repo her sister’s school supplies, but I’m pretty sure being the only student whose parents follow her into school (especially with little brother and sisters in tow) could cause her emotional damage beyond repair.Â  I’ll take my chances at Walmart.

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**What a good parent you are....braving WalMart rather than embarrass Taylor. Way to go!  
**derek**Less in the store than black friday, but all crammed into the school supplies section... :o  
**jamiahsh**I'm sure the mart will be slightly less than the extravaganza that is Black Friday. However, I doubt if you will be the only parent doing last minute shopping. Have fun :D  
**Megan**aww:) I didn't think Taylor was going into 7th grade! lol. I guess every school has their term or grade(s) that they refer to as middle school. Ours turned out to be 7th and 8th grade. I was gonna say something in the earlier post but wasn't sure..so what is middle school for your school starting at 4th grade?

# Back To School!

Well, summer is officially over – school starts **tomorrow**!Â  I could be like everyone else and say “where did the summer go?”, but for me, it actually didn’t go as fast as I would have thought.Â  We were so busy; though it was good-busy; not like so-much-work-to-do-busy.Â  But much fun was had and I enjoyed every minute!Â  Last week was spent at school open houses and orientations, as well as a training event at our church to allow us to volunteer with our church’s student ministries.Â  That was an interesting evening – it began with us volunteers breaking off into groups of about 15 and making lines.Â  We were given a spoon tied to a string which was wound around a “spool” ie, an empty tube of toilet paper.Â  The first person in the line (me) was to put the spoon down their shirt and pants and give it to the next person who was supposed to put it *up* their pants and shirt, then to the next person who was supposed to put it down the shirt and pants, effectively “threading” the line of people together.Â  Kind of strange, I thought, but what’s going to happen once we’re all “wearing” the string???Â  It was a little scary, but luckily, the threading was the entire ice-breaking activity, and the rest of the evening was pleasantly spent listening to a guest speaker while munching on all kinds of orange snacks (orange was the theme for the evening – I never really thought about how many party snacks are orange before!).

Today we had so many activities and volunteering planned for church that we were on the go from 8:30 in the morning until about 3:30 in the afternoon.Â  Busy, but it was time well-spent, especially since we finished up the day with Kidstuff (a cute show with a wonderful message for the kids) and then a carnival with LOTS of treats and fun for the kids; they had a blast.Â  Good thing too – we need to get settled down early tonight in order to get our oldest to school by **7:30 in the morning**!!!Â  She is starting middle school, and yes, to those of you who have asked – she will be switching classes, kind of like the “block” style they had when I was in middle school.Â  My daughter has a homeroom, but then she switches for language arts and math and perhaps other subjects as well.Â  And they do gym class strangely – there are 4 classes: gym, music, technology (typing, etc.), and art, and they take one of these 4 classes every day for 9 weeks and then switch to another.Â  That sounds pretty cool to me!Â  I would have LOVED it if I only had to worry about gym for 9 weeks of the year!Â  But, being in middle school also means that she has to change for gym class, poor thing – I remember that aspect of middle school making a lot of kids really nervous.Â  And at orientation last week, the principal gave us parents a talk about making sure we wash the gym clothes – the kids are getting to “that age”, she said, which prompted me to whisper to my friend nearby, “I’m not ready!”Â  But my daughter IS ready for middle school, and she seems to be making her way from tween to teen in no time –Â  UGH!Â  Poor thing got her first pimple just in time for the first day of middle school, but she doesn’t seem to mind too much, so we’re not making it a big deal.Â  It’s not like we’re publishing it on the internet for the entire world to read or anything…Â  But what are moms for?Â  She can thank me when she’s older and finds this through some sort of google search or something.

Our second oldest is starting Kindergarten.Â  This is our “difficult” child; our strong-willed one.Â  Samantha has a mind of her own, and some of the things she says leave us in stitches – others leave us shaking our heads, but we’ll stick to the positives here.Â  It seems that Samantha has the same KindergartenÂ  teacher that her sister had a few years ago, and my husband and I are chuckling to ourselves about the unintentional “joke” we’re about to play on our local school system.Â  We are wondering how many years it will take for word to spread amongst the teachers in town about how much of a…Â  well, *difference* there isÂ  between Samantha and her big sister…Â  No need to go off about it here, like I said, we need to call it an early night, but it will suffice to say that any teacher of Taylor’s who gets Samantha 4 years later will probably be surprised 

I was going to write about the younger two as well, but it’s bedtime already and this post is long enough – that’s what I get for not blogging regularly, I guess, an Ã¼ber-post!

### Comments

**derek**I should back off a bit and say that there are schools around here as well that have such mixes. One school in Des Plaines for example is K-8. They are not separated in any way. Well, there is a "middle school hall" and an "elementary hall," but 4th and 5th grades are in the so-called "middle school hall," all specials teachers (art, gym, music) teach K-12, and other resources such as the LMC are shared. They seem to do fine as well. Another school I know is actually two buildings joined in the last decade or so. K-6 and middle school are separated, but share resources as well. In short, as L says it can work in at least some cases.  
**mary911**One of my deputy's wives starts her first year at Bryan MS as the new social worker...(I'm not sure if that's her new title or not). I remember being so excited about getting to switch rooms for classes....however it wasn't until 7th grade. I think it's great that Samantha is unique. My family was the same way, but in the other order. My oldest brothers were the ones that maybe proved to be a bit more of a challenge....so by the time I came along, the teachers were ready....however, much to their delight, I was the perfect student....a blessing, I'm sure SOMEONE would say....(Ok, it's getting deep in here and I only have flip flops on....) I pray Samantha keeps her spunk!  
**taylhis**I don't know that I would classify it as a debate... I think the bottom line is that kids are different in different places. Because I was a resident of both types of places (urban and rural), I can totally see Derek's concern with the mixing of the grades - I would NOT approve of the concept given the class sizes and the fact that the urban kids mature MUCH earlier. In the rural area, the class sizes are much smaller, the mentality is different among many parents (many have more time for their kids and aren't as consumed by work), and the staff can make it work. Some places around here have K-12 schools and they work just fine!  
**jamiahsh**Interesting debate. Our our junior high school housed 6th-8th but the 6th grade was on the other side of the building. The new school now holds 6th-12th grade. I believe jr. and sr. high are on different floors.  
**derek**Separating the grades is definitely a good thing- young adolescents of 7th and 8th grades should be nowhere near 4th and 5th whether it be on the bus or in school.  
**taylhis**We shall see - I think she will do well. The good news is that the grades are very separated in the building, and the buses are also separated by grades. I think the experience will do a nice job preparing her for high school.  
**derek**I really have to shake my head at the decision your district made to put 4th and 5th graders through the middle school experience. I suppose one positive note is that they are getting out of the way a new school system \*before\* they start going through...other changes. There are some who say even 6th grade is too young, but having been in such a system (being probably the youngest in my class to boot!) and having no negative feelings about it, I don't necessarily agree on that one, but I know 6th grade elementary has its benefits too. 7:30 start time for T is going to be tough, but from her perspective she has some extra time in the afternoon! :)  
**jamiahsh**oops... sorry, WAY TO GO!  
**taylhis**WTG = ? not familiar...  
**jamiahsh**WTG, C. Sorry \*but not TOO\* sorry that I'm not there anymore for your overnight trips :D  
**taylhis**No trace of fog!!! Everything went smoothly, so I hear anyway - sweet hubby did everything (including the dreaded wmart trip) while I was asleep. He said he was bored after the baby woke him up at 4 in the morning! UGH! And yes, middle school starts at 4th grade.  
**jamiahsh**Hope it is clear and sunny tomorrow morning. And no traces of the terrible f word and we all know to which word I am referring.  
**jamiahsh**Hmm... I seem to remember 4 siblings who had a similar experience throughout their years spent gracing the halls of the E-town Local School system. I remember at least one teacher asking number three if he was going to be like number one or two. Now a few of them are being graced by the offspring of the original four.... three of the four, anyway :D I don't know who to feel sorrier for: the students or teachers.

# An Old Friend, A New Perspective...

A few weeks ago, we learned a friend from way back was going to be in the area on his way from Illinois to Florida with his family, so he came by and brought the fam.Â  That in itself was very unusual – after 10 years of friendship and various business associations and partnerships, we had somehow never gotten around to meeting his family in person.

But on this day earlier this summer, they all stopped in, and his wife and two kids (the oldest was off on some kind of school function) were really very nice, fun, and interesting people – we had a great day together.Â  Their kids, although quite a bit older than my kids, were nonetheless kept entertained by my kids, especially their pet rats.Â  Overall, it was a great visit with a nice family –Â  we really should have gotten together sooner!

And I have some advice for our friend: appreciate what you have, buddy.

I don’t know why he does some of the things he does, but he sometimes acts, um, I’ll call it restless, and now that I know how awesome his wife and kids are, it’s going to be that much more difficult for me if I continue to hear about any more dumb choices on his part.Â  He seems to be going through some sort of mid-life crisis, so I can only hope that he finds what it is he’s looking for without hurting those wonderful people who love him!

### Comments

**derek**I'm sure you all have figured it out by now, but even though I share some attributes with this person ("a friend from way back"- at least I hope!- and "Illinois"), she is not talking about me, though maybe the mid-life crisis part could apply... nah. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Very sound advice  
**mary911**What a difficult situation for you to be in....yes, I hope his midlife crisis dissolves soon. Happy thoughts, happy thoughts.....

# Kid Currency

Sometimes Dr. Phil *does* give good advice.Â  Among my favorite Dr. Phil advice lines is: “every kid has his (or her) currency”.Â  Unfortunately, our second-oldest daughter’s (age 5) currency (referring to something that can “buy” a kid; in other words, cheer up a sour mood) happens to be one of the girlie things her parents despise most: makeup.Â  She is starting to encounter the all-too-familiar plight of being a younger sibling: big sister leaves home bound for all kinds of fun adventures that little sister is not old enough to do; swimming at the pool, sleepovers, girl scout outings, the list seems endless when you’re ‘not old enough’…Â  It’s hard to be the little sister and to get left behind – I know because I was there!

So anyway, the other day, our oldest daughter left for the pool, and Sammie was really upset she couldn’t go with – but I knew just the cure: makeup!Â  I had bought a few makeup kits on clearance just after the Christmas season, and since I don’t wear makeup, what better use for it than to cheer up a sad little girl?Â  We don’t want the kids wearing makeup out in public or to school, and we especially don’t want it leading to an “addiction” – a teenage girl who won’t leave the house without her makeup on, yuck!Â  But for a special play-treat once in awhile to cheer up a left-behind little sis or two, makeup is just what the doctor ordered and works like a charm!

### Comments

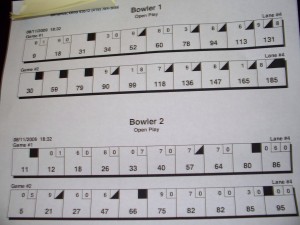
**mary911**Ha ha Jamiahsh!!! What a wonderful mommy-daughter date! I do nail painting parties for my nieces and my friends daughters! They love it!!!  
**jamiahsh**I remember being the younger brother at times being left behind. Makeup didn't do a thing for me.. oddly enough.

# Bowling For Columbine

While I’m on the topic of date night (see my previous post)…

This week we did not feel like mini-golfing again on date night, so we went bowling instead.Â  I did so well, we got a printout of the scores, much to my husband’s dismay – I’ve already mentioned how he has bad luck at physics-dependent sports like bowling and mini-golf.Â  And I got tons of practice at bowling as a kid – I was in a weekly bowling league for I don’t know how many years.Â  Later in high school, I took bowling in gym class and joined intramural bowling after school where IÂ  was crowned, “Female Bowler of the Year” for the two years I was in it –Â  not a difficult feat, seeing as how there were under 10 girls involved, but still, if we had had a competitive bowling team in high school, perhaps I would have been a high school athlete, hehe!

I’ve spent about 23% of my adult years pregnant (!) and most of the rest of those years raising small children who would wreak havoc with a bowling ball, so needless to say, I have not had a chance to hone the skill I developed as a youngster.Â  I do enjoy the occasional bowling game,Â  though, and rarely do I top my previous bowling average from back-in-the-day: 132.Â  Well, the other date night, not only did I top my old average for the two games we played but I somehow tied my all-time high score!Â  Well, anyway, here are the scores, and this reminds me to make joining a weekly league a priority when the kids get a little bit older!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/8-11-09-bowling-scores-0021.jpg)

And about the title I chose for my post…Â  I just finished reading the book *Columbine* by Dave Cullen, and it was a fascinatingly detailed account of the 1999 Colorado high school massacre dissected from just about every angle.Â  If you like to read true crime or just want to know every detail about the massacre (it holds a special fascination for me since it was unfolding just as Hubby and I arrived at our honeymoon destination after a 24-hour road trip back in ’99), you should read this book.Â  It’s both sad and informative, and the author does mention that the Michael Moore movie, Bowling for Columbine, has little to do with the circumstances involving the high school massacre.Â  But, Bowling for Columbine is a catchy title nonetheless, which is why I borrowed it, not because I’m a Michael Moore fan.Â  Actually, we saw a parody of his movies the other day, and I will be sure to include the movie review in an upcoming post called “It Was A Redbox Summer”.Â  Stay Tuned!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I just have one thing to say: What is it with you two and road trips? Has there ever been a trip you have taken in which there has not been some tragedy unfolding? but yes... great scores.  
**justj**Good scores. I haven't been bowling for in a year or so either. Sounds like fun.  
**Chris**I am so proud of your scores! That was awesome! Watching you do so well was so much fun. It was so exciting when you needed that last strike in the 10th frame if you were to get your high score â€” and you did!! I LOVE YOU! (IGNORE IT ON MINI GOLF)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Great scores Lisa....way to go!  
**derek**C's scores look more like the scores I would get. My high isn't much higher than your game #1...

# Full Moon = Mini Golf?

Earlier this month, I got a whim on date night for us to go mini-golfing.Â  Apparently I was not the only person who felt this way – the local mini-golf course was packed end-to-end with groups of golfers – on a Wednesday night!Â  We began our putting only to find ourselves stalled at every hole waiting for the group of 4 in front of us – which backed up the group of 2 behind us, etc.Â  We didn’t realize it was this crowded when we began golfing otherwise we probably would have chosen something else to do (not big fans of crowded places), but it ended up being lots of fun; we found plenty to chat about while waiting to play the next hole.Â Â  Among the topics were the strange occurrences befalling the behavior of our golf balls.Â  My husband’s normally bad luck (especially at laws-of-physics sports like mini-golf and bowling) seemed to be exaggerated, especially by my good luck.Â  An example – my husband took his shot, then I took mine, and my ball hit my husband’s ball sending it further from the hole, while mine bounced off his and into the hole for a hole-in-1!Â  Unintentionally, of course Â  After a few more of those wacky incidents and (to my dismay) the appearance of dozens of live frogs in the mini-golf pond, we had had our fun and were finished.Â  But on the way home, we couldn’t help but notice the full moon beaming overhead – a coincidence or is there something about a full moon that makes people want to mini-golf?Â  Friends in the fields have shared with me that hospitals and law enforcement agencies are extra busy on the nights of full moons – interesting.Â  How about you guys?Â  Did any of you have a sudden golfing urge last Wednesday night / early Thursday morning?

### Comments

**mary911**I was all ready for the full moon busy-ness that night at work, but it really wasn't. I was actually kind of bummed. At the beginning there was some weird stuff, but everyone must have decided to play nice and go mini-golfing..... ;)  
**jamiahsh**OOOHHHHH... the full moon. Craziness abounds.  
**justj**I think I was doing lights for a play that evening. I remember the full moon on the way home.  
**Chris**Oops - wrong post! Well, you did great at Mini-Golf too. What can I say? I married an amazing woman!  
**Chris**I am so proud of your scores! That was awesome! Watching you do so well was so much fun. It was so exciting when you needed that last strike in the 10th frame if you were to get your high score --- and you did!! I LOVE YOU!

# The Hot Tub On The Expressway

Because we had such a wonderful time at Splash Universe, the indoor water park in Shipshewana, Indiana, we decided to take the kids to Splash Bay, another indoor water park, this one in Maumee (Toledo), Ohio.Â  Again, we had a blast!Â  Following is a summary of both parks.Â  To abbreviate, I’m going to call Splash Universe in Indiana “IN” and Splash Bay in Ohio “OH”.

Water Slides:Â  LARGE: IN has 2 large water slides that you travel down in inner tubes (though they are essentially the same slide – same design), while OH has 3 large ones and only one of those is for inner tubes.Â  I personally prefer very tame water slides, so my favorites are the tube slides.Â  The other 2 water slides at OH are much bigger, but the blue one pushed me underwater at the end, and the red one is one of those “toilet bowl” ones – the slide opens out into a huge bowl or funnel, and the rider drops down through the middle into a swirling 7.5 foot deep whirlpool – no thanks.Â  Not for me nor my little ones, but my husband and my daughter’s teenage friend really liked it, and we enjoyed watching them from the balcony outside the snack bar where you could see into the bowl and watch them drop.Â  MEDIUM SLIDES: IN had many more smaller water slides – kind of like playground slides in water.Â  OH had a few, but more on those in the kids’ play area section.Â  SMALL SLIDES: IN had 2 tiny slides in a small baby area, perfect for my 2-5 year olds.Â  OH did not have any baby slides.

Swimming Area:Â  There was not much room for swimming in the IN water park.Â  Off of the lazy river, there is a little pool with a bench around the perimeter for families to sit, but not really anywhere for anyone to swim – something I found quite strange for a water park.Â  At OH, the kids’ play area has a bit of extra room for swimming in 2 places, although the depth is only 3 feet – better than no swimming at all though!Â  Neither place has a pool exclusively for swimming, however, nor my favorite water park element – the wave pool.

Kids’ Area:Â  Both parks have a large water playground for kids where they can squirt each other with various contraptions and go down slides and stuff.Â  Both places also have a zero-depth entry pool with a soft floor, which is great for really small kids getting ready to crawl and walk.Â  Both parks alsoÂ  have a Lily Pad Crossing, where kids can use overhead ropes to help them cross a path of stepping stones across a pool – this was really popular with my 9-year-old daughter and her 6-year-old boy cousin.Â  OH also has a really cool “shark” – a piece of playground equipment that is bolted to the floor of a 3-foot pool.Â  The kids can try to climb on the shark, the adults can try to shake them off and even climb on it themselves – the thing was really popular among guests of all ages.Â  OH also has a basketball hoop and floating balls which was a lot of fun for Hubby and me – providing we could get a long enough break from the kids to play a game.Â  Overall, I liked the OH kids’ area much better, but my husband liked the IN one better for just one reason – the 500-gallon tipping water bucket!

Lazy River:Â  In an indoor water park, lazy rivers are basically moats that carry an inner tube rider around the room.Â  I really enjoy these, even thoughÂ  indoor ones are slightly less cool than outdoor ones, just because they can’t get very long nor travel very fast.Â  The OH one was accessible directly after the water slides, and this was a pretty cool design, but the OH one was not very fast – I really enjoyed the feeling of getting swept down the river in certain parts of the IN lazy river.Â  It was really fun to try to time our trip down the lazy river so that we would meet up with the kids after a trip down the slide.

Hot Tubs: The hot tub at IN is adults only, and we never made it over there.Â  That reminds me, the temperature in the IN water park was always very warm – TOO warm when entering while wearing street clothes.Â  In contrast, the OH park is actually kept kind of chilly for my taste, and the water wouldn’t really warm up until a few hours before the park closed at night.Â  My kids were often cold in the regular water at OH.Â  But the OH hot tub was my favorite part of the entire park.Â  It was incredibly relaxing, and there was even a waterfall you could sit under.Â  AND, you could swim outside!Â  The weather was somewhere in the mid-70’s, so it was beautiful to sit outside in the hot tub, tucked in kind of a hidden corner just off the expressway where you could watch cars pay their toll and go about their days, but they couldn’t see you unless they knew better than to take a peek under the water slides.Â  And that’s another thing – since the water slides go out of the building, you can sit in the hot tub and see water sliders travelÂ  above – we would have our daughters and their friend put their hands against the water slide and wave to us; it was so fun!

In Summary:Â  For me personally, I preferred the OHÂ  water park over IN, just because I liked the hot tub a lot and even though they only had one tube slide, it was a really great slide!Â  I liked the more open areas for swimming and the basketball court OH provided, and I loved watching my daughters try to conquer the shark.Â  IN was fun for other reasons, especially having fun with a larger group of family, but if we’re just talking about attractions, then I definitely prefer Splash Bay near Toledo OH.Â  I don’t think I can get an unbiased answer if I ask my kids – what could beat being at an indoor water park with their grandparents, cousin, aunt and uncle and great uncle all at once?

*By the way, don’t ask for pictures.Â  If you think I was going to take our camera into any place with all that water, you must not know about my uncanny ability to lose and/or destroy cameras!*

### Comments

**Chris**I'm just writing to say I LOVE YOU!  
**jamiahsh**Why would people not be pleased being filmed underwater? I recall a trip on which we went on a snorkelling/whale watching expedition and I seem to remember being shot amongst the underwater life. think I kind of blended in. HEHE  
**taylhis**Good detective work - nope not this past scorching weekend. And it's not that I wanted to record underwater, it's that I knew my camera would end up IN the water! That's a pretty cool camera, but I don't think people would have been too pleased with being filmed from underwater!  
**derek**Mid-70's?? Must not have been this past weekend then... I just read about a camera that can be used underwater- ah, here it is: [Underwater Camcorder lets you record in and out of the water](http://www.geek.com/articles/gadgets/underwater-camcorder-lets-you-record-in-and-out-of-the-water-20090731/)  
**jamiahsh**Oh, yes... camera problems would definitely make me not want to try to tak photos. I think the funnel slide sounds great!

# I Can't Get Enough Of The Cute Animals

I received a few more of the email forwards withÂ  pictures of cute animals, so I thought I’d combine them into one post.Â  So here are some cute animals – enough said.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/deletebirdcat.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/deletebirdcat1.jpg)

That little parakeet is preening his smiling kitten buddy – something birds only do to the ones they love!Â  And these pandas were displaced when an earthquake shook their forest home, but they’re getting good care now.Â  What I wouldn’t give to sit right in the middle of that pen!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/deletepandas.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/deletepandas1.jpg)

And, for the finale, check out this cat who loves boxing!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**aww... i would take the chance anyway... esp if I was trained. Loved the boxing cat, also!  
**derek**That video was hilarious! As for the pandas, I think I would take a pass on sitting in the pen, at least if mama was around- they may be pandas, but they're still bears!

# As If We Needed ANOTHER Reason To Stay Up Late...

Yesterday was gong to be a huge catch-up-around-the-house day for me; I had big plans – unpack the suitcase from our unwillingly shortened venture earlier in the week (my son has decided to be the first one of our kids who doesn’t travel well.Â  He won’t sleep away from home, and he cries in the car – not cool for a family fond of road tripping), catch up on my email, and read and write some blog posts, among other things.Â  I got through the email and caught up on my fellow tangents bloggers posts (this task was made especially easy since [one of us](http://justj.tangents.org/) has seemingly disappeared), but I never got around to writing any posts of my own.Â  Time just slipped away from me yesterday; everything seemed to take forever.Â  I had a huge shopping to do at my **favorite** place (bold represents sarcasm) Walmart.Â  I was so tired that I got to the store and was waiting in the customer service line before I realized that I had forgotten the credit card at home – ugh.Â  At least I only had one kid with me to reload intoÂ  the car, otherwise it would have taken even longer.

Aside from the busyness and the fact that I should go to bed earlier but never will, I’ve been sleeping much better lately – that Claritin is a life-saver!Â  Still can’t get a cat though – we took the kids to the Humane Society the other day (just looking – we actually left without a new pet, hmmm, don’t think that’s ever happened before!), and I just gazed at a cat and sneezed; I didn’t even touch it!Â  What a shame because our friends have 2 litters of teeny tiny adorable farm kittens right now!Â  But back to why I was so tired that everything took forever yesterday.Â  My husband was asked to review the local community theater’s youth production for the newspaper, so we took the kids (minus Sir Climbs A Lot) to see the show.Â  Well, show**s**, actually, the turnout was so great for the youth theater this year that there were actually two plays.Â  And a few of our game night friends were involved, so it was fun to see them on stage.Â  But by the time we got home and got the kids settled down to start writing the review, it was past 11:00!Â  And because the turnout for youth theater was so great (which is an awesome thing), we had 37 kids to mention in the review.Â  And here’s the doozy – 37 kids to mention and no program!Â  There was an error at the printing company, and the programs were not ready for our special dress rehearsal pre-screening on Thursday night.Â  The director made us a partial cast list, but it still took awhile to figure out who was who enough to write a review.Â  Luckily, the kids had done a nice job and the shows were adorable, so some of it was easy writing, so we were chugging along (well, I was playing a video game since Hubby was chosen to write the review and needed my computer, but I was helping) when all of a sudden, something comes FLYING into our living room.Â  And no, it wasn’t the usual parade of kids – I mean flying literally.Â  It was a displaced wild bat (we have pet rats, not a pet bat – yet), and it was flying panicked around our living room.Â  I’m not afraid of bats, but it was a sudden thing to happen at 1ish in the morning, so I cowered next to my husband until it left the room.Â  I was really afraid it would fly into the halogen lamp – I’ve smelled the roasting bugs that became victims of the halogen; a bat in there would leave quite a mess, poor thing.Â  So anyway, now we had to locate the bat and show him the door.Â  In case you’re reading this and you’re horrified and re-thinking any future visits to our house, be assured that like fellow rural NW Ohio older homeowners (wait, I said that wrong – I’m not old, the house is!) we’ve had a bat in the house before.Â  And like the previous occurrence, this one was captured without incident and returned to the wilderness.Â  But first, we had to build a bat relocation contraption and stumble around on chairs at 1:30 in the morning trying to catch the thing.Â  But we managed, and he happily flew away when released outdoors, and it was still before 2 in the morning.Â  But my poor tired husband still had to finish that review – which is where I got my post title; I can’t believe that bat interfered with my sleep cycle!Â  All was said and done and we were both asleep just before 3, followed by a busy (and forgetful) Friday with a game night which led to another late night.Â  Yawn.Â  So why am I sitting here blogging instead of napping?Â  Oh yeah – 4 kids = no napping.

### Comments

**derek**...as a boy scout (no s). Proofreading is everything!  
**derek**I remember encountering bats when visiting Eagle Cave several times as a boy scouts. I wonder if it's still open- many caves are being closed due to the bat fungus.  
**taylhis**Heard about that - it was the first time a game between those two teams went scoreless for 14 innings, glad it turned in the Yanks favor. Cubs condolences accepted - and it wasn't Zambrano who gave up those runs - he is on the DL which is even worse! In one night, they lost a game, lost first place, and lost Zamrbano - i-yi-yi!  
**jamiahsh**And a FANTASTIC game night once again... even if the Cubbies lost (NY beat Boston 2-0 in FIFTEEN innings)  
**jamiahsh**Yes... bats are fun especially in the middle of the night! I have been awakened by one of the flying critters and had to show him the window (open of course). But with all the excitement and lack of info and sleep, I thought the review turned out nicely. Great job!

# Faith

Well, we found a church home in March, and it’s been going very well; we love it there.Â  The month of August is filled with church opportunities for us – a few classes we’re taking, a carnival for the kids, I’m volunteering in the Welcome Center, and we just went to a retreat at a beautiful Christian campground in Michigan yesterday.Â  But this post is not about THAT type of faith – it’s about a dog named Faith who was born with only a stub instead of front legs.Â  They had to remove his stub, and his mommy and first owner rejected him.Â  His new owner named him Faith and taught him to walk and get along without his front legs just fine.Â  How cute is this?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/delete-faith2.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/delete-faith.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/delete-faith1.jpg)

Thanks to Elizabeth for sending this to me!

### Comments

**derek**I remember reading about this some months ago- very interesting story, thanks for the reminder!  
**mary911**Ok, who let him get on the computer???? ;)  
**Chris**I don't see what the big deal is... I walk around on two legs all the time... J/K What a great story to share! :-) I love this blogger! ;-)  
**jamiahsh**Amazing story. Is it often that a dog rejects her pups even if they are different in some way? Curious, but at least he was given a god home. Great name, too.  
**Megan**I heard about this on t.v. It is soo amazing how well Faith gets along..so cute...  
**Phyllis Beyer**How sweet. I love this story.

# It Runs In The Family

My aunt sent me the following picture of my cousins at the Cubs game the other day down in Florida – it’s a screen shot from WGN.Â  At least they got to go to the game where the Cubs beat the Marlins at LandShark Stadium!Â  In case you’re wondering, the Cubs are doing very well right now – over .500 and just a half game out of first place.Â  They’ve been playing some GREAT baseball and are very fun to watch these days – GO CUBS!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/delete-cubs.jpeg)

### Comments

**derek**I thought I read before that they were in first place? Shows how well I keep up with these things. Some say going to minor league games is the better experience these days due to the expense of major league games and other things. I have that option should I choose to exercise it with two teams within reasonable driving distance.  
**Megan**I LOVE going to baseball games! But some friends wouldn't recommend going with me...I tend to pay more attention to the players than to the game;)  
**mary911**I've never been to a professional game of anything. I've been to Komet Hockey games, and that's it. I think if given the opportunity, I'd probably like it. I'm a real people watcher type person....maybe not a serious fan like you all.....so maybe not a good idea to go with any of you....you may leave me!!!! ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yes and the Yanks just saved themselves yesterday from being swept by the ah, hehm other Chi-town franchise (not mentioning any names) and are now a half game ahead of the Red Stockings for first in the AL East. Go Cubbies ;)

# Why We've Already Packed Away The Baby Walker...

Because he’s a boy.

The other day, IÂ  was sitting in the living room when some action in the area of my son’s walker (the thing the baby stands in that has wheels on it, allowing them to walk easier) caught my peripheral vision.Â  I silently watched as he turned around and proceeded to climb up and out of his walker, backed down the front of it, and quietly sat on the floor like nothing had happened.Â  Then it dawned on me that I hadn’t even put him IN the walker in the first place!Â  I checked with my husband, and he hadn’t put him in there either, and later that evening it was verified as we watched him do it again – my son had put *himself* in his walker in the first place before he climbed back out again.Â  He acted like a pro, so who knows how many times he’s done this, but needless to say, the walker has been packed away before he even used it to help himself walk.Â  But that leads me to my point – we’ve had 3 girls and now a boy, and we are starting to see the major differences between little boys and little girls;Â  the most noticeable at this point being that boys **climb EVERYTHING!** My son can climb before he can walk.Â  He’s been climbing stairs for awhile already, and the other day he climbed the table in the laundry room, and he can almost climb up onto the couch.Â  I can’t imagine what it will be like when he CAN walk, YIKES!!!

### Comments

**Chris**I don't get it. DOH!  
**mary911**I think you've just figured it out!!! Tee Hee!!! ;)  
**taylhis**ugh... no doubt he will. Let me guess, did you hit your head when you fell out of the tree? I've noticed that it's very easy for little boys to find things on which to hit their heads! Is this why women are smarter? ;) joking, joking...  
**derek**Sounds like one smart guy with the walker. He'll be climbing trees outside in no time- just make sure he doesn't fall out of one like I did when I was 9 or 10. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yep... he climbed the stairs here the other night, as well (of course, I was right behind him :D ). Adventurous little guy. Of course, my siblings were just the opposite 3 boys and 1 girl in that order.

# The End Of The (Band) World As We Know It...

Our town holds the distinction of having Ohio’s oldest city band – it’s over 150 years old.Â  Remarkably, this city band has had only 3 directors since 1888 – the current director has conducted the band for 48 years!Â  But at the age of 96, this was his last year with the band – and last Wednesday’s concert was his last.Â  The turnout was incredible – for a small rural town, an audience of 1,000 was beyond expectations, I think.Â  Usually, we can hear the band concerts from our backyard, but there was a threat of rain for this last concert of the season, so they moved it across town where they could have it under a roof.Â  We drove over for just a little bit, and even though we stayed in the car in the parking lot (sleeping kids), it was very enjoyable to listen to the band in the night air.

I would have liked to play for the band under this band director, just to meet him and be a part of town history, but my schedule does not allow for this as a hobby right now.Â  I guess I’ll have to wait until my kids are grown and I can play under the direction of the city band’s **4th** conductor since the 1800’s – providing I still have the skills to play in a band, that is –Â  I am quite rusty even now, let alone years from now!Â  But as I was saying, the city band as we know it is about to change…

### Comments

**Chris**Is that my trumpet D? I played trumpet for about 3 months in middle school. hehehe... By the way Taylhis... LOVE YOU!  
**derek**I have a trumpet I haven't used in 20 years...  
**jamiahsh**I do, too. Known him since my high school days. Paid position (maybe not a lot... who cares, anyway) and Krause possibly directing?! Do they have a spare tuba?  
**taylhis**I like Terry - he's very nice. I hope he gets the job if he wants it.  
**Megan**Being as he was my band director since I was in fifth grade...it will be interesting to see how different it will being under his direction as an adult.  
**jamiahsh**Would have loved to have gone and watched... maybe one day we can join. HEHE... that would be fun... playing under Krause's direction :D  
**Megan**You should:) I bet it would be a challenge with four kids and being involved with theatre. We only practice for an hour one night a week starting the end of May. Then the band concerts are one night for an hour a week until close to the end of July (which you know). Plus, and I didn't know this till after I first started..you get paid:) We voted for the next band director and Mr. Krause was on the ballot...seems like he has a really good shot at band director.

# A Nielsen Family

It began with $3 cash being enclosed in a letter – we had been selected to be a Nielsen family.Â  You know the Nielsen company – basically, they gather information about how many people are watching what on tv in order to determine how much commercials should cost.Â  So anyway, they sent $3 cast, and I have to admit, that piqued my interest.Â  They called with a short phone survey, and a few weeks later, we received a large envelope with 4 booklets (tv diaries), and $30(!) cash.Â  There were instructions; all we had to do was record what we watched on which tv for a week.Â  But it turned out to be easier said than done…

Recording what is watched on all of the tv sets (what year were those diariesÂ  printed – who says “tv sets”?) in our household turned out to be quite a challenge!Â  First of all, we have a parrot in the laundry room, and his tv is on all the time.Â  I don’t always know what is playing, but I do know that the bird loves The Price Is Right.Â  So I made a little note in our tv diary for that tv and mentioned that it’s on all the time for the pet parrot and that he especially likes The Price Is Right.Â  I made sure to notate that I don’t know if he prefers Bob Barker or Drew Carrey, though…

And then there is the kids’ tv, which is in their room.Â  I know they watch a whole lot of the Disney channel, but I don’t know what’s always on it.Â  Because it’s summer, we didn’t watch much tv in the living room; we mostly use that tv for movies on DVD.Â  It was challenging to remember to write down details every time a tv was watched, and if we forgot, it was hard to remember what was watched.Â  So at times the task was daunting, but we had already accepted the payment, so I felt that we had to follow through with the project.Â  Overall, it was a neat experience, and if they value our input, there will be a lot more of The Price Is Right, The Office, and hopefully Cubs baseball on tv 

Just for the heck of it, I took a picture of one of the tv diaries and the envelope:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/late-July-09-005.jpg)

Overall, a fun experience, but next time I might have to decline depending on how old the kids are when our names come up again.Â  It was very difficult for me to have to complete “homework” with 4 small children underfoot – hard to say if it would be worth the $30 again…Â  maybe if the kids are older and can fill out their own diaries…

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Right... I thought there was some sort of box involved... must have changed and made it more difficult for the family. I'm not sure how people are selected. Someone must be paid to sit behind a large number of phone books all day long.  
**taylhis**It's funny; I didn't know anyone either, but then I mentioned it to my uncle and he said he's gotten picked several times. And I learned in my Mass Communications class in college that they were done by putting a special data-recording box on top of the tv, hmmmm... That certainly would have made it easier!  
**derek**I never knew who all took part in these Nielsen ratings. Now at least I know one family. :)  
**taylhis**You could have; they said to record for guests as well. But the survey week is over, and I've mailed the diaries back already - sorry!  
**justj**Can we come over and tilt the ratings?

# A Bridge Over Not So Troubled Water

I received a cool picture via email the other day – a river bridging over another river!Â  It’s man-made of course, but what a feat!Â  It bridges the River Elbe in Germany and connects two important shipping canals.Â  The project was put on hold indefinitely when Germany was split during the last century and was finally completed in 2003.Â  I think this is pretty cool, so I’ll share it and thank fellow tangents.org blogger [Jamiahsh](http://jamiahsh.tangents.org/) for sending it to me.Â  I don’t know why he didn’t put it on his blog, but IÂ  figure he probably would have gotten a chance by now if that’s what he wanted to do with it Â  Check it out:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-river.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-river1.jpg)

For more information about the bridge, [click here.](http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,990878,00.html)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Very cool. Road trip? I'm in.  
**jamiahsh**Really cool though... sounds like a road trip to me ;)  
**jamiahsh**HMMM.... I wonder the same thing... ah, well.

# "It's Kind Of Like A Kid's Birthday Party..."

The title of this post is a quote from my favorite tv show, The Office.Â  Now I must go on a brief tangent to find out when this awesome show starts for the season – there it is, September 17, ugh, almost two months to go!Â  Time to add a countdown to the site…

Tangent over.Â  Anyway, in the tv show The Office, they have an annual awards show called The Dundies.Â  The lovable yet jerk of a boss, Michael Scott, gives (mostly silly) awards to his staff, and the workers generally are not thrilled about the Dundies.Â  A character named Oscar Martinez says the following about Michael and his Dundies:Â  *“The Dundies are kind of like a kid’s birthday party, and you go, and there’s really nothing for you to do there, but the kid’s having a really good time, so you’re kind of there? That’s… that’s kind of what it’s like.”* The reason I’m sharing the quote with you is because it floats through my mind every time I invite our family friends to one of my kids’ birthday parties.Â  I have 4 kids, one born in every season, so we have a birthday party around here every few months.Â  For the older ones, we invite their friends from school, and we invite family and a few of our adult friends to the parties for the younger ones.Â  I really hope no one is ever bored – it is, after all, a bunch of adults sitting around at a kid’s birthday party.Â  We don’t play “pin the tail on the donkey” or break a piÃ±ata; it’s just a reason for a bunch of us adults to get together, chat, and have some cake.Â  This is exactly what we did this past Sunday at my son’s first birthday party.Â  He had a really great time, and so did his sisters helping him open the presents.Â  He turned blue from his birthday cake, which he absolutely loved, of course!

BEFORE:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/christophers-1st-bday-party-7-19-09-007.jpg)*(his bib says “My 1st Birthday”, but he hated it and is trying to get it off in this picture)*

AFTER:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/christophers-1st-bday-party-7-19-09-013.jpg)

He also got lotsÂ  of great presents –Â  some adorable outfits and cool toys that actually kept him busy for more than 10 minutes!Â  He likes his new toys so much that he’s been playing with them non-stop!Â  They’ve actually kept him out of trouble – well, kind of, he did have two baths out of necessity already today and he spilled a glass of water all over my computer wires, but that’s nothing for him.

So thanks again to everyone who attended – he especially loved it when everyone sang ‘happy birthday’ to him!

### Comments

**derek**Sorry I never got back to you on the party. Sounds like it was a good one. As it was, I was needed this weekend at my church as a lot of leaders were absent for some reason.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Wouldn't have missed it for anything. I also, can't believe he is 1 already.  
**jamiahsh**You didn't miss the party... you were just fashionably late ;)  
**Megan**It's always a blast at your house! Did Christopher even get any cake in his stomach? lol...So cute:) So sorry to have missed the party:( I can't believe he is 1 year old already!  
**jamiahsh**ever bored?! Incredible! How could anyone be bored with 4 entertaining kids. 9-17-09...

# Library Update

A few blog posts ago, I made a plea to save Ohio libraries because the governor was proposing a budget plan that included a major cut in library funding.Â  The vote went through the state legislature, and the budget was re-worked in such a way that the libraries received less than half of the budget cut that was originally proposed, so YAY!Â  Our voices were heard!Â  In this economic crisis, it is understandable that funding is going to be cut on certain community resources, so let’s hope that our libraries can figure out a way to continue their many services without changing too much in light of these cuts.Â  I received an email back from one of the congressmen, so I thought I’d share it below.Â  Not that the letter was written personally for me, but it’s nice to have my efforts acknowledged.Â  Hopefully my friends who work for the state can keep their jobs in light of the budget re-working!

DearÂ Ms.  
Thank you for contacting me with your concerns over Governor Stricklandâ€™s proposal to reduce the general revenue transfers to the Public Library fund by $227 million over the next two years. A vital aspect of democracy is that all citizens are able to express their views, and I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with me. Although I was not able to respond to you prior to the budget vote, please know that your correspondence as well as messages from across our region and the state had a major influence on my work on this bill and, ultimately, how I voted.

Due to the economic situation that the State of Ohio is encountering, all agencies and departments have been forced to absorb cuts in state funding. Fortunately, during the conference committee, an agreement was reached to reduce the Governorâ€™s proposed cut to library funds so that libraries statewide will experience only an $84 million cut over the next two years. While I realize that this is still a considerable reduction, it is substantially lower than the $227 million originally proposed by Governor Strickland.

Again, thank you again for contacting me with your concerns onÂ the budget. If I may ever be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to write or call.

Sincerely,



Steve Buehrer

State Senator

1st Senate District

### Comments

**mary911**Hm, that looks a LOT like the one I got!!! Yes, indeed, YAY!!!!!!  
**derek**Good news indeed, in light of what could have happened. :)  
**jamiahsh**Confidence and determination score once again!

# VIPs For A Day (part three of.... well, I'll try to make this the last part)

If you’ve read my first two blog posts about our trip to King’s Island, then you know that I’ve rambled and chronicled, and now I’m blue in the face and ready to move on.Â  I would like to rate most of their rides though for those who are curious and/or contemplating a visit to the theme park.Â  Somewhere there is a Discovery Channel show about the 10 Most Extreme Roller Coasters I’d like to see – I hear King’s Island has 3 or more on the list!Â  Going to hope that it’s on youtube…Â  If you haven’t read my previous post, here is my ride experience scale: 1â™¦ = not so good, while 5 â™¦ = awesome!

**The Racer** – 3â™¦.Â  A wooden racing roller coaster that doesn’t really race.Â  According to our guide, people on the different racing trains would trash-talk each other so much that they built a wall to separate the two train colors.Â  When we rode, the first time the blue train was not operating, and the second time, the trains did not go at the same time.Â  Still a fun wooden coaster though!

**Flight Deck** – 1â™¦.Â  Formerly called Top Gun, but whatever you call it, we did not like it.Â  It’s a roller coaster whose car is suspended from the track above the car, which basically amounted to a lot of swinging.Â  Ok for me, not my favorite, but it made my husband sick.

**Vortex** – Â¼â™¦ – This one only gets a quarter star to put it on the map –Â  my map key didn’t exactly contain a zero, so let’s give it a quarter star just because it’s a coaster.Â  But otherwise, yuck.Â  Jerky, but without any real thrills.Â  Reminds me of the Shockwave they used to have at Six Flags Great America in Gurnee Illinois.Â  Funny how I used to ride that over and over, especially near park closing when it would empty out.Â  We would just stay on Shockwave until they kicked us off!Â  But as an adult, the ride type doesn’t work for me.

**Invertigo** –Â  3â™¦.Â  I need to go back on this one when it isn’t lunch time!Â  I think the Flight Deck/Invertigo/haven’t had lunch yet combo did me in as IÂ  felt a bit queasy after this one.Â  Basically, you go up and through a loop, and do the same thing backwards.Â  The cool thing about this one is that you face other riders, which I actually don’t know if that’s a cool thing or not – our guide recommended we try sitting on either the front or back of this one so we didn’t have to face strangers on the coaster.Â  I did enjoy how this one whizzed through the station though, and like I said, I will have to try it again on a full stomach.

**Sponge Bob 3D Ride** – 4Â½â™¦.Â  I really liked this one!Â  A lot of fun, and much more movement than its counterpart at UniversalÂ  Studios, the Jimmy Neutron ride.Â  It’s a 3D Sponge Bob movie where the seats move as you move about Sponge Bob’s world.Â  The scenery is great, and not only is it 3D, but the rider actually gets to move along with the movie.Â  As a bonus, the movie is very funny, and I loved the story!

**Whitewater Canyon** – 4Â½â™¦.Â  You know the type – a large round boat makes it way down a “river”, complete with rapids, drops, and waterfalls.Â  I always love this type of ride and much of the fun is riding it with your friends or evenÂ  strangers trying to see who is going to get the most wet!Â  The day we went, it was an unseasonal 70Â°, and getting wet wasn’t quite as enjoyable as usual.Â  This is actually one of the smaller versions of this type of ride that I’ve been on, and the boat seated 6 people instead of the usual 8, 10, or 12 as I’ve seen before.Â  But this version has an added element of fun – friends, family, and people who have ridden the ride can take revenge on riders by putting in a quarter for a chance to launch a water cannon at passing boats.Â  This part is lots of fun, although they need to get the change machine working so more people can squirt!Â  We went on with some kids who didn’t get wet enough in their opinion, so they rode again while we kept watch at the water cannons and succeeded in getting them SOAKED!

**Backlot Stunt Coaster** – 2â™¦.Â  Lameness.Â  But remember, I’m used to Universal Studios since we try to trek to Orlando yearly.Â  This has nothing on Universal.Â  But I suppose for younger kids, it could instill a feeling of bravery as they race past exploding police cars.Â  It goes kind of fast up a winding track, which is kind of different, but other than that, the excitement kind of fizzled, and the ride isn’t all that long.Â  The brightly colored cars you ride in are super-cute, but does that really matter?

**Adventure Express** – 1Â¾â™¦.Â  This is also kind of lame, which is alright, not every coaster has to be top thrill.Â  But this one is like Big Thunder Mountain Railroad at Disney, but that is bigger and faster.Â  Adventure Express was going alright until the rider finds himself in a climatic tunnel, climbing a lift past moving robots and everything.Â  Then when you reach the top – nothing.Â  Nada.Â  Literally – the ride ends here.Â  What the ?

**Scooby Doo and the Haunted Castle** – 4Â½â™¦.Â  You ride through scenes of Scooby Doo trying to shoot the bad guys with a laser gun attached to your car – cool!Â  Even better, I actually beat my husband on this one!Â  This ride is a lot like Buzz Lightyear at Disney, and I can never even get close to Hubby’s score on that one.Â  He must have had an off-ride though, cuz the second time we rode he beat me silly again.Â  Oh well, this ride is awesomely themed.Â  They remembered quite a few of the bad guys from the old Scooby Doo tv show, and there were sound bites galore.Â  The castle looks awesome from the outside,Â  and we even drove a Mystery Machine:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/kings-island-7-2-09-003.jpg)

Other fun rides at this park that deserve at least an honorable mention are the railroad (just a standard train ride, but oh-so-relaxing after a huge day of coaster riding!), the Wild Thornberry’s River Adventure (kind of a lame log-flume type ride, but still lots of fun), the Eiffel tower (we didn’t ride it, but it was gorgeous to look at), and Dodgem (plain ole bumper cars, but when is the last time hubby and I got to ride ‘n bump kid-free?Â  I don’t even remember!).Â  Because we splurged and got the guided tour, we even had time to catch some shows – an ice show and an 80’s review.Â  The ice skaters were pretty good; especially one guy who even did a triple axle!Â  The 80’s show was fun, even though many of the performers were incapable of both singing and dancing at the same time.Â  There was a specialÂ  Michael Jackson tribute, even though he had passed away only a week before our visit.Â  But there were afros, mullets, big bangs, leg warmers, bright colors, even giant Rubik’s cubes, and it was fun to sing along to the rockin’ 80’s tunes.Â  One did get the feeling however, that not one member of the show had any idea of what the ’80’s was actually like…

So there you have it.Â  I’ve reviewed and rated the rides I rode and found worth a mention.Â  If you are thinking of visiting, you should know that King’s Island also has a huge kids area, and many more rides I didn’t mention.Â  We tried to stay away from any rides with a lot of spinning or anything that looked too crazy (especially this one called Delirium):

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-delirium_lrg.jpg)

It looked a little too crazy/dizzy for me; maybe if you go to King’s Island, you can try it and let me know what it’s like in the comments!

### Comments

**Varicose Veins Treatment :**Spongebog is always very cheesy and funny, i like this cartoon character~';  
**Light Fittings**spongebob is crazy funny, who does not love spongebob anyway hehe'\*\*  
**Sydney Collins**what i like about spongebob is that he is sarcastic and funny`,;  
**Wyatt Richardson**spongebob is really funny but she sort of overacts sometimes."'-  
**Nevaeh Green**Spongebo and Patrick are really great characters. love them.;-,  
**justj**I really like rollercoasters, but I'm not sure I would ever get on that ring on a stick ride. Looks like I would lose my lunch on that one.  
**mary911**LOVE the picture of you guys in the Mystery Machine!!!! Freddie and Daphne, eat your hearts out!!!! :D  
**jamiahsh**Whitewater Canyon I remember. 70 degrees and still willing to get wet? My kind of riders! Performers in an 80s revue who don't remember the decade? COME ON! Young whippersnapers :D

# A Future In The Superbowl?

Here is a commercial I had not seen until a friend sent it to me in an email forward.Â  As I was sitting here chuckling over it, my two oldest daughters became curious and came over for a look.Â  They loved what they saw, and I had to play it 3 more times!Â  I don’t think it’s in regular circulation yet, but if it is, I haven’t seen it.Â  Of course, I never watch tv anymore!Â  Perhaps it’s waiting to be unveiled until the next round of infamous Superbowl commercials?Â  Enjoy!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Probably laughing about the effects in less than 10 years. But cute! I see an E\*Trade baby/Avian troupe battle February 7, 2010. Isn't that a bit late?!  
**taylhis**I agree with Derek - they animate it with computers. But they did a nice job; the animation is really smooth! Though something tells me that we'll be laughing about these effects in 10 years!  
**Phyllis Beyer**How cute! How on earth do they film something like that?  
**derek**The CGI says modern commercial, yet the cassette boombox and roller skates scream otherwise. Hmm... But yes, cute.  
**justj**All I can say is: Where were the knee pads and helmets on those kids? ;) Cute!

# Our (Thirty) First Year Checkup

My son had his 12 month checkup at the pediatrician the other day, and all is well!Â  It was kind of strange though, when the doctor asked my husband if **I** snored a lot.Â  My husband admitted I do, and then the doctor proceeded to make me breathe for him.Â  What the heck – is this a normal part of how a one-year-old baby is examined, by exploring the mother’s snoring habits?Â  The doctor then started describing some of my behavior as of late – you are tired all the time, and you feel lazy.Â  Right on!Â  He said he could tell just by looking at my puffy eyes that I probably have allergy problems, which is inhibiting my sleep patterns – did I mention that our pediatrician is also the county’s medical sleep expert?Â  So he recommended that I start taking Claritin and some nose drops.Â  I tried the nose drops yesterday, and already I could breathe better through my nose better than I’ve been able to in months – funny how you don’t notice things like this, but I’ve been so busy, I thought I was just tired from all the busy-ness, and I didn’t really notice that I wasn’t able to breathe much through my nose.Â  I did notice that I’ve been itchy constantly – my eyes, behind my face, and now, I have this nasty spider bite on my knee I got on the 4th of July that will not go away – I itch constantly!Â  I’m really hoping the Claritin works, and I can be back to the energetic mom I so want to be!Â  Hey, maybe the allergy medicine will work SO well that I can get myself a pet cat ðŸ˜‰

So anyway, like I said, everything is going great with my son.Â  I just thought it was weird when the focus of the doctor’s appointment turned to me.Â  He is doing great; he is 30 inches long which is exactly average for his age.Â  He weighs 21 lbs, which makes him a little on the smaller side, weight-wise, so we have to try to fatten him up.Â  The doctor also said he should be standing more, but then again, I had scheduled his appointment for during his nap, so we had to wake him up to see the doctor.Â  I don’t know about you, but I wouldn’t exactly be thrilled about standing up for someone in the middle of my nap either!

### Comments

**derek**I could probably use something like Claritin myself, except I am paranoid about future liver problems many drugs cause. Glad to hear CVA is doing great.  
**jamiahsh**I wouldn't be happy if I got woken from a nap to go to the doctor. But weird and wonderful how it turned and seems to help you. Eat, Beeber, EAT! HAHA!!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Very interesting....I remember when you were younger you needed an inhaler for a year or so. Sorry, but I don't remember any specifics.  
**mary911**Huh, I thought my laziness and tiredness was because I was tired and lazy!!! Who's your doctor??? Glad the little guy is doing well! And glad his momma is improving!!! :) Have a great week!!!

# VIPs For A Day (part two of even more parts)

So, where did I leave off when I blogged about our kid-less [day trip to King’s Island](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/07/06/vips-for-a-day-part-one-of-more-parts/) amusement park?Â  I don’t remember; I got kind of side-tracked and have made a few unrelated blog posts since then…Â  But no matter, I’ll just begin by rating the rides at King’s Island; my scale is 1-5 â™¦’s, 1 being not so good and 5 being a perfect ride experience.

**The Beast** – 4Â½â™¦.Â  I have an in-depth description of this one in my previous post, but I will recap again – very cool wooden roller coaster; built into the existing terrain of the Miami River valley in southern Ohio which means you can be speeding along not more than 3 feet above the ground, thinking you must travel a lift before you can drop, but that’s not the case!Â  This is the longest wooden roller coaster in the **world** with a 4 minute and 50 second ride time.Â  Like any wooden coaster, it can be rough and rickety (I was sure I threw out my bad back on one of the speeding curves, but thankfully, I did not.Â  Shhh, don’t tell anyone I ride coasters with a bad back, but it must not be that bad since my back was one of my least sore parts the day after King’s Island), but these sensations improve if you ride the front row – I HIGHLY recommend the front seats on this one!

**Diamondback** – 4Â½â™¦ – I also talked about the park’s newest addition in my previous post, so here is another recap.Â  Exceptionally smooth ride, with no upside-down air time.Â  Rather, the only air time is achieved when your butt *lifts* from your seat on the multiple drops.Â  The sensation of free-falling is achieved by the restraint system – one smallish plastic piece that sits between your legs – that’s it!Â  The picture I posted in my previous blog doesn’t do justice to the coaster, so here is another:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-diamondback1.jpg)I know certain readers of mine will notice that this is indeed a computer-generated picture, so I might as well just say that outright.Â  The first time we went on Diamondback, I **loved** it, and it would have gotten an even higher rating from me if it were not for the time we rode it in the front row.Â  Unlike The Beast, the front row of the Diamondback adds an entire new dimension to the ride – one I was happy enough without!Â  I respect our tour guide’s opinion that riding front on Diamondback is a must-do experience, and even though it wasn’t for me, I’m glad I got to do it once.Â  But it was SOOOO scary!

**Firehawk** – Holy (excuse my language) crap.Â  This is one doozy of a coaster!!!Â  Wow, I forgot to rate it, hmmm let me think…Â  3Â¾â™¦.Â  First let me explain what this coaster is, and then I can explain what would have made it better.Â  The riders load into Firehawk, and then the seats recline until the rider is *lying down*.Â  Not for the faint of heart – you are strapped into flexible (not hard plastic like most) shoulder harnesses, and then you are tilted backward until you are lying on your back – and it evenÂ  feels like your head might just be lower than your feet.Â  So anyway, lying down, the rider leaves the station, and proceeds to go up a hill, head first, facing the sky.Â  So of course you can’t see when you’re going to reach the top.Â  And when you finally do reach the top of the lift, you flip until you’re flying Superman-style through the trek of the coaster.Â  Overall, it was awesome, and I have to sayÂ  that I truly misjudged how ultimately different the horizontal sensation would be – it was VERY different.Â  What kept me from giving this coaster a higher rating, however, was this (and a discussion on the long ride home found my husband thinking the same thing):Â  For a unique roller coaster where you were supposed to feel like you were flying, especially for one of the first and only of this type (this is the only one in Ohio, I believe), they really could and should have simplified the design.Â  Instead of all the inversions, corkscrews and loops, they should have actually slowed down the coaster and left the rider suspended belly-down for the majority of the ride.Â  After people experienced that, THEN they could have added the speed and all the inversion stuff in an update version of the ride, and it would have been like a 2-fer – 2 rides, one idea.Â  The way it was, the ride was so fast that you really didn’t have the time to pretend to be Superman, and that was a shame.Â  The woman in our row the second time we rode Firehawk was, and I quote, “terrified”.Â  My husband told her it wasn’t that bad, and when he told her that, I was thinking, “What are you thinking?Â  It IS terrifying!”.Â  I just did not think that being on our backs face up on our way up the lift was the right time to tell a stranger that my opinion differed from my husband’s – it’s not like she could check my face for my true feelings.Â  The woman found out for herself.Â  I think she liked it though, as did I in the end, despite the changes I would make.Â  Another fun thing about this coaster is that while waiting in line (or by-passing the line on your VIP tour, highly recommended please see my first King’s Island post ), you get to pass next to the part of the ride where it first slows down as the riders come back into the station.Â  You can hear the riders’ very first reactions to the crazy configuration of this coaster, and that is a really cool time-filler!

**Flight of Fear** – 3Â¾â™¦.Â  It does feel strange to rate this and the previous coaster the same since they are two veryÂ  different ride experiences, so I feel the need to disclaim that I’m rating my overall ride experience.Â  Keep in mind that I am no longer in my 20’s, so I’ve lost my reckless abandonment.Â  I really like roller coasters, but I do draw the line and find some things too scary – so my rating system might vary from that of a true coaster enthusiast.Â  But anyway, I liked Flight of Fear, largely because it is like a much better version of Disney’s Space Mountain.Â  My husband likened it to the Aerosmith Rock N Roller Coaster at Disney’s ~~MGM~~ Hollywood Studios – which I loved, but IÂ  found it more like a much improved Space Mountain.Â  All 3 are dark indoor coasters.Â  Flight of Fear and Aerosmith have what they call linear induction launches, which is how smart people say “0-54mph in 4 seconds!”.Â  On the way home, I was browsing through (ahh, life without kids in the car!) the super-cool stat sheets our guide gave us as parting gifts, and I noted that Flight of Fear was the first ride in the world with the linear induction launch!Â  It was SO much cooler than Space Mountain; much more smooth and with inversions.Â  Space Mountain is herky-jerky, and there are no drops nor inversions – it’s almost kind of like, what’s the point?Â  THIS is Magic Kingdom’s thrill ride?Â  But then again, Magic Kingdom really isn’t like that – you visit with small children and/or for the small child inside yourself.Â  But my point is, Flight of Fear is SO much better than Space Mountain, but not quite as good as the Aerosmith coaster – perhaps something to do with Aerosmith’s black light flourescent graphics versus the plain darkness of Flight of Fear; I preferred the graphics.Â  For a tangent, here is an interesting story about Flight of Fear: as I mentioned, we had a guide for our trip to this park.Â  Other park visitors would see he was an employee and ask him questions throughout the day.Â  One of the questions was “Is Flight of Fear still open?”.Â  Our guide said yes, not really knowing what the guest was talking about until later during the behind-the-scenes tour of The Beast when the park’s PR Manager, Don Helbig (who has ridden The Racer, another wooden coaster, almost 12,000 times!Â  How does one even count that high, especially when being tossed around on a wooden coaster?) told us that one of his job’s challenges was to dispel the rumors about the park given life by the internet.Â  One of those rumors he talked about happened to be that Flight of Fear met its demise.Â  Not true – Flight of Fear is alive and well and also well worth riding, especially if you are a person who is used to Space Mountain.Â  I think I can pretty much guarantee you will like Flight of Fear better.

Well…Â  I have once again ~~talked~~ blogged your ear (?) off with my boring detailed account of an event.Â  I wanted to rate most of the enjoyable rides at King’s Island, but I must cut the post short for now – maybe I will be able to get the other cool rides in the next post if I cool it a little and shorten the detail…Â  Until then…

### Comments

**taylhis**Flight of Fear wasn't too short - I felt like it almost stalled in the middle, but I think that's just part of it. The Aerosmith one WAS really short, though it's been years since I've been on it also.  
**derek**If my memory serves, the Aerosmith coaster was really goo, but extremely short. Is Flight of Fear really short as well? Not compared to the Beast of course since \*any\* coaster is short in comparison. How about this- is it satisfying, or does it come to an end just as you're starting to really enjoy it? I think that was the problem with Aerosmith. They all sound like something to experience.  
**MY First Time | Morat's Blog**[...] Recent Posts MY First TimeSo Much For Sleeping In...VIPs For A Day (part two of even more parts)The Village GreenA bit of humorIt doesn't take long......My Little ManA Beary Super Birthday!Just [...]  
**Phyllis Beyer**I loved reading your accounts of the roller coasters. I must say, though, that at 62 I think they might be a bit much for me. Too bad they weren't around about 15 years ago. I'm glad you're still young enough to enjoy them. Do you remember how you got your roller coaster start? Riding the American Eagle at age 4 - you begged me and against my better judgement I let you ride.  
**jamiahsh**BORING!!!!!?????? Only makes me more excited about our Halloween trip! What a bumber that you don't get to experience the Superman-esque flight during Firehawk, but still sounds great. I CAN'T WAIT to ride the Beast again! I much prefer the Rock N'Roller to Space Mountain. I, too like the graphics inside.

# My Little Man

My son is ONE year old today – how time flies!Â  He is starting to look like such a little man:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/christophers-dedication-pictures-001.jpg)

This picture was taken at our church for his baby Dedication ceremony we had in June.

*Jesus said “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”  
Mark 10:14*

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY BEEBER!Â  WE LOVE YOU!!!**

### Comments

**mary911**What a beautiful boy!!! Happy Birthday Christopher!  
**jamiahsh**Happy BIG 1 big guy! What a thrill it is for me to have someone so special to me almost share the same birthday as I. So glad I got to share it with you today at the zoo! You really started to look like you actually wanted to see the animals which is good in your family. Awesome picture!  
**derek**Happy birthday CJ (Chris Jr.)!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Happy 1st Birthday to my very special grandson. Papa and I love you very much.

# Christian The Lion

My previous post became too lengthy, but I wanted to share the following video they had on the hotel tv.Â  Whether it was my relief that the baby had finally fallen asleep, or my being so tired after a huge busy day, the video made me emotional – I think it’s just a feel-good video.Â  I meant to show it to the fellow animal lovers in my family, but it skipped my mind that morning, so now they can see it here; it’s awesome!

Christian The Lion:

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Incredible! Nurture vs. Nature.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Totally awesome!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
**whatever**This was so neat to see. Love you Lisa!

# Down And Out In Shipshewanni

Well, life is back to normal, I guess you could say, whatever “normal” is.Â  My 3 girls were with their Grandma in Illinois for over a week, and they had an awesome time.Â  Our house was quite quiet and empty without them, so we made it our business to not be in the house much at all.Â  We were constantly on the go, getting to doÂ  lots of fun things withÂ  just the baby and even some things just hubby and meÂ  – great times!Â  More on that later since I need to finish writing about our trip to King’s Island, and hopefully entice some people to come along when we go back close to Halloween.Â  But for now, here is a re-cap of our trip to Shipshewanni – I’m respectfully poking fun at my mom, who has a tendency to sometimes mispronounce things – love you Mom!

So Monday, instead of driving to Illinois to pick up the kids, we met them and my parents, uncle,Â  sister, nephews, and brother-in-law in Shipshewana Indiana for two days of fun in an indoor water park.Â  Anticipating this trip for months, I was sure I was going to have a fun blog to write – a family trip with 7 adults, 4 kids and 2 babies sounded like fodder for a National Lampoon movie.Â  But strangely,Â  especially considering **this** group of people – you know who you are – nothing bizarre happened; no one in the group got crazy (except for our baby, but that will be addressed later on…), and we all had a blast!

I have to be honest and say that when we got to the water park, I was a bit disappointed to see that there wasn’t a swimming pool.Â  But as time went on, I became happy with the small size of the place since it was easy to keep tabsÂ  on the kids and find other members of the family to catch up and chat.Â  There were two large water slides where you go down on rafts, and we had an awesome time taking turns going down with everyone racing each other.Â  You could go down one or two-at-a-time, and after a while, our oldest got brave enough to try and found she LOVED the water slides!Â  Same with her cousin, and the two of them went down together – it was adorable toÂ  see the two of them work together to carry their huge raft up all those stairs.Â  I wish I had a picture, but it was impossible to have a camera in the water park – and please, with my camera luck, do you think I could have taken pictures in the water park and still have had a camera when we left?Â  Doubtful.Â  But anyway, we (exhaustively!) made our way up all those stairs time and time again to race our daughter and my nephew and even my mom and dad down the water slide.

They also had a kids’ pool with lots of things to play with and a soft floor for the babies to crawl on.Â  There was also a playground with 4 water slides –Â  the kind you go down without a raft – and I liked those too until I mistakenly went down one before it was cleared…Â  My husband was standing at the bottom of it holding our two-year-old, and I slid right into the back of his legs, bowling them over.Â  Thank goodness no one was hurt, and I’m sure it was an hilarious, stooge-like display of idiocy.

They also had a lazy river – my favorite.Â  You just grab a raft and float on down the river, and my 1-year-old son fell asleep because it was so peaceful to float down the river in my arms.Â  When we are rich, we are going to build a lazy river at my goat farm where I will play with goats, make cheese, and relax in my lazy river 

We split up for dinner, and my parents and uncle were nice enough to watch the kids soÂ  we could go out to dinner with my sister and brother-in-law.Â  We took the babies with us (our youngest sons are 2Â½ months apart), and they allowed us sisters and husbands some much-needed catch-up time; I think it’s been over 5 years since we went out together which is too long!Â  We went to an Amish-style restaurant, and at first I thought it was going to be a gimmick.Â  You know, yucky Sysco food disguised as Amish style food…Â  but thankfully, I was wrong.Â  The food was SO good!Â  The roast beef was incredible, the mashed potatoes homemade and not out of a package as so many are, and the chicken and noodles tasted like the noodles were also made from scratch.Â  Everything was all we could eat, served family style – YUM!Â  I highly recommend the Blue Gate restaurant!

So then we went back to the water park for a little bit until it closed, and then it was time to try to get the kids settled down for the night.Â  My parents were gracious enough to splurge (the entire trip was a Christmas gift from them) and get us a room with some extra space for our large family, and the two oldest girls had their own little bunk bed area with a tv and nightlights in their beds.Â  They were out in a jiffy.Â  Not the case with the younger two – our two-year-old Disney had to bunk with us for lack of beds while her one-year-old brother had a crib.Â  DisneyÂ  and I caught up on life and her week with Grandma while whispering under the covers while Daddy tried to get the baby to bed.Â  Soon, Disney was asleep which just left one standing…Â  and standing…Â  Christopher refused to go to sleep.Â  In a hotel, especially in a room adjoining my sister’s where they also had a fussy trying-to-go-to-sleep baby, we could not let him cry it out, soÂ  we took him down the hall to the mini-arcade – at least I could read my magazine and my husband could play some Madden while the baby crawled around.Â  Ha.Â  All he wanted to do was crawl up and (fall) down the stairs, so no fun for us.Â  I thought about taking him downstairs so we could at least sit with my dad and uncle and enjoy the evening air, but one of us had to stay with the sleeping girls.Â  Since our goal was to be able to spend some time together, this was not an option.Â  We ended up sitting outside of our room for awhile, letting the baby crawl, but soon he got crabby and we realized we were just assaulting my sister’s family from the other side of the room with our noise.Â  Finally we put him back in his crib and hid out in the bathroom so we were out of sight, and this did the trick – 4 down!Â  Except that now it was too late to do anything together, so we just watched a few of those weird youtube-like videos and went to bed.Â  Apparently the baby woke up again in the middle of the night and also early the next morning, and my awesome husband took care of him, even though he was dead tired by the time we got home the next day.Â  I didn’t sleep well either, especially with Disney in our bed who kept kicking me.

So the next morning, we were up for breakfast, and I couldn’t eat anything because I was so tired.Â  No problem; I’d get lunch later when I was hungry and at the very least, we had big plans to pick up some gourmet cheese from the awesome cheese shop before we left town.Â  We split up for the day since my husband didn’t mind taking the older kids to the water park again, and the rest of us had had enough water park, so we went to the flea market instead – what a madhouse!Â  I don’t know why it’s only open 2 days a week because for those 2 days, the area is MOBBED with tons of traffic!Â  But anyway, the flea market is huge and has a wide variety of things for everyone.Â  Before I left, hubby said to make sure I bought myself something, so I did – isn’t he awesome?Â  He takes most of the kids for the day AND tells me to buy myself something, awww…Â  (and this is why I obliged to let him try out for a play – he is a giver; he deserves to doÂ  something HE wants to do.Â  Of course, being in a show takes months of rehearsal and prep time –Â  oh, man, what did I agree to???)Â  But anyway, I got a black and white vintage photo of Wrigley Field in 1946 – how cool is that?Â  I bought a Bears Superbowl frame and some hot sauce for hubby, and we left the flea market before seeing all of it – is that possible to do in just one day?Â  Then it was time to go home, and our oldest was really upset to see Grandma go – she has a Grandma addiction, so the more time she spends with Grandma, the more sad she gets when it’s time to leave.Â  But she got over it, and we achieved the coveted quadruple-kid-pass-out on the way home.Â  Overall, an awesome time, and I think we should definitely do something again next year.Â  As fun as the water park was, I might suggest a different location next time – maybe a campground or another place where we would have more sit-down time to really get together, catch up, and maybe even play some games.Â  My sole complaint is that I arrived home cheese-less Â  There was an awesome cheese shop, and we were going to stop on the way home, but the kids were just too crazy and the traffic too thick in Shipshewana for us to stop – dangit.Â  I had been looking forward to that cheese for two days!Â  Bermuda onion cheese, yummmm…  
*(drooling….)*

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I would imagine that when you are 62 you might also mispronounce some words - too bad I won't be around to kid you - HA HA. Dad and I also had an awesome time. Our house was TOO quiet when we got home. We miss the girls terribly. We are open to suggestions for next year because we also want to do this get-together again.  
**derek**I'll have to check it out.  
**taylhis**cheesehaven.com (drooling...)  
**derek**Nothing like a two-day vacation including a waterpark. Wait, no. There's nothing like a two-day vacation including a waterpark FOR FREE! Sounds like a great time. :) Can you order fine cheese over the internet..?  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like a GREAT water park. We were discussing the pros and cons between Shipshi's and Kalahari... the $300.00 per night at the Kalahari was enough to turn us off of that FAST! I can't imagine any of my nieces and nephews being away from grandma for an extended period of time but that's prolly because they all live in the same town.

# VIPs For A Day (part one of more parts)

On Thursday, my husband’s brilliant ability to find awesome entertainment deals on the internet paid off once again.Â  He booked us a VIP tour at [King’s Island (click for a view of the rides and attractions!)](http://www.visitkingsisland.com/) near Cincinnati Ohio, and we spent the entire day at this awesome amusement park!Â  The VIP tour included our own personal guide; a park employee who followed us around all day leading us up the exits of every ride so that we got to bypass the line and ride without waiting – *in the seat of our own choosing.* We also got to wear lanyards with VIP passes on them (think of the movie Wayne’s World when Wayne and Garth get backstage passes to see Alice Cooper.Â  They wear them around their necks and proudly display their lanyards, flashing them into the faces of nearly everyone they encounter, hilarious!) – and tempting to reenact, but there were some people in line who were upset that we got to board without waiting in line; I wouldn’t want to rub it in.Â  But I would recommend the VIP tour to anyone who wants to go to King’s IslandÂ  – it includes a guide (you can even make him do things, like hold your stuff and go on rides, haha!), no lines (sometimes a minimal 5 minute wait at the gate while the ride operators find a place to stick you in, not really an issue at all – there is plenty to watch for those 5 minutes), an all-you-can-eat buffet for lunch, unlimited fountain drinks throughout the day, ice cream, a backstage tour of The Beast (the longest wooden roller coaster in the world!), and 2 ride pictures.Â  A great deal, especially if you want to sit through my following narrative to see if it’s a place you’d want to visit:

The lady on the phone told us to get to the park at 8:30 am, so we were actually early and had to wait in a car line to get in.Â  When we got to the park, we got shuffled around and had to wait a bit more – it seems that this part of the tour could be tweaked a little bit.Â  We didn’t get our guide and get on rides until about 9:45.Â  Still early (park opens to the general public at 10), but we had about an extra hour of doing nothing at the park (could have slept an hour longer!), so perhaps they should tweak this part of the tour to make it run more smoothly for the guest – everything else about the tour is really great though!Â  So anyway, our guide comes to meet us, and we gave him our list of rides and follow him around the park.Â  Actually, since it was before 10, only the park’s brand new showcase ride and The Beast were open.Â  So we began with the Diamondback – which I had named as the ride that scared me the most on the way over.Â  But I loved it!Â  It was so smooth and all those fast drops were so fun in the cool open air.Â  The Beast was another story.Â  I liked it, but it was very rattly and jerky.Â  Going back on The Beast later in the day and sitting in the front row changed the experience for me, however, and we ended up riding it a lot!Â  Once we discovered the front car of The Beast and I switched sides of the train with hubby, I enjoyed the ride immensely.Â  It’s a **4 minute, 50 second** ride through the forest on a wooden roller coaster at speeds of over 60 mph.Â  The subtle sound of chirping birds accompanied by the naturalistic scents of the surrounding forest and the wooden tunnels where the coaster whizzes is indescribable.Â  A comment on themeparkinsider.com says about The Beast, “*Running through the thick forest at 65 mph on an intense wooden coaster…about as close to riding a real beast as you can get. Classic ride that always delivers.”* – I have to agree.Â  They built another wooden coaster at King’s Island called Son of the Beast, but it closed in June when people complained it was too rough.Â  From the printed King’s Island info, I learned that Son of the Beast was a *looping* wooden coaster – interesting.Â  Oh well, maybe it’ll open some day for me to try.Â  But back to the backstage tour of The Beast – very cool.Â  We watched some trains descend the first large drop which actually leads directly underground into a tunnel.Â  We walked further into the forest (noticed some long-gone riders’ possessions along the way: broken sunglasses, coins, hats, etc.Â  Didn’t see any cell phones, but then again, we saw the lost cell phone display they have in the Diamondback area – a big clear box FULL of cell phones, ipods, Blackberries, PDAs, etc. ), and we learned some interesting facts while watching riders fly past us – and boy, were they surprised to see us walking around back there in the forest!! As for the facts – the entire coaster was built from scratch on site; unlike many of today’s coasters which are shipped into the parks in segments.Â  The Beast was built around and including the existing rolling terrain of the Miami River valley in lower Ohio, and as I mentioned, it goes underground.Â  It has speed monitors built into parts of the track, so if a train is going to fast, it will automatically break to slow itself down.Â  I gratefully noticed this while riding, and it helped calm my concerns of flying off the track.Â  This coaster goes so fast into those tunnels – WOW!Â  For all these reasons and more, it’s a coaster like NO other!Â  Here’s a pic – looks like something I’ll have to try in the fall; the forest looks beautiful during peak season for color-changing leaves:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-beast.jpg)

Ironically, the exact opposite thing happened with the Diamondback –Â  I loved it the first time, and then I tried the front row which was absolutely terrifying!Â  IÂ  won’t be riding the front of the Diamondback again.Â  Careening down thatÂ  first 74Â° drop (!) practically face-down at over 80 mph with only a red thing between my legs to keep me from plummeting to the earth made me feel like I was going to die for sure.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-diamondback.jpg)

And not in a good way, which is ironically enough sometimes the reason why lots of crazy people like to ride coasters.Â  Being in the front seat on Diamondback makes it look like the the track disappears beneath you, then before you know it, you’re flying in the air getting lift out of your seat and you have nothing on either side nor in front of you – yikes!Â  I’ve grown too old to feel invincible, so I put a cap on my thrill-seeking.Â  I enjoy a good coaster, but I also have my limits.Â  If you are a thrill-seeker roller coaster enthusiast who just can’t get enough, try the front car on Diamondback!Â  And a side note, the guy who gave us the behind the scenes tour of The Beast is the guy who thought of the name for Diamondback; it was an interesting experience to have something like that come up during a conversation.

I think I’ll stop there for now…Â  it was a big day, and I’d like to write up more and get more pictures up – and yes, IÂ  do have those free ride pictures we got of Chris and I on The Beast and Diamondback.Â  Am I willing to post them on the internet?Â  Maybe you’ll have to read my other King’s Island posts to find out!

### Comments

**VIPs For A Day (part two of even more parts) | My Food Chain Gang**[...] where did I leave off when I blogged about our kid-less day trip to King’s Island amusement park?Â  I don’t remember; I got kind of side-tracked and have made a few unrelated [...]  
**derek**Just read the last two comments. Count me in if I can get off work!  
**derek**Now \*that\* sounds like something to do with all of you some time. Those VIP passes must have cost a pretty penny though considering what you got! 8O  
**Chris**Yes JustJ you MUST come for our Halloween tip there -- 13 haunted houses and all the awesome coasters!!!! You MUST (MUST!!!) come! ALL TANGENTS BLOGGERS SHOULD GO. WE CAN MAKE IT A TANGENTS EVENT!  
**taylhis**We are planning to go back for the Halloween season - we will have to set up a day way ahead of time so people can make it!  
**justj**Now I am really sorry I missed that trip. I'll have to go later this year, if I can find another coaster enthusiast. They don't exist in my house now.  
**jamiahsh**One thrill seeking, roller coaster enthusiast who can't get enough? HERE! The Beast is my favorite wooden coaster. Cedar Point has one called the Mean Streak that is just ok.

# Zoo Ratings

admission price, add-ins (rides that may or may not have separate admission), notes, cleanliness, layout, restaurant, animals, exhibits

### Comments

# I'm Still Alive!

Don’t count me out!Â  I know I haven’t been blogging as much as I used to; it’s because I’ve been all over the place this summer!Â  I am just swamped, but in a great way!Â  The girls were with their Grandma for the past week, so I used the opportunity to finish up some old blog drafts and post them.Â  I haven’t really had the chance to sit down and write up my many recent adventures, so hopefully time will allow for that in the next few weeks – it’s been totally awesome, and I can’t wait to share everything with you!Â  But until I have time for more blogging, please bear with me and check back often for updates!Â  I hope everyone had an awesome 4th of July weekend – happy birthday America!Â  THANKS FOR READING!

### Comments

**derek**(\* the above comment is not to be considered an endorsement of a favorite view, "the ends justifies the means.")  
**derek**True, but it's the results that count. ;)  
**taylhis**Nice observation, and thanks for looking at my stats. But remember, I am the one who pointed out the schedule-a-post feature... so I haven't necessarily posted five of the previous 6 days.  
**derek**Kind of an ironic post, considering you had posts five of the six previous days. ;) But I understand- for you it's a veritable drought. :D  
**Chris**I am soooo glad you are still alive! :-) Of course it is all the fun we had that made you 'dead' anyway! I LOOOOOOVE YOU - THANKS FOR A GREAT WEEK!!! You are the BEST!

# Secrets Of Traveling With Kids

I’m smack dab in the middle (of the beginning) of raising 4 kids of all different (under 10) ages, and also their friends are around a lot, so we are constantly surrounded by young-ins!Â  Of my many observations and trials and errors in trying to keep them all simultaneously calm and content, I have discovered a few secrets, *golden* secrets – so considered because of their miraculous success rates, at least in the under 10 set.Â  Give me a few years (especially when the kids reach their teens), and I may have enough golden kid-contenting secrets to write a book, let’s hope I learn some more anyway…

1.Â  If you trace the roots of every kid tantrum and meltdown, you will find that most are derived from feelings of hunger, followed closely by fatigue and thirst; the latter two can be interchanged, it depends upon the kid.Â  But the #1 reason is usually hunger.Â  Keeping small, energy-boosting (and likable!) snacks on hand at all times can do wonders for the mood of the group.

2.Â  Never underestimate the power of blankie.Â  I keep those really thin blankies in my car –Â  the ones they give youÂ  at the hospital when you’re having a baby.Â  They fold up so small, it’s really not a big deal for me to keep a bag with 4 of them (1 per kid is important!)Â  folded up and stashed under the front passenger seat.Â  When we are returning home on a long drive or even when we’re in the middle of a long day out, a sleepy (and full-stomached, see hint #1) kid can often be comforted and most often put to sleep by a blankie.Â  Even the thin ones work like a miracle; I’ve seen it work for multiple ages, genders, and personalities.Â  It’s difficult for me to get used to, but I keep offering my son little stuffed animals to play with.Â  I had 3 girl babies before him, and they all loved stuffed animals.Â  My son could care less, unless the stuffed animal still has its tag for him to rip off.Â  But the blankie secret is effective even with him – he’ll pull it up against his cheek and instantly get sleepy!Â  If you don’t have enough of the hospital blankies for each kidÂ  (and it’s important they eachÂ  have their own), I highly suggest you purchase other thin blankies for the car since they’re inexpensive, especially when you consider how helpful they are.Â  They come in packs of 4 or 5 for under $10, I think…Â  A key to helping this secret be effective is to make sure **you** retain control of the blankies – don’t let the kids keep them in the back of the van or like anything else, the novelty will wear off, rendering the blankie ineffective.Â  My kids know that the car blankies are just for “blankie emergencies”, and that policy helps to make sure I can keep them somewhat clean and stashed and ready for use.

So just remember, snacks and blankies can usually get you out of most kid-pinches, sometimes even calming kids who pinch, ha.Â  At the very least, if you find yourself in charge of some crazy kids, plan ahead and do some light packing – these hints will buy you some time to think of a better plan!

### Comments

**taylhis**My kids also travel very well. The beauty of the blankie secret is that they are already in the car - no packing required. And by energy boosting, I meant snacks that contain protein and B vitamins - NOT sugar or caffeine or energy drinks - those ARE better left for the adults. I heard the same thing about turkey - but then I heard that one person would have to eat more than an entire turkey to get the drowsiness effect. That's where the blankies come in - helps kids relax and get much needed rest.  
**justj**Strange, I never had to do much of that. We just packed them all up in the van/car and took off. For trips longer than an hour or two, we did pack snacks, lunch and books. I do remember the travel bucket with coloring books and reading books. My kids just traveled well. As for the snacks. Energy Boosting??? For the kids in the car? I would think low energy snacks for kids. Energy Boosting would be for the parents. ;) Try turkey, I hear that makes you drowsy.

# Jubilant Jubilee Time

Once a year, like many around the nation, our small town has a festival complete with carnival rides, games, and fried foods galore.Â  Upon seeing how quickly our money disappears year after year, we vow to never return to our town’s festival, called the Jubilee.Â  But somehow, we find ourselves back there year after year, and the kids always do have a great time, despite the fact that a family could go broke because of this thing.

This year’s Jubilee was great.Â  My girls were looking forward toÂ  it for an entire week.Â  Once they began to pull up the trailers and set up the rides come Sunday, the kids’ excitement was unstoppable.Â  And because we formulated a careful budget plan regarding the Jubilee this year, Mom and Dad were happy to see the little ones so excited.Â  But there was one problem we did not foresee nor did we warn the kids about – the possibility of rain.Â  And you know what I’m talking about – these traveling amusement companies are not going to refund your money just because it rained a little and they had to shut down some rides.Â  it was quite a gamble – dash the hopes of the little ones or take our chances with the rain (and judging by the radar, we could tell it was probably going to rain all night).Â  We decided to take our chances with the rain, especially since we were assured that they would keep the rides open unless there was lightening.Â  Luckily for us, the gamble paid off, and we were all able to enjoy many (wet) hours riding the rides, sampling the food (including my favorite Jubilee treat, Root Beer Float flavored Dippin’ Dots), and mingling with friends we bumped into along the way.

The kids had a great time, and so did my husband and I, even though we rode ourselves sick.Â  A ride called the Hurricane (boats that fly in a circle) was the one that did in my hubby, while the Orbiter made me feel like I suddenly aged a decade or two.Â  Immediately following the Orbiter, with my head spinning, I made the unwise decision to get on a ride called Rock O Plane which is essentially a Ferris Wheel with circular cages instead of benches – and as the large wheel turns, the small cages with the passengers in them spin around independently, going upside down and sometimes trapping the riders facing head-first for what seems like forever…Â  fun, but the combination of all those rides made my head spin for the rest of the night!

We returned to the Jubilee with my parents when they came to visit on Saturday when there were live bands to listen to, and it was just a nice atmosphere.Â  The kids each got to ride a few more rides, and they were satisfied until next year…

### Comments

**derek**So far I have been able to avoid the first three days of our festival. This is possible because 1) I am not within reasonable walking distance of the festival, and 2) I have no kids to take (or anyone to go with for that matter). I'm glad you (mostly) enjoyed yours, however. :)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Grandma, Papa and Uncle Bud had as much fun as the kids. We'll have to try and make the jubilee again next year.  
**jamiahsh**No one would go on the Hurricane nor the Rock O Plane with me... so we rode tamer rides like the Orbiter. Funny, we got a free ride on the Orbiter since there was no one in line when our first ride was done. I miss the days when they had bumper cars. One of my favorite midway rides.

# Furry Babies Sucks!!!

We began our trip to Chicago last Saturday, and the 3-state, 4-kid, mini-van trip went pretty smoothly.Â  At some point, we achieved the quadruple-kid-pass-out which is never anything short of a great thing!

We arrived at our hotel in Naperville, Illinois on Saturday afternoon, and we decided to take the girls swimming in the outdoor pool which was really refreshing on an 80Â°+ day.Â  It’s been a long time since I’ve been swimming outdoors, and it was nice of my mom to meet us there for a swim instead of us driving the girls to her house for their week of fun with Grandma.Â  After the girls left with her, we wanted to meet with a friend, but we were staying in the west ‘burbs rather than the north ‘burbs this time.Â  Both parties had just endured long car rides, so we settled on a halfway point – a mall in the west ‘burbs.Â  Not really knowing what to plan on doing, we ended up finding such a great parking space at the mall that we just ended up going in to bumble.Â  And it was fun!Â  Partly because I haven’t been in a real mall for years, so it was really interesting to see the different techniques that have evolved to try and entice shoppers to buy and visit…Â  But I also enjoyed my mall visit because of the company we were keeping; it was nice to chat and catch up.Â  And as you might have read in [derek’s blog](http://sublife.tangents.org/2009/06/27/testing/), we happened upon a glow-in-the-dark indoor mini-golf course that was less than a week old!Â  It had 56 holes, but I don’t think I could ever play that much mini-golf at once, so we stuck with the traditional 18 holes.Â  I guess I should add in that I won the round and also had a lucky day with two holes-in-1 ðŸ˜‰Â  And I must comment on how good the baby was – he just sat in the shopping cart and watched the glow-in-the-dark golf balls throughout ALL 18 holes!Â  There were these small contraptions sprinkled throughout the golfing space – you put your ball in, and it rolls around and comes out glowing brighter – those were fun!Â  And it was fun to see the mall again.Â  It wasn’t the same mall I hung out in all the time as a teenager, but I had still been to this one a lot growing up, and it was neat to see how much (or how little, compared to most things in the area) it had changed over the past decade and a half.Â  That reminds me, speaking of change…Â  when we arrived in Chicago, err Naperville on Saturday, we took the Naperville Road exit off of I-88 which is an area with which I ~~am~~ used to be very familiar.Â  Back in the day (did I really just say that?), I would commute through that same intersection to work and back every single day, yuck…Â  but apparently they’ve completely re-done the entire area in the past few years because the intersection was unrecognizable.Â  I mean, they added new roads and everything – it was the most bizarre feeling, it felt like I had gotten dropped into the middle of the twilight zone.Â  We exited I-88, and all of a sudden, we were on Freedom Drive.Â  Where now?Â  Freedom Drive?Â  I had literally never heard of Freedom Drive, they created the street from scratch and plopped it down into this area where I worked and played so many years ago.Â  As much as I thought I knew where we were going, Jill the GPS was actually quite helpful during this twilight zone adventure, and she got us to our hotel, even though I knew where it was –Â  WAS being the key word here.Â  But back to the mall…Â  we bumbled around some more after getting some pretzel dogs (yummier in Chicagoland, of course, what isn’t?) at the food court.Â  I heard some lady talking on a cell phone about the “puppy store”, and sure enough, we happened across it.Â  I’m an animal lover, so I love to see and visit with animals, but I think a side effect of my tenderness toward animals is my loathing of pet stores.Â  And the pet store in the Stratford Mall in Bloomingdale Illinois is just about the worst I’ve ever seen.Â  It’s no secret that many of the major chains of pet stores get their “wares” from puppy mills; ie dog breeding facilities with cramped quarters, little food, and animal abuse.Â  The huge chain famous for bad press, Petland, just closed a bunch of stores, which I believe is a good thing for dogs and dog lovers everywhere.Â  I strongly believe that people should adopt animals, namely dogs and cats, from humane societies and other animal shelters.Â  There are soÂ  many homeless pets, so how can it be justified to buy a puppy who is bred for selling when there are so many others bred accidentally who are also looking for love?Â  I strongly support spay/neuter programs as well, fyi…  
So anyway, the new pet store at the mall is called “Furry Babies”.Â  Their website calls it an “upscale puppy boutique, not just a pet store”, but I call it disgusting.Â  The puppies were in cribs, for goodness sakes, and along the walls they had a large variety of dog clothes for sale, no doubt at prices that I wouldn’t pay to clothe my human kids.Â  We inquired about one particular puppy, who was cute but looked to be slightly cross-eyed.Â  We found out that she was a “designer dog” –Â  they pretend like they meant to mix two breeds together (in this case a golden retriever and a poodle, thus giving us a “Goldendoodle”), but where I come from (the reality land of logic), we would call it a “mutt”.Â  And mutts tend to be better with kids, live longer, and are cheaper than purebreds – at least they were untilÂ  a few years ago.Â  Now mutts are these “designer dogs” and they cost **a lot** of money – in the case of the furry baby Goldendoodle – a cool $1600.Â  I cannot denounce this place loud enough!Â  IÂ  also don’t want to spend a ton of time going off about animal welfare nor lose readers by getting political.Â  This just happens to be an issue I feel strongly about, and I plead that if you are in the market for a family pet, you consider adopting your animal companion from a shelter and also realize that you are entering intoÂ  a life-long committment!Â  That being said, Furry Babies sucks, but the good news is that I can’t see them lasting that long.Â  Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that the employees wear mock scrubs, in order to imitate delivery room nurses, I guess, whichÂ  to me is even more sickening.Â  But there IÂ  go again…Â  get me going and I will never stop…Â  so if you want to read more, [here is a link](http://network.bestfriends.org/MessageBoards/TopicPopup.aspx?g=E79CE3CF85664250A4CABD781F1DA8C6&t=30973) to the forums about Furry Babies on the bestfriends.org website, which is an awesome organization – the country’s largest animal sanctuary for homeless pets of all kinds!Â  I hope to visit them someday in Utah, but until I get over my fear of flying I will just persue their website and IÂ  suggest you do the same…

Now that I’m actually leaving the homeless pet tangent behind…Â  we left the mall at a decent hour since we wanted a good night’s sleep to rest up for the Cubs / Sox game the following day – the entire reasonÂ  we were in town to begin with.Â  Poor us – that did not happen!Â  We got back to the hotel (which was pretty crappy for a Naperville Hampton Inn – see my[Small Separate Side Post](http://taylhis.tangents.org/wp-admin/post.php?action=edit&post=1977)), and the baby decided he was going to go nuts and stay up until midnight.Â  Then the little booger awoke at 6 the next morning, and he crawled around and caused mischief like dipping my drying bathing suit into the toilet, thanks for THAT.Â  My husband was nice enough to take him in the bath for awhile and do other various quiet activities with him in the small room so that I could get a little more sleep, and then we all went downÂ  to breakfast – my poor husband was a zombie.Â  I decided for us (he could not make decisions at that point) that he would go back up to the room while I drove our son over to my mom’s for the day while we went to the Cubs game.Â  We did that, and it took me about an hour to get all the way out to Aurora (not much traffic on a Sunday morning, but SOOO many stoplights!) and back.Â  I thought we had plenty of time, but if you read my “A Patch of Blue In AÂ  Sea Of Black And White” post, you’ll see why IÂ  shouldÂ  have stepped on the gas a little…

### Comments

**Betty**I recently came across your blog and have been reading along. I thought I would leave my first comment. I don't know what to say except that I have enjoyed reading. Nice blog. I will keep visiting this blog very often. Betty http://smallpet.info  
**jamiahsh**I can see it! Beesley in a dress HAHAHAHA! Never tried to dress our pooch.  
**Taylhis**I used to dress up the dog I had growing up - she was a huge Doberman mutt who let my sister and I do anything to her. But we never went to the doggie boutique for her clothes; we just used our clothes, much like my girls do to Beesley. My childhood dog Boots had to endure wearing a Girl Scout uniform and a New Kids on the Block shirt, among other things! Mutts are the best!  
**Susan**I agree with your logic on adoting pets from a local shelter. Mutts make the best family pets. And I am especially fond of mutts over pure bread dogs. However, I did not know that mutts are now considered "designer". If this is really the case then the local pound would be considered the original designer pet store. :) And I personally could not begin to imagine paying $1600 for a mutt or any other dog. This logic reminds me of the saying "more money than brains". I hope I always have more of the latter.  
**jamiahsh**A Hampton Inn that shows Hilton family bio vids minus Paris? Upscale designer puppies. Doggie clothing... have you ever clothed your pets? I for one, enjoy your tirades... informative AND entertaining at once.

# Small Separate Side Post

I didn’t really see a place for bitching and moaning in the few posts I wrote about our wonderful trip to Chicago – hence the small separate side post.

First, when we arrived at our hotel, we requested a crib for the baby.Â  Evening turned to night, and we were still without a crib.Â  We called down to the front desk, and she kept saying strange things about the missing maintenance guy, but finally he was located.Â  He delivered the crib and took a look at our ant (!) problem and declared it was no big deal.Â  Maybe not to him, but I saw the Dateline episodes about the people who got severely bit by the hotel bed bugs!Â  On top of this, we had a door that would stick so that I’d have to knock every time I came back from getting pop or ice or something from the car, etc.Â  And then there were the drunken celebrity phone calls…

Not something we did, rather, something we came across when perusing the hotel’s tv offerings.Â  On the hotel’s video menu, where they usually have movies you can buy, games you can play, and stuff about the hotel, we learned that the Hampton Inn offered some offbeat choices.Â  First, there was the Hilton Family Channel – 24/7 documentaries about the Hilton family, how they began their hotel empire, and where it is today.Â  After 10 minutes, I had had enough.Â  And after those 10 minutes, not a word of Paris, interesting…

Another strange tv offering was under the ‘short takes’ menu.Â  These seemed to be youtube.com videos – I know I had even seen a few on youtube.Â  You know, Charlie Bit Me (the British siblings posing for a picture when the baby bites his big brother, a youtube / talkshow sensation), Office Pranks; I’m sure you’ve come across some of those popular videos somewhere in pop culture, yet here they were being offered for (free) viewing in the hotel room!

Still another strange tv offering was “hot for words”.Â  And before you get the wrong idea (or is it?Â  I’m confused by this whole concept), this was not the ‘adult’ menu.Â  Each ‘hot for words’ video however, looked to be something naughty but was actually proven to be individual dictionary lessons – to increase one’s vocab, perhaps?Â Â  But it still seemed to be a strange selection for a hotel tv – I’ve never seen anything like that before…

And lastly, perhaps what is the weirdest selection on the hotel tv: drunken celebrity phone calls.Â  It was a young adult (I guess?) making prank phone calls to celebrities (supposedly).Â  But the caller was the only person on camera, and there was no proof that celebrities were even involved – maybe it would have been funny if we had seen the celebrities reactions to being called by some random (drunk?) guy, but there was no proof that he was even able to get ahold of the celebrities phone numbers, and even then, a stretch.Â  It was a really strange thing to have this kid on our tv, watching him make these really stupid, probably fake phone calls.Â  What a strange tv offering…Â  yet it was free, and we bit, I guess…

The final bad thing about this hotel is the ringer on the phone – it sounded like a woodland creature, no joke!Â  I really wanted to get a video of the thing ringing, but when the baby didn’t sleep that well, everything of least importance was put aside.Â  Too bad, it was the strangest ringtone I’ve ever heard…Â  at least it rang for the first time in the evening.Â  If it had rung in the morning without us knowing it was the phone, I would have been convinced it was some sort of wild rodent loose in our room!

### Comments

**justj**Sounds like an interesting hotel. I stopped at one and didn't even turn on the TV. Of course we got in late and went to sleep right away.  
**derek**Sound like they are trying to different with their TV selections? I'm glad you came out though, even if the Cubbies got stomped.  
**jamiahsh**WOW! What a hole! Hilton family documentaries and no Paris? Aren't Hilton's supposed to be "nice" places to stay? Sounds like a roach (or should it be ant) motel to me.

# A Patch Of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White

We took a fun little excursion to Chicago this past weekend and had a few adventures!Â  More about those later (if I get to them – my time to blog has dwindled A LOT lately!).Â  What I want to write about now is the Chicago Cubs game.Â  Let me begin by escorting the elephant from the room – the Cubs got creamed by the White Sox yesterday.Â  There, I said it.Â  And I’m just stating fact, unfortunately.Â  We were lucky enough to have tickets (happy birthday to me from Hubby – THANK YOU!!!!!) for Sunday’s game – the final game of a 3 game series between the cross-town MLB rivals the Cubs and the White Sox.Â  This game was to be the “rubber match” – with both teams tied at 1 win apiece for this series, Sunday’s outcome would decide the series winner.Â  But the Cubs lost.Â  Miserably.Â  It was almost like they didn’t show up to play baseball – which is something I and probably at least a few other Cubs fans lovingly yelled from the stands.Â  We got to watch Carlos Zambrano, the Cubs famously hot-headed starting pitcher, take the mound – and consequently lose his control and get booed off the field.Â  And let me say it wasn’t just Sox fans who were booing Zambrano.Â  But I think it was awesome that he was the starting pitcher the day we got to go watch the game live, and he was really fun to watch.Â  It was frustrating to see the empty bullpen across right field though – it seemed empty forever.Â  My husband and I really thought Lou Pinnella should have made the callÂ  to the bullpen a little bit sooner and atÂ  least get someone throwing balls down there – Zambrano does not recover his game often once he loses it. Â  We were both watching for Lou’s call, and finally Zambrano made his trademark nasty move – the guy gets so angry that he beans someone.Â  He throws a 90ish mph baseball AT the batter!Â  So then he stalks off the field, gives the fans a one-finger salute (I don’t think it was THAT finger), and goes into the locker room to pout by himself.Â  He didn’t throw down any water coolers onÂ  the way this time as he’s also been known to do, but I can’t say that I wouldn’t have liked to see that.Â  As lucky as we were to get to see Big Z pitch, he didn’t do very well and we were happy to see him go.

But alas, Zambrano was not the only problem yesterday since the Cubs’ bats haven’t produced much of anything for weeks, and our game day was no exception.Â  Thus we witnessed a shut-out on the Cubs.

But that’s enough of that.Â  It ‘s amazing how much fun we had despite the worst possible scenario for the game!Â  I LOVE live baseball, and MLB almost doesn’t compare to the smaller AAA and AAÂ  leagues.Â  Those are fun too, but comparing those atmospheres is really like comparing apples and oranges.Â  It was kind of toasty in the sun, and my knees got burnt to a crisp; I’m dealing with that today.Â  For those of you who want to know the outrageous robbery they’re getting away with in MLB stadiums across the country, at U.S. Cellular Field in Chicago, it costs $23 to park, $6.75 for a 20 oz. beer, $4 for a bottle of pop or water (let me guess – they took out all the public drinking fountains, I sure didn’t see any), and $4.75 for a hot dog.Â  If you can keep yourself hydratedÂ  during the game, you can save yourself $6 on 2 bottles of water by buying one before and one after the game from the street vendors – theyÂ  sell them for $1, which isn’t bad at all in that heat!Â  Originally I had planned to eat all day at the stadium, but I just wasn’t hungry in the heat.Â  There’s nothing like sitting there at a baseball game and cracking peanuts, but I actually passed on those too.Â  I certainly didn’t want to leave my seat much, and by the time the peanut vendor arrived, we no longer felt like sitting there calmly cracking peanuts while the Cubs played like you-know-what and gave the game away.Â  That reminds me – we had GREAT seats, upper-level, 3rd base side, right about even with the pitcher.Â  We had a bird’s-eye view of Zambrano’s animal-like pacing and stomping rituals on the mound.Â  I guess that’s enough about the game – interesting how we were ALMOST late…

Sox park (its real name is a tongue and finger-typing twister) is situated on I-90, one of Chicago’s expressways.Â  I was anxious to try Jill the GPS’s skills in a city environment since she had so failed us in Pittsburgh, but more so in the outskirts,Â  we weren’t really in downtown Pittsburgh.Â  Jill did fine in the big city of Chicago, but when we got off the expressway, it was chaos – and it wasn’t like Jill was programmed to guide us through the Sox’s bizarre parking system; red coupons, green coupons, etc.Â  We THOUGHT we had left in plenty of time for the game and might even see some batting practice, but we hit some traffic on the way down (did I mention this was also a weekend for the Taste of Chicago?!?Â  Oops – bad planning on our part; we couldn’t believe it.Â  The Taste draws *millions*!).Â  Anyway, when we arrived on the south side, we were confused about where to go for cash ($23!) parking.Â  There were people directing traffic (don’t know if they were cops or city workers or Sox park workers, but I might find out so I can file a complaint!), so we asked one of the ladies how to get to cash parking.Â  She said, “I’m going to let you make a U-Turn (we were heading east, toward the stadium), and you make the u-turn and go to 33rd street.Â  So we made the U-turn and headed west when we began to get a not-so-comfortable feeling.Â  Remember, we had seen the stadium, and we were now heading away from it, out of the city.Â  And usually numbered streets in cities are parallel toÂ  each other.Â  So if we were looking for 33rd, most likely we should see 31st, 32nd, or 34th streets first – but we weren’t.Â  So we turned around, and an hour later, when we finally figured out where toÂ  be, we had passed the “helpful” traffic person again and confirmed our suspicions:Â  she had tried to take us out of the city **on purpose**.Â  In fact, when we passed Ms. Directions again, there was a Sox parking pay lot *one block* in front of her.Â  I like to think theÂ  best of people, but here it’s obvious that earlier, she had us make the U-turn rather than turn around so we wouldn’t be able to see that she was taking us the wrong way.Â  Rude isn’t even the word for that.Â  As most locals know, Sox park is not known for being nestled in safe neighborhoods – Wrigley Field, home of the Cubs, is known as the “Friendly Confines” – NOT Sox Park.Â  We were fine, the area didn’t get too bad, my husband just got really upset that we might be late for the game.Â  Indeed, when we did finally find our lot, there was a big line and we sat in it for a long time.Â Â  I can’t help but wonder if maybe Ms. Helpful had noticed the color of our shirts – Cubbie blue- which isn’t exactly welcome on the south side of Chicago.Â  And those Cubbie blue shirts we wore (which ironically said “Cubs win!”, sheesh) were probably responsible for other rude behaviors directed our way.Â  For instance, my husband got bumped a little harder than regular crowd jostling, and some of his popcorn spilled.Â  Sox fans nearby jeered, and there were also the people who would walk by us up the stairs on the way to their seats (we were seated on an aisle) and feelÂ  inclined to say “Cubs suck”.Â  Yesterday they may have had a point.

The people directlyÂ  around us were friendly enough, a mix of Chicago fans, both north and south, Cubs and Sox.Â  Some people wore a Sox hat and a Cubs shirt, while there were families of people dressed for both teams, an interesting mix.Â  As I looked around the stadium, I saw mostly white shirts (the black shirts were hard to see) in the sea of people, although the sea was dotted with many patches of Cubbie blue, much like the blue patch the two of us created.Â  As rude as a select few Sox fans were though, I suppose they can’t be all bad…Â  on the wayÂ  in to the stadium, it was extremely windy and we both got our Cubs hats blown right off our heads – maybe it was a sign of things toÂ  come…Â  But anyway, it was Sox fans who helped up retrieve the runaway hats.

Overall, a great day for some baseball; definitely something I hope to doÂ  again.Â  Except next time, I think we’ll park far away and take the train to the stadium and forget trying to park in the city.Â  We hit traffic on the way out too, and an hour after the game had ended, I turned around and I could still see Sox park which was STILL within walking distance!Â  TOO MUCH TRAFFIC!

### Comments

**NASCAR » Blog Archive » Heart Rate Monitor Kansas City Royals San Diego Padres**[...] A Patch Of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**NASCAR » Blog Archive » Rowing Machine New York Yankees Chicago White Sox**[...] A Patch Of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**jamiahsh**Not sure, d... but if you are anywhere near Ann Arbor or Columbus the third week of November (depending upon where THE GAME is at)... or if you are a MI transplant student at OSU  
**derek**Is the OH/MI rivalry more friendly, out of curiosity?  
**justj**You wore Cubs gear on the South Side? That's braver than me wearing Tiger gear in Cleveland. ;)  
**jamiahsh**OM, MY GOODNESSS... wrong site... I wondered when that would happen.  
**jamiahsh**don't have to worry about a saw... just had to grab a big knife and go to town... (insert demonic laugh). Is there a musical about a Demon Butcher?  
**jamiahsh**SHEESH... the blue shirts, coupled with the out of state plates must have aided Ms. Helpful in her assistance giving. And the Yanks had their subway series this past weekend. Sounds like you had great seats to see Big Z... guess he was not was not making pizzas, eh?  
**mary911**You are brave souls. That's all I have to say! Oh, and another thing...(ha ha) WHEN is your birthday? Being new to the group I should be told about such things prior to the occurance so I don't look like a dweeb!!! Oh, and one more thing....I'm glad you had a good time!!!! ;)  
**NASCAR » Blog Archive » Patio Heaters Kansas City Royals**[...] A Patch Of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# SAVE OHIO LIBRARIES!

It’s a catch-22.Â  In this horrible economy, people are using the free resources provided by their local libraries **more than ever**.Â  However, in this horrible economy, governments are having trouble funding the free resources provided by local libraries.Â  Here in Ohio, Governor Strickland is contemplating a new state budget cut that would reduce our libraries’ funding by an additional 52%, and that’s on top of the 20% cut they’ve already seen in 2009.Â  With this kind of reduction in funding, obviously the libraries would not be able to function on the same level on which they are currently functioning, nor with the same hours.Â  If you live in Ohio, you can help the governor and congressmen know how harmful library funding cuts would be to each and every community in the state.Â  Here is some contact info to help you doÂ  your part in saving the libraries:

[Click here toÂ  Contact the Governor’s Office](http://www.governor.ohio.gov/Assistance/ContacttheGovernor/tabid/150/Default.aspx)  
Contact the Governor’s Office by phone @ (614)466-3555  
Fax the Governor @ (614)466-9354

State Senator Steve Buehrer  
Phone: (614) 466-8150  
Fax: (614) 466-4250 ATTENTION STEVE BUEHRER  
Email: SD01@senate.state.oh.us  
For more information, click here:  
[www.saveohiolibraries.com](http://saveohiolibraries.com/)

Thank you for your help!Â  Closing library branches is harmful to communities in many ways and would affect everyone, even those who don’t use the libraries themselves.

### Comments

**derek**Our state can't even pass a budget... :|  
**justj**Just a few other cuts in the works are education (K-12 and College), State Patrol, State Parks, Roads, Mental Health and Nursing Homes. I think the Nursing Homes are losing about the same as Libraries, but then again they have other funding. Of course there is some talk about eliminating other State Government Jobs. Over all it is not a good situation, and I don't see any easy solution.  
**Taylhis**Different things are important to different people - the library is important to me. I'm not an expert on state budget, far from it, so I don't know where to get the money - I'm sure there are other funding options to be explored beyond the state level. I just think congressmen would be more likely to listen if Joe Public addresses one issue at a time rather than writing a general criticism of their work. A few years ago the libraries were in danger of closing, so I wrote to our state senator and got a nice personal reply in the mail. I'm not saying my letter helped, but the libraries stayed open and the congresswoman (or an intern) at least took the time to acknowledge my letter.  
**justj**I was just saying that one needs to check into this before going all out for 1 specific budget item. I guess I'm coming from a situation where what I do for a living depends on State government funding. Funding for all state government functions seems to be getting cut. Some, like the libraries, are cut at a more drastic rate. With less money coming in, less can be spent. What are you willing to cut if the libraries get the money? Remember there is only a limited amount. Who gets what slice of the pie? Myself, I would like to see the state tackle some of the hard issues. What services are really not needed? Should there be a wage freeze on all state employees? Should there be a straight percentage cut on all government agencies and funding? Yes, the libraries look to be taking a big hit, I can't argue against that. But there are other places getting hit just as hard. It would be best to send a bigger message to our state reps, that we want responsible spending, not that we just want to save the libraries.  
**jamiahsh**Indeed, a small group can do little but if enough people voice their concerns to the right people someone will AT LEAST listen.  
**Mary**I already sent the governor my email.  
**Taylhis**Of course there are worse things than libraries closing - this is obvious. But helping to save the libraries is something anyone can do for free and the negative impacts of such closures would be bad for our kids, our neighborhoods, property value, etc. I just think it's very simple for Ohioans to write or call their congresspeople to let them know we need our libraries. Will it help? Who knows, but we definitely won't know unless we at least try!  
**jamiahsh**Same here... politics, blah! I think we can all agree on the sad state this state and country are in.  
**justj**Serious problems here. The State of Ohio has a problem with a negative balance on the books. There need to be cuts made somewhere. Most likely everywhere. The library situation is just one part of the picture. We will be seeing other cuts soon. To Education, Law Enforcements, Roads and the list goes on. Without an upswing in the economy, this will just get worse. My question is what other cuts will be made if the libraries get some of the funding back? I haven't seen an answer to that yet. Yes, the impact on libraries is severe, but is there something else that would be worse? I'm glad I'm not in politics.

# 500th Post

WOW!

I’ve made 500 blog posts here on My Food Chain Gang!Â  That is A LOT of rambling and a ton of tangents!Â  Thank you for reading; especially those of you who have read all 500 posts, if there is anyone who could stand me for that long!

I think after that many posts, I’m entitled to a generic one, noting nothing other than my 500th blog post, don’t you?

### Comments

**derek**Never- as a punishment you will now delete 200 posts, and still be ahead of me!  
**justj**A most insightful introspection on your 500th post. I think you really went off on a tangent this time. ;)  
**jamiahsh**yes... I think the 500th post is reason to post a generic one... even if I do tend to do the same every hundred.

# AWWW!!!

We were playing in the back yard yesterday when we saw something furry laying on the ground.Â  Thinking the dog had gotten an animal, I put the dog inside and made myself scarce while my husband investigated – I’m sensitive about animals, and if the dog had killed a furry little creature in the back yard, I wanted to pretend like it didn’t happen.Â  So I come back outside a few minutes later, and my husband is still kneeling over the fur, saying he hasn’t figured out what it is yet.Â  What?Â  Clearly the fur was not moving; why couldn’t he figure out what it was?Â  I fetched him a stick, and when he poked it, he found that it was just fur.Â  And underneath the fur was a hole containing teeny tiny baby bunnies – live ones!Â  They are incredibly cute, and they even hop!Â  After some investigation on the internet, we found that the best thing to do is to leave them alone and that their mother didn’t abandon them.Â  Baby bunnies only get nursed for 5 minutes per day, and if the mother were to stay near the nest, she would alert predators to the babies.Â  I couldn’t resist pushing aside the fur to take a picture.Â  It’s very inconspicuous yet also in the middle of the open yard.Â  I sure hope nothing happens to those babies.Â  The first one is of the nest, then you move the fur, and the second picture is of a little head, note the white blaze on the top of the head.Â  The third picture is a baby bunny face with eyes closed, see if you can find it in the middle of the fur:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/bunny-nest-in-the-yard-001.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/bunny-nest-in-the-yard-003.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/bunny-nest-in-the-yard-002.jpg)

I’m too afraid of hurting them to examine them closely enough to count them or take better pictures, but aren’t they cute!Â  From what I read, they will venture out of the nest at around 3 weeks old, and they will leave it altogether at 6-8 weeks.Â  Judging by the size of our babies and the fact that we didn’t see the nest before yesterday, I’d say ours are probably only days old; perhaps they were even only hours old when we found them yesterday!Â  I am so glad we have a fenced yard now to keep the neighborhood cats out – we have a few, and I’ve been feeding one of them.Â  I feed her at the front of the house though, so I wonder if continuing to feed the cat will encourage her to come over here or if it will distract her and keep her in the front of the house, away from the baby bunnies?

I’m excited to watch them grow – they already look bigger than they did yesterday!Â  Maybe I’ll post their progress on my blog – stay tuned!

### Comments

**Susan**can't wait to see them this thursday.  
**jamiahsh**Adorable... have the kiddies been informed of your guests?  
**Phyllis Beyer**I wish I had seen them when I was sitting in your backyard Sat. I bet they are very cute.

# Before And After - Chapter 3 - Beesly

Our dog Beesly (named for the character Pam Beesly on the awesome NBC show The Office, which you should really watch (end of shamelss plug)) can grow to be very fluffy.Â  From people who have seen her, we’ve had commentsÂ  ranging from “That dog is more round than she is tall!” to “there is more fur than dog there” and then there are the people who would just laugh after they saw her.Â  She ~~is~~ was a very fluffy dog.Â  Since it’s summertime where Beesly lives, we figured it was time to shear her like a sheep, which ended up being a surprise doggie makeover because she had SO much fur.Â  Check this out:

BEFORE:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/beesley-before-haircut-6-16-09-0021.jpg)AFTER:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/beesley-after-haircut-6-16-09.jpg)

After we sheared Beesly, we looked forward to showing her to our 9-year-old daughter, Taylor, who is Beesly’s main caregiver.Â  We told the kids we had a surprise for them, and we let Beesly in from the back yard and my daughter’s friend cried out that the surprise was that we got a new dog.Â  Well, thanks for giving the kids expectations about the surprise (hehe), but she **was** half-right.Â  The surprise was a “new” dog.Â  The kids can now pet Beesly since before the haircut you would only be petting a thick mat of fur.Â  Beesly herself appreciates this makeover a lot too!Â  She is much more cool when she lays outside, she is less thirsty, and she even has lots more energy!Â  She IS like a new dog!Â  And by the way, the kids all liked the surprise.Â  Taylor saw Beesly and laughed and laughed; it was adorable.Â  And as a finale to this blog post, THIS is how much fur we got off of Beesly – the pen is sitting on top of the bag to reference the volume of the fur contained inside:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/beeslys-bag-of-hair.jpg)

I know they make clothes out of alpaca fur and sheep’s wool; does anyone know about the harvesting of dog fur?Â  And I’m not talking about Burlington Coat Factory, YUCK!

### Comments

**The Washington Monthly**[...] Before And After - Chapter 3 - Beesly [...]  
**mary911**Wow....that's a lot of fur. I bet she is so loving her new do....what girl doesn't????  
**derek**Beesly- open wide and say baa! :D Speaking of hair- (in Beesly's case \*fur\*) cuts, I need to get rid of some of this mop on top myself before next week.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I think she looks adorable. I bet she sheds less too.  
**jamiahsh**A New Dog... YEAH! And yes... everyone should watch The Office! What else is on at 9PM Thursday nights, anyway.

# Teaching Is Probably Not My Forte

Another tangents.org [blogger, who is also a veryÂ  good friend of mine](http://sublife.tangents.org/), blogs about his (mis)adventures concerning substitute teaching.Â  He has posted a poll or two about what subjects and ages his readers would like to teach if they could choose.Â  I never really took the questions seriously since I could never picture myself in the situation to teach.Â  After all, you need a degree to teach most anything these days, and I stopped college short of a degree to get married, which is one of the best decisions IÂ  ever made, no regrets.Â  So I would answer those polls, and I would say I’d like to teach zoology or animal behavior or something like that because I love animals.Â  And I guessed that I would like to teach kids younger than high school, because I was a kid once, and I remember how older kids treat their substitute teachers…Â  But again, until a few weeks ago, I never thought I’d find myself in a position to actually teach a class…

At our family’s church, childcare is provided.Â  Over the summer,Â  understandably thereÂ  are many childcare volunteers who need a break, so they ask parents to volunteer.Â  My husband and I quickly signed up – after all, we have 4 kids in childcare there everyÂ  week, so it was time to give back.Â  We didn’t state an age nor gender preference of our students; we just noted that we didn’t want to be in the 4-year-old nor 2-year-old classes since that’s where our two daughters are who would have a chance of being clingy with Mom and Dad volunteering in their class.Â  Basically, it was the luckÂ  of the draw – and our “luck” dictated that we were to be in the 3rd-5th grade boys class.Â  Ok, no problem.Â  I’ve seen the tail-end of those Brownies meetings while waiting to pick up my daughter – 9 or 10 tween girls running around; screaming, giggling, gossiping, sometimes somehow doing all 3 of those things at once…Â  So um, no thanks, boys will be just fine for Sunday school.Â  So I thought…

We got our “lesson plans”, and there were not fewer than 10 pages of instructions to follow for our 1 hour and 5 minute class.Â  Well, add-in the arrival games and we were in charge for about an hour and 15 minutes.Â  But I haven’t seenÂ  time crawl by that slowly since before I had kids; it was the longest hour I’ve had in a long time!Â  Not that I wasn’t having fun, because I was –Â  A LOT of fun, actually.Â  So anyway, all week, my husband and I have been poring over these lesson plans; I was committed to go in there today knowing exactly what I was doing and determined to keepÂ  control over those boys.

SoÂ  we arrive, and the helpful leader tells us toÂ  grab snacks for the kids ahead of their arrival, but we don’t know how many we’ll be expecting, so in her words, “10 should be plenty”.Â  We get to the classroom, she explains a few things, and kids begin to arrive.Â  From the beginning, it was clear we were going to have toÂ  keep one eye on a rambunctious and mischievous (though intelligent) little boy named Avery.Â  In fact, the very minute after I made a mental note to watch Avery very closely, I looked up and he was *gone*.Â  I had no choice but to leave my poor defenseless husband in the clutches of the growing number of 8-10 year-old-boys while I literally **ran** after the wayward Avery.Â  The Kid’s Kingdom building of our church is still somewhat of a maze to me, so it was pure luck that I got out into the hallway just in time to see the back of Avery disappearing through a set of double doors.Â  “I’ve got you now, sucker”Â  IÂ  thought as I ran through the gym after him.Â  I chased him right up to the kids’ check-in desk, where I, the newbie, had to explain to the staff person why I was chasing a kid who had escaped from my classroom.Â  Luckily for me, she seemed to know Avery and to be familiar with his escapades, and she was grateful that I had chased him down.Â  Turns out, he had decided to get himself a name tag (which he is supposed to do *before* class but evidently did not), so he decided to leave the classroom to do so without telling anyone, which of course is a big no-no.

So I collar Avery, and we return to the classroom, and there are now kids everywhere who all had apparently arrived during the chase scene!Â  There was one teeny-tiny little girl who stuck out like a sore thumb in a room full of all boys years older than her, so I went over to her and offered to walk her to the girls’ class –Â  and that’s how I found out that she was a guest of one of the kids in the class, who turned out to be one of the pastor’s sons.Â  Actually, he was the son of the pastor who was our friend before we chose this church, so seeing him was a bit of a relief – for that moment anyway.Â  I thought for sure he would be a nice, helpful boy…Â  but more on that later.Â  We did a head count, and we discovered in our classroom, we had 14 boys + 1 little girl + 2 freshman teachers withÂ Ã˜ experience = fun times ahead!

We played the activity that was slated for play while the kids were arriving, and it was a worksheet where the kids matched words with the fears they represent, like arachnophobia=the fear of spiders, felinaphobia=the fear of cats, etc.Â  It went pretty well, despite disappearing pens (one guess – yes, Avery.Â  Though I countered his pen trick well.Â  When he said that he **ate** the pens, I said, well, you won’t be needing snack then, and the pens were automatically recovered).Â  Finally it was time to line up to go to large group.

Once in the large group room, also known as The Wherehouse, our responsibilities diminished as the leader took over and we relished a break of sorts.Â  We got to see a few of the kids act things out, which was neat, and we alsoÂ  got to see our oldest daughter who had come over from her class.Â  Let me tell you, she was a pro at their songs and dances!Â  She just performed them without evenÂ  giving a glance over to Mom and Dad, which is so the way we wanted it andÂ  exactly what we were afraid of when declining to volunteer in any of our kids’ classrooms.Â  But her section of the room was also eerily quiet, and I kind of regretted the decision to stay away from teaching our kids’ classrooms as I envied their parent volunteer with her *four* quiet girls versus our *fourteen* borderline obnoxious boys (and one little girl).Â  Large group was uneventful, crisis-wise anyway.Â  I tried some of the dances and my husband made fun of me…Â  but the kids don’t want to see some grumpy-lookingÂ  adult standing there,Â  not having fun, right?Â  My job was toÂ  encourage them to participate, and I figured step one would be to participate myself!

So at 11:30, after Large Group, it was time to go back to the classrooms until 12:05.Â  And that’s when time began to creep in a way it hasn’t for us since our engagement.Â  We began class with one of the suggested games; a relay race involving cups of water.Â  The instructions said it was “great for boys”, so without really giving it thought, we learned the rules of that game and one other.Â  The relay involved carrying a cup of water on the back of one’s hand down a “balance beam” (tape line on the floor) and back again.Â  This was fun, but as you can imagine, there were more than a few spills.Â  And a note: Avery chose to get himself kicked out of this oneÂ  – kudos to my husband for putting his foot down!Â  Of course, by then all the boys were getting really rowdy (the pastor’s son was one of the tricksters; here I thought he’d be a big help), so we shut the door and passed out the snack.Â  But if you remember, earlier I said that we had onlyÂ  brought 10 snacks to the classroom, which “should be plenty” but alas, were not nearly enough for 15 hungry kids.Â  Luckily, there were other snacks leftover from the previous session, and we didn’t bother letting them chose which of the two snacks they would get, so snack time was very peaceful thanks to my husband’s brilliant “you-get-what-you-get” snack tactic.Â  I maintain from my many observations of kids that the #1 cause of **all** kid meltdowns is lack of food.Â  That is free advice 

So then we sat at the table in the classroom, and it was time for a coin tossing game.Â  Everyone got a partner (including me – a well-behaved boy named Brandon, thank goodness), chose a side and each team flipped the coin –Â  the person whose side was flipped answered the first question (something relating to the verse lesson and what was shown in the play during large group).Â  The game continued withÂ  asking questions of eachÂ  partner, and the kids began to have some fun with it and come up with silly answers.Â Â Â  It was a fun game, but we finished and there were still at least 10 minutes until dismissal!Â  Again, my husband saved the day, and rather than trying to look over the instructions for another game and potentially losing control of the classroom whilel we did that, he made up an activity, so we went around the table discussing our fears.Â  And I’ve complimented him enough so far because he did an awesome job with the kids, but here’s where it gets ugly – my husband chose this moment to share my fear of frogs with 14 little boys.Â  If I were a regular teacher, I would be terrified and would probably move from my house and my hometown.Â  But as a one-time substitute Sunday school teacher, I think I’m safe from any horrid pranks involving amphibians.Â  So back to the game, according to their creativity, one boy’s fear was of “cinderblocks”, while a few of the students answered honestly that they were afraid of the dark.Â  Quickly looking for our lesson plans to determine the next activity, we found them to be missing…Â  “Avery” we said simultaneously, and like magic, there were the lesson plans, right in front of Avery’s chair.Â  But it was finally almost time to line up at the door for dismissal, and again, Hubby saved the day with another game – this one killed two birds with one stone by producing quiet AND spending time.Â  The boys had to be quiet while my husband counted to 20 or else he would start over.Â  We only had to reset twice, believe it or not!Â  Once for (who else) Avery, and once for two otherÂ  boys wrestling each other to the floor.Â  And then it was over.

And then we got our beautiful oldest daughter back, and she is so good and obedient.Â  And our other three, they were happy to see us as well, and us them, and things were going great until we pulled out of the parking lot and our 5-year-old noticed her older sister’s new ring she had earned at church…Â  and so began the fighting.Â  And the making up.Â  And the familial bonding which involves a beautiful process that also makes me want to tear my hair out at times.

I am looking forward to volunteering in Kid’s Kingdom again.Â  But maybe next time, changing diapers for an hour would be easier!

### Comments

**Taylhis**Our Care Pastor went to Moody.  
**derek**Oh, consider each of the younger grades to have about 20 kids each, half the combined 4th and 5th grade group. Also, 4th and 5th grade go with their parents to big service the last weekend of the month. This prepares them somewhat for junior high when they go with their parents all the time, meeting instead at a time outside of the main service (it has been Sunday afternoons/nights, but I think they may be changing it. You know, I mentioned on my blog that this group of kids weren't even born yet when I started serving in children's ministry- yikes! Additionally, last year there was one person set up to be a point person adding some of his ideas to the ministry. He has since graduated from Moody Bible Institute, but we now have someone taking his place- one of the kids I had in 4th grade (and 5th) when they started the combined 4th/5th grade ministry- double yikes! 8O  
**derek**A little preview of Beeber in eight years or so... So, in comparison to my church- here we have the one large group of 4th and 5th graders (boys and girls). Typically a service has 35-40 kids. There are games in the room to play until 5-10 minutes after service starts, at which time (on a normal schedule) we go to the gym for a large-group game, though this is occasionally replaced with a craft instead. After 15-20 minutes in the gym they come back, taking a bathroom and drink break, and do three songs for worship led by at least on high schooler (or older) on guitar and vocals. Some services have a second guitar and bongo as well. After three songs they pray and do a lesson (I teach the lesson from time to time- they rotate the teachers week to week). The lesson is usually around 20 minutes. The kids are given a worksheet to fill in during the lesson, which also contains a memory verse and daily devotions to do during the week. Once teaching time is over we pray again and only then do the kids break off into gender-specific groups led by an appropriate-gender teacher. Ideally, there would be eight groups (two each for each grade/gender), but usually it's more like six. In these small groups we talk about application of the lesson to their lives using some given questions and whatever else may come to mind. This lasts until the end of the service (which is 90 minutes by the way). There is no snack time, though from time to time we give random rewards for bringing bibles, doing devotions, and/or memorizing the memory verse. They also get bigger rewards three times a year. For K-3rd grade the program is different. They don't have a gym time- instead they do coloring or other activity sheets for about 15 minutes until it's time to get together with the other classes for a combined drama, worship, and teaching time. Then they go back to their classrooms and break into small groups, though not gender-specific like 4th and 5th grade. During the summer and several weeks during the school year there is no drama, so I'm not sure what they do instead- longer teaching time? Though it can't be too long considering the attention spans of the younger ones. As I've mentioned before there is no 3rd grade during the summer as 3rd grade and up move up a grade in June to get the younger ones into camp as soon as possible, but 2nd and under don't move up until the end of the summer.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I agree...one of the best posts ever. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about your experience as a "teacher". I've been telling you how different boys are.  
**jamiahsh**rambunctious, mischievous, AND intelligent.... a wonderful combination for a ten year old boy ;) sounds like you had a wonderful time... I just knew that 10 treats would not be enough when i first read it. fear of cinderblocks... is their a term for that? I think this ranks as one of the best posts ever!  
**derek**Quite a difference from my church! I will comment more tomorrow on it- I'm tired and have to get up to go to Grayslake in the morning...

# Windows And More (Or So He Says)

As we speak, we are awaiting the end of a lengthy though entertaining home improvement saga.Â  It began during the first winter we spent in our current house, which is almost a hundred years old and our first non-rental, owned-by-us house.Â  We moved into our house in October, and at the end of December that year, we got a huge shock when we opened our gas bill – over $300 for one month!Â  After enduring obscenely high gas bills (almost $500!) for a few winters, we decided to take measures to reduce theÂ  bills; among them, get some windows replaced in the old house.Â  We were talking to friends who did the same thing, and they highly recommended the guy who did their windows.Â  He does have a business; he’s not just a private contractor or friend of a friend who does windows.Â  We actually did do some research; we sat through hours-long presentations by 2 other window companies.Â  But the hometown, 1-guy, recommended local small business was the least expensive option, so we chose him.Â  I’m not going to say it was a mistake, at least, not yet – remember, I’m still waiting for the guy to leave, but let me back up…

SoÂ  we decide to go with this guy’s windows, and we give him a deposit.Â  He orders the windows (presumably)

thinks out loud – lots of hmmm, huhs, etc.

gave him a check for deposit, he said 2 weeks, 5 weeks later, we were hunting him down.

what is that smell – celebratory cigar, thank goodness.Â  like Keith Day

### Comments

# Battle Of The Bulge

If you think this is a weight-lossÂ  blog post, click again!

Recently, I’veÂ  noticed a huge bulge appearing in the floor of our downstairs bathroom:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/bulge-in-btrm-floor-6-11-09-001.jpg)

Ok, so it’s difficult to see in the picture – it’s a few inches above that rectangular green carpet, but believe me when I say it’s getting bigger, seemingly by the day – it’s now big enough to trip over!Â  My husband thinks we’ll be able to see what’s happening by going into our basement and looking at it from below the bathroom floor.Â  The only problem is that our bathroom is over the crawl space, not the basement.Â  In the 2Â½ years that we’ve lived in this house, we’ve never set foot (nor knee) in the crawl space – it’s always scary to think what one may find in a crawl space that hasn’t been disturbed in years, at least for me.Â  I guess I’ve seen too many horror movies…Â  or maybe it’s the fact that I grew up only miles away from the most macabrely (not a real word, but fits perfectly here if you ask me – maybe I will coin the term) famous crawl space – that of John Wayne Gacy, where 29 bodies were unearthed in the late ’70’s.

So anyway, someone needs to go into that crawl space to find out what this bulge it expands and takes over the entire house!

And we recently were told that our electric wiring in the house is out of date; here we’ve been spending money to fix up certain things on the house, and other things just keep breaking.Â  Sometimes I’m not so sure about the joys of home ownership, sigh!

### Comments

**One Of Those Days… | My Food Chain Gang**[...] ok, so it wasn’t a complete shock.Â  We had scheduled the plumbers to come today to fix our bathroom floor bulge, but I wasn’t expecting the bathroom to be missing!Â  And obviously the plumbers’ [...]  
**derek**Hopefully it turns out to be something cheap, considering the electrical work can cost some $$.  
**jamiahsh**"When it rains it pours" so says Morton salt or a fictitious doctor of note. But I recall another crawl space that was a bit higher than the one in your basement that someone entered a few years ago.

# Cuteness To Get You Through The Weekend

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/cute-kids-6-11-09-002.jpg)

Above is a picture of our second oldest, 5-year-old Sammie and her almost 1-year-old brother Christopher.Â  He is the only boy in our family, and also the only sibling with which Sammie doesn’t fight.Â  It seems like the natives (kids) have been restless lately.Â  Our oldest, Taylor, it back to her snotty tween “I’m-better-than-everyone-else-so-why-do-they-get-more-than-me” attitude, so she is constantly yelling at and fighting with her sisters.Â  Disney is 2 and hasÂ  been really sensitive, demanding, and impatient lately.Â  Needless to say, our house has been very loud as of late.Â  But in betweenÂ  the arguments, the kids still find time to be cute.Â  Here is a picture of Disney actually sharing the activity table with her baby brother (whose looks seemingly aged months after he got his new haircut):

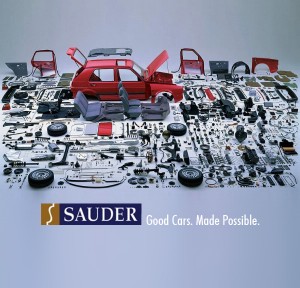
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/cute-kids-6-11-09-004.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**I will be around- we get back Friday night. Can't guarantee my attentiveness though after almost six days in charge of 6-8 nine- and ten-year-olds! ;)  
**Taylhis**Derek - That'd be great if we could do something - though we are coming to town, dropping off the kids with my parents, then going to the Cubs game! I will let you know if we decide to come up a day early, if so, it'd be on the 27th if you're around then. Have a great time at camp!  
**derek**Referring to your mom's post, if you're coming here to drop them off, let me know so we can do something again. :) Unless, of course, I am away at camp if it's next week...  
**Susan**I remember my children at this age. Time really goes fast and before you know it, the children are all grown up. Keep up the fantastic parenting job you and chris are doing.  
**jamiahsh**And something seems different about Dis' hair, too?  
**jamiahsh**Ah, HA! A haircut... I knew something was different about the Beeb.  
**Phyllis Beyer**They are all so cute! Soon you will get a break when the girls come to Illinois for a week. I can't wait. I have lots of fun things planned.

# A Regional Forward

With amusement and much scrutiny, I peruse most of the many email forwards I receive…Â  Occasionally, one will catch my eye.Â  Such is the case for the forward containing the following picture entitled: “Sauder Woodworking Company Takes Over GM”

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/sauder-forward1.jpg)

I found it extremely amusing, but I began to think of the entertainment value of the aforementioned email forward.Â  Is this also amusing toÂ  people who aren’t affected by the close proximity of the Sauder factories?Â  Do people who live farÂ  outside of Archbold, Ohio get the joke?

Well, anyway, if you live where you get it, then HaHa –Â  we share aÂ  joke.Â  It IS funny – Sauder is a huge employer in the area andÂ  many locals have jobs assembling Sauder’s ‘assemble yourself’ kits of furnitiure.Â  The fact that someone crafted an email to tie it into the horrible economy and the down-sizing of GM is priceless…Â Â  but there I go again, overexplaining the joke.Â  If you get it, then you get it…Â  (and are probably located within 60 miles of Lake Erie), but if you have no idea what I’m talking about –Â  power to you to recognize regionally sensitive email forwards…Â  What are some of the regional forwards that have been haunting YOU?

### Comments

**derek**I got it- they sell Sauder stuff over here. I probably have some in my house, cheap as I am. I am not refined enough for my furniture to have to be real oak, cherry, or whatever. Particleboard is just fine. :)  
**justj**I think this may be more of a economic joke. Sauder furniture is sold all over the place. A certain economic niche buys it and gets the fun of assembling it. We just see more of it, since the outlet store is so close.  
**jamiahsh**I have no idea what you are talking about... HAHAHAHAHA! Regionally indicative emails? Not so much regional but I keep getting emails that I KEEP getting ad nauseum.

# Parental Pickle

Have you heard about the controversy of Lenore Skenazy?Â  She is the New York mom who is under fire for letting her 10-year-old son ride the subway alone.Â  I would not put my kids on a subway alone, but us here *(taking on a suddenÂ  hickish accent…*) are country folk, after all, and even **I** didn’t ride the subway when I was in New York three months ago.Â  But I trust that Ms. Skenazy made the right decision for her child…Â  why?Â  Because I think that parents these days NEED to be trusted to make the right decisions for their children!Â  I believe that we are in the midst of an age where we are much too over-protective of our young-uns.Â  And those parents who aren’t utterly over-protective are left to a cruel and unusual punishment of media scrutiny…Â  If you follow and/or agree with what I’m saying, you will enjoy the writing of Lenore Skenazy:

*The last word: Advice from â€˜Americaâ€™s worst momâ€™*

*A year ago, journalist Lenore Skenazy caused a media sensation when she let her 9-year-old ride New York Cityâ€™s subway by himself. In a new book, she explains why she has no regrets.*

*About a year ago, I let my 9-year-old ride the New York subway alone for the first time. I didnâ€™t do it because I was brave or reckless or seeking a book contract. I did it because I know my son the way you know your kids. I knew he was ready, so I let him go. Then I wrote a column about it for The New York Sun. Big deal, right?*

*Well, the night the column ran, someone from the Today show called me at home to ask, Did I really let my son take the subway by himself?*

*Yes.*

*Just abandoned him in the middle of the city and told him to find his way home?*

*Well, abandoned is kind of a strong word, but â€¦ yes, I did leave him at Bloomingdaleâ€™s.*

*In this day and age?*

*No, in Ladiesâ€™ Handbags.*

*Oh, she loved that. Would I be willing to come on the air and talk about it?*

*Sure, why not?*

*I had no idea what was about to hit me.*

*A day later, there across from me was Ann Curry looking outrageously pretty and slightly alarmed, because her next guest (the one right before George Clooney) just might be criminally insane. By way of introduction, she turned to the camera and asked, â€œIs she an enlightened mom or a really bad one?â€*

*The shot widened to reveal â€¦ me. And my son Izzy. And some â€œparenting expertâ€ perched on that famous couch right next to us, who, I soon learned, was there to Teach Us a Lesson.*

*I quickly told the story about how Izzy, the 9-year-old, had been begging me to let him try to find his way home on his own from someplace, anyplace, by subway.*

*I know that may sound a little scary, but itâ€™s not. Here in New York, families are on the subway all the time. Itâ€™s extremely, even statistically, safe. Whatever subterranean terror you see Will Smith battling in the movies goes home when the filming stopsâ€”probably to New Jersey. Our cityâ€™s murder rate is back to where it was in 1963. And, by the way, itâ€™s probably down wherever you live, too.*

*Thatâ€™s why letting Izzy find his way home alone seemed like a fine idea. Not dangerous. Not crazy. Not even very hard. My husband and I talked about it and agreed that our boy was ready. So on that sunny Sunday when I took him to that big, bright store, I said those words we donâ€™t say much anymore.*

*â€œBye-bye! Have fun!â€*

*I didnâ€™t leave him defenseless, of course. I gave him a subway map, a transit card, $20 in case of emergencies, and some quarters to make a call. But, no, I did not give him a cell phone. Because although I very much trusted him to get himself home, I was a lot less sure heâ€™d get the phone there.*

*And remember: He had quarters.*

*Anyway, it all turned out fine. One subway ride, one bus ride, and one hour or so later, my son was back home, proud as a peacock (who happens to take public transportation). I only wrote about his little adventure because when I told the other fourth-grade moms at the schoolyard about it, they all said the same thing.*

*You let him WHAT?*

*The more polite said things like, â€œWell thatâ€™s fine, and Iâ€™ll let my son do that, too … when heâ€™s in college.â€*

*Soâ€”back to the Today show. After Izzy tells Ann how easy the whole thing was, she turns to the Parenting Expertâ€”a breed that seems to exist only to tell us parents what weâ€™re doing wrong and why this will warp our kids forever.*

*This one is appalled at what Iâ€™ve done. She looks like I just asked her to smell my socks. She says that I could have given my son the exact same experience of independence, but in a much â€œsaferâ€ wayâ€”if only I had followed him or insisted he ride with a group of friends.*

*â€œWell, how is that the â€˜exact same experienceâ€™ if itâ€™s different?â€ I demanded. â€œBesides, he was safe! Thatâ€™s why I let him go, you fear-mongering hypocrite, preaching independence while warning against it!â€*

*Well, I didnâ€™t get all of that out, exactly, but I did get out a very cogent, â€œGee, um â€¦ â€ Anyway, it didnâ€™t even matter, because as soon as we left the set, my phone rang. It was MSNBC. Could I be there in an hour?*

*Then Fox News called. Could I be there with Izzy that afternoon? MSNBC called back: If I did the show today, would I still promise to come back with Izzy to do it again over the weekend, same place, same story?*

*And suddenly, weirdly, I found myself in that place you always hear about: the center of a media storm. It was kind of fun, but also kind of terrifyingâ€”because everyone was weighing in on my parenting skills. Reporters queried from China, Israel, Australia, Malta. The English wanted to know, â€œAre we wrapping our children in cotton wool?â€ To which I boldly replied, â€œWhat the heck is cotton wool?â€ (Turns out to be the kind of cotton in cotton balls.)*

*The media dubbed me â€œAmericaâ€™s Worst Mom.â€ (Go aheadâ€”Google it.) But thatâ€™s not what I am.*

*I really think Iâ€™m a parent who is afraid of some things (bears, cars) and less afraid of others (subways, strangers). But mostly Iâ€™m afraid that I, too, have been swept up in the impossible obsession of our era: total safety for our children every second of every day. The idea that we should provide it and actually could provide it. Itâ€™s as if we donâ€™t believe in fate anymore, or good luck or bad luck. No, itâ€™s all up to us.*

*Childhood really has changed since todayâ€™s parents were kids, and not just in the United States. Australian children get stared at when they ride the bus alone. Canadian kids stay inside playing videoÂ­games. After I started a blog called Free Range Kids, I heard from a dad in Ireland who lets his 11-year-old play in the local park, unsupervised, and now a mom down the street wonâ€™t let her son go to their house. She thinks the dad is reckless.*

*What has changed in the English-speaking world that has made childhood independence taboo? The ground has not gradually gotten harder under the jungle gym. The bus stops have not crept farther from home. Crime is actually lower than it was when most of us were growing up. So there is no reality-based reason that children today should be treated as more helpless and vulnerable than we were when we were young.*

*If parents all around us are clutching their children close, itâ€™s easy to understand why: Itâ€™s what pop culture is telling us to do. Stories of kidnappings swamp the news. Go online, and you can find a map of local sex offenders as easily as the local Victoriaâ€™s Secret (possibly in the same place). Meantime, if you do summon the courage to put your kids on a bus or a bench or a bike, other parents keep butting in: An unwatched child is a tragedy waiting to happen.*

*Hereâ€™s a typical letter addressed to me at Free Range Kids:*

*â€œI understand that you probably donâ€™t want your children to grow up afraid and not able to survive as independent adults,â€ she wrote. â€œOn the other hand, I think youâ€™re also teaching them that there is nothing to fear, and that isnâ€™t correct. Itâ€™s survival of the fittest, and if they donâ€™t know who/what the enemy is, how will they avoid it? There are many, many dangers to protect them from, and it does take workâ€”thatâ€™s what parenting is. If you want them to run wild and stay out of your hair, you shouldnâ€™t have had them.â€*

*I agree that it makes sense to teach your kids about danger and how best to avoid it. Just like you want to teach them to stop, drop, and roll if theyâ€™re ever in a fire. But then? Then you have to let them out again, because the writer is wrong when she says, â€œThere are many, many dangers to protect them from.â€*

*There are not. Mostly, the world is safe. Mostly, people are good. To emphasize the opposite is to live in the world of tabloid TV. A world filled with worst-case scenarios, not the world we actually live in, which is factually, statistically, and, luckily for us, one of the safest periods for children in the history of the world.*

*Like the housewives of the 1950s, todayâ€™s children need to be liberated. Unlike the housewives of the â€™50s, the children canâ€™t do it themselves. Though Iâ€™d love to see hordes of kids gathering for meetings, staging protests, and burning their baby kneepadsâ€”and maybe they willâ€”it is really up to us parents to start re-normalizing childhood. That begins with us realizing how scared weâ€™ve gotten, even of ridiculously remote dangers.*

*We have to be less afraid of nature and more willing to embrace the idea that some rashes and bites are a fair price to pay in exchange for appreciating the wonder of a cool-looking rock or an unforgettable fern.*

*When we watch TV, we have to remind ourselves that its job is to terrify and disgust us so that weâ€™ll keep watching in horror. It is doing an excellent job on both fronts.*

*We have to learn to remind the other parents who think weâ€™re being careless when we loosen our grip that we are actually trying to teach our children how to get along in the world, and that we believe this is our job. A child who can fend for himself is a lot safer than one forever coddled, because the coddled child will not have Mom or Dad around all the time. Adults once knew what we have forgotten today. Kids are competent. Kids are capable. Kids deserve freedom, responsibility, and a chance to be part of the world.*

*I have to be honest, though: I write all this in a kind of shaky mood because I just got a call from the police. This morning, I put Izzy, now 10, on a half-hour train ride out to his friendâ€™s house. It sounds like Iâ€™m a recidivist, but really: His friendâ€™s family was waiting at the other end to pick him up, and heâ€™s done this a dozen times already. It is a straight shot on a commuter railroad. This particular time, however, the conductor found it outrageous that a 10-year-old should be traveling alone, and summoned the police, who arrived as my son disembarked.*

*When the officer phoned me at home, I told him the truth (while my heart stood still): We had actually inquired of the railroad what age a child can travel alone and were told there was no specific regulation about this.*

*Later I looked up the official rules: A child only has to be 8 to ride alone on the railroad or subway. Good rule.*

*(From the book Free Range Kids by Lenore Skenazy. Â© 2009 by Lenore Skenazy. Reprinted with permission of the publisher, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)*

### Comments

**10 Sure Fire Ways To Get Rid Of An Acne Blemish | Best Anti Aging Cream**[...] Parental Pickle | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**justj**Hmm, need to think on this. I believe we allowed a 10 year old to fly in a plane half way across the country by herself. She survived the round trip. And of course the dangerous thing around here, is letting them ride bikes on back roads where the drivers are hitting 55+ and not looking for bikes. There is an inherent danger in life, our children have to deal with it eventually. How we let them handle it, says more than when we let them do it.  
**Susan**I hate jounalist. I really, really hate journalist!! It seems to me that they are only interested in reporting bad news and telling only half the story. Now personally, I would never let my 10 year old ride the subway alone. No way. But this is a personal decison based on the fact that I was almost abducted. To this day the incident still overrides my parental instinct. I can also say that when my children were young, my parenting ability was continually criticized. And my children are great or at least that is what everyone is constantly telling me. Hmmm........maybe my children are great actors. :) Anyways it sounds as though instead of everyone telling "America's worst mother" what she is doing wrong; maybe everyone should be asking her (and her husband) what did they do right.  
**jamiahsh**Has it not been proven that kids mature differently? To me a 10 year old New Yorker who has proven that he can be trusted enough to take the subway from Bloomingdales to a bus to his home is no different that a 10 year old being trusted to walk to the grocery and back in Smalltown USA. In fact, I think I was 6 when I was running errands. Obviously, Izzy was bright enough to be able to follow the subway map, transfer to a bus, and get home safely.

# Please Help My Family

Something interesting happened weeks ago, and I haven’t had the time to blog about it until now…

My husband and I were driving down a main drag in our small town, kid-less because it was date night, when we came across a guy standing on the corner across from Walgreens with a sign saying “Please help my family”.Â  Our movie didn’t start for awhile, so we pulled over to talk to the guy who looked to be about our age.Â  We asked him about his circumstances, and what brought him to our town.Â  We learned that he was the father of two who had just been laid off from a factory job and couldn’t provide for his two children or for his wife who had also lost her job.Â  He had come to our town in hopes of finding work or resources to help his family.Â  We learned that he had a daughter, just a little bit older than our oldest daughter,Â  and a younger son, so we went home to gather things he said his family needed – clothes and food.Â  We told him we would be just a few minutes, and we went home and gathered up what we thought would be a treasure trove for someone in need who has kids: coats (brand-new, donated from my husband’s wholesale business), food, clothes for his daughter, even some clothes we could scrounge up for his son.Â  We returned in less than 10 minutes with the items, but the man was gone!

I still can’t figure out what went wrong!Â  Perhaps he was lying about the needs of his family, and he really wanted cash instead for something else, possibly drugs (this is why I always try to avoid giving cash to those in need but rather try to find necessary resources for them instead).Â  I hate to be skeptical, but I have read a bunch of stories in the news about panhandlers who try to swindle and deceive, mostly for the purpose of supporting drug or alcohol habits and not seeking for their own well-being or that of their families.

This happened probably over a month ago now, and we haven’t seen the guy since…Â  If I did, I would probably pull over again, but this time it would be to ask him what it is he REALLY wants!

### Comments

**mary911**And you wonder WHY someone would send you an anonymous gift card..... ;)  
**Taylhis**We spoke with him a little bit about the police and and the laws - he said he called the city police and they said there are no laws against it. If that's true, it explains why we see people like him from time to time. I think at first he thought we were questioning his presence and going to tell him to go home. Who knows, maybe he still thought we were going to get him in trouble and he left.  
**jamiahsh**One of our churches offers a meal every Wednesday night. The youth at my own church has a meal one Sunday a month.  
**derek**I would pray that he is in a better situation (and his family assuming he was telling the truth of course). You did the best you could, and the right thing.  
**justj**It could be that the police stopped by and visited with the man. I'm not sure what laws are on the books regarding panhandling, but most rural communities have stricter laws than larger cities. And there is less for the local officers to do, so they can move panhandlers to different locations. In our county, we have a number of organizations to help those in need. I've seen signs on a few local churches that have free meals. Unfortunately, for those in need, it is hard to find out where the help is. Of the people I've seen wanting money, food or help, it is amazing how many actually turn down anything but the money. I remember when I just moved back to the area, I offered to buy a weeks worth of groceries for a man's family. He turned me down flat, he just wanted the cash. All I could say was Hmmmm.  
**jamiahsh**One of my favorite things... aside from raindrops on roses and all the rest... helping those in need even if by offering a smile, a kind word, encouragement no matter how insignificant it may seem at the time, a hug goes a long way.  
**jamiahsh**Definitely strange. In today's world, one can never really tell if the guy on the corner is genuine or noto. However, a good thing to go the necessity route rather than the $  
**Susan**I have also seen the similar people on the street corner holding signs and my thought was why aren't they holding up a sign that reads "work wanted". I am the first one to admit that times are tough, but asking for handouts are not the answer. I do commend you for going the extra mile to help someone in need. I have no extra money, but I do like to help people. My favorite thing to do is "random acts of kindness". some of the things I have done are holding a door open for someone, helping a stranger unload their cart at the grocery store, or just smiling at someone and telling them to have a nice day. I remember about a month ago I was driving down State Street in Fort Wayne. A little old lady in the lane next to me had a flat tire. I pulled my car up next to her. It took a few blows to the horn before she would roll her window down. She looked shocked when I told her about her tire. I often wonder just how many blocks she would have driven before anyone else would have told her she had a flat.

# Befores and Afters

As you might have read in my blog before the impromptu camping trip, we’ve been putting a lot of effort into a bunch of home improvement projects lately.Â  Here are a few of the latest pictures:

Backyard, before and after the new fence:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/dsci0140.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/our-new-fence-5-19-09-001.jpg)

Not from the same angle, but hopefully you get the idea.Â  We now have a fenced-in play area for the kids, and the dogs have their own little area for their gross natural business.

Even the rats have moved on up into posh digs.Â  Here is their new cage, where all 4 of them live together – harmoniously, I might add!

BEFORE:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/our-4-rats-004.jpg)

AFTER:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/rats-new-cages-5-727-09-001.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Looks nice, both projects.  
**jamiahsh**AWESOME cage!

# Camping Pictorial

If you’ve been reading my blog lately, then you know that I was away last week camping with my family –Â  my husband, 4 kids (ages 9, 5, 2, and almost 1), and 2 dogs.Â  Camping for the entire week with 4 little kids has its ups and downs; mostly ups.Â  But one of the major downs is the amount of house-mom work that awaits my return:Â  6 persons worth of laundry for a week and a half, which I refer to as “Mount Washmore”, grows to be the size of a small county’s dump.Â  And my Week O’ Heap O’ Paperwork I must sort through is picture-worthy:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/basket-of-paperwork.jpg)

But when all is said and done (a week or more from now), I will say it was well worth it.Â  It was worth it to be (mostly) away from the internet and other electronic distractions for a week, especially tv.Â  During that week, it wasn’t my job to dwell on horrid and depressing headlines from around the world.Â  And it was worth it to spend a distraction-less 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with my family, just the 6 of us in the wilderness (of Indiana) with only the bare necessities (a furnished cabin with refrigerator and a store within walking distance) with which to survive…

A great time was had by all, and camping is definitelyÂ  something that we will do again in the future.

This is our cabin.Â  It has two beds downstairs where Daddy, Mommy, Disney, and Charity and Beasley (the dogs) slept.Â Â  Along with the two beds are a table and chairs, a bench, shelves, a half-bathroom, a mini-fridge, and a microwave.Â  There is also a ladder which leads to the loft that spaciously houses two twin mattresses where our two oldest girls slept.Â  As you can see, there is also a picnic table out front and a grill and fire pit.Â  Our cabin’s porch also came with a great view of the fishing creek and the sunset.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-001.jpg)

We did lots of fun activities while we were camping; including boating.Â  We took out a rowboat (thanks for rowing, Dad!), and the little ones caught a nap before we set sail:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-009.jpg)

We also took out a large pontoon boat and made ourselves quite comfortable watching for wildlife for hours at a time:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-062.jpg)

I think I could get used to being a boat captain; I just loved driving the boat (and my husband says I’m good at it, whatever that means).Â  But I really did love being the captain, deciding when to pull close to shore, idling the boat or even keeping pace with the wildlife as we did when we followed a young hunting raccoon.Â  We were able to see SO much wildlife; all in its natural glory; it was great!Â  Among the highlights: butterflies, dragonflies, water snakes attacking fish, fish attacking fish, herons, swanÂ  families, frogs, crayfish, geese families, raccoons, does and their fawns, turtles, and even lots of campground dogs and puppies.Â  Here is an example of the beautiful scenery with a doe getting a drink at sunset – I missed photographing her fawn, oops:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-071.jpg)

And the next picture combines two of the kids’ favorite things about camping –Â  frogs and marshmallows – I guess “Big Buddy” does not eat marshmallows…Â  not raw ones anyway.Â  For those of you who are wondering about my frog phobia, youÂ  should know that there was a mandatory 5-foot-diameter ‘frog buffer zone’ around the cabin for me.Â  But I did come to terms with the phobia in some ways during the trip, maybe it will lessen with time, who knows.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-013.jpg)

Next is a pic of our baby boy – he was so excited toÂ  finally get at that basketball that we had to take a picture.Â  Never mind that he’s going to play baseball for the Chicago Cubs some day – or the Chicago Bears if my husband gets *his* way…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-014.jpg)

Here are all 4 of my kids on the beach – they all loved playing on the beach!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-023.jpg)

And, some more examples of the beautiful scenery – the rising moon over the lake at sunset:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-088.jpg)

A hot air balloon over the lake:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-072.jpg)

And that reminds me – we also spotted some parachuters in the sky (and lots of cool airplanes – the airport was across the highway at the front of camp) who landed in a field nearby.Â  Our daredevil 5-year-old Sammie said, “I want to do that!”.Â  It’s really funny that she said that if you know Sammie.Â  And ironically, when she was in the womb, IÂ  even said that she would be the one to parachute and do crazy things like that to scare her parents!Â  I could just tell by the strength of her kicking and the fact that she was *constantly* moving…Â  Well, anyway, another great trip, and let me close by recommending camping as an inexpensive family vacation that pays dividends in quality time and togetherness!

### Comments

**justj**I still wonder why anyone would jump out of a perfectly good airplane. Nope, can't see me doing that. No pictures of that "monster" bass?  
**jamiahsh**provided of course you had a parachute. I forgot about you and airplanes.  
**taylhis**Hmmm.... I suppose if you got me on the airplane in the first place, then I would be more than willing to jump off of it!!!  
**jamiahsh**AH.... There's the balloon! I would go for the airplane jump myself. My oldest brother has been skydiving and has the video to prove it!  
**derek**You know that you'll have fun jumping out of that airplane with Sammie when that time comes... :P Two more pictures saved to my computer (of the kids of course, not that I see your two (you and C) mugs on any of the pictures anyway- just one of your feet!)...

# My Favorite Camping Memory

If you’ve been reading my blog as of late, you know about my family’s impromptu camping trip – my husband and I, in a fit of outlandish spontaneity (read: **his** idea), decided to take our 4 children – ages 9, 5, 2, and almost 1 year – on a surprise, last-minute, week-long camping trip.Â  Despite our family being very inexperienced and mostly camping-inept, it’s been going pretty well!Â  My husband was shipped off to camp for entire summers when he was a kid, and it’s fun to see this side of him – the skills that he learned in the campgrounds of his youth since we’ve never been camping together…Â  well, not like this anyway, with 4 kids and 2 dogs to look after.Â  As for me, the camping experiences of my youth consist of a few over-nighters for Girl Scouts, and one week-long venture at Girl Scout camp that I did not like one bit – it was cold, we had to get up early, I had to be away from my beloved family dog, which made me incredibly homesick.Â  To top off my week of misery, the counselors at the camp wanted us to do a *mandatory* (believe me, I did ask about the mandatory part!) art project that involved catching frogs, dipping them in paint, and letting them hop across a piece of paper.Â  Call it art, if you will, but there was no way I was going to be anywhere near that art project due to my intense fear of frogs and toads which I am still conquering as we speak (guess what my 5-year-old’s favorite camping activity has been this week?).Â  Luckily for the kid-version of me, it rained at Girl Scout camp, meaning I did not have to participate in the frog-filled art project.Â  But it took 3 days for that project to get canceled, and I was panicked about it the entire time.Â  Plus, when we got up in the morning, it was very cold outside, and first things first – we had our swimming lessons first thing in the morning.Â  Anyone who was too cold to participate in the morning lessons lost their privilege to partake in free swim after lunch when the sun was scorching.Â  But as miserable as I thought I was at camp, I did have a favorite camping thing that we did – something that just isn’t the same without a campfire: we made pie-iron pizzas.

A pie-iron is a camping cooking utensil that consists of two small, shallow metal square pans with long handles.Â  You can build sandwiches and desserts and all kind of culinary creations between the squares, then you latch them together and hold them over the campfire to cook the filling.Â  My long-term memory continues to serve me well – even as an adult, pie-iron pizzas are delicious!Â  After a trying day yesterday with my girls being tired and throwing tantrums all day, making pie-iron pizzas was a great way to close the day – they honestly cheered everyone up, including me!Â  Not only are they yummy, but to make them is actually a fun project that is easy for kids and can easily burn a good 30 minutes of off kid boredom time!Â  The kids might need help cooking their pie-iron pizzas over the campfire for safety reasons, but any age kid can enjoy preparing her pizza for cooking.Â  There is something about kids helping to prepare their own food that makes them eat better than ever, too – works every time for my kids.

So yeah – the $10.99 pie-iron turned out to be a great investment.Â  Not only was it a fun family experience (I built the sandwiches with the girls while Dad helped cook them over the fire) which also accomplished the task of feeding the family, but the activity accomplished the near-impossible task of cheering up a tired family!Â  I am excited about the [many experiments](http://www.chuckwagondiner.com/pieiron.html) I plan on conducting with the pie-iron – you can make mini-casseroles, desserts, pita pockets, stir fry…Â  so many possibilities!

As I cheesily began to sing the other night, “Pizza…Â  Roasting on an open fire…”

### Comments

**derek**Speaking of camping, my turn is coming up again soon. No pie-irons though.  
**jamiahsh**YES.... i remember pie-iron pizzas, roasting marshmallows til they fall off the stick (burned, gooey, and oh, so yummmmmmmy) jiffy pop popcorn. The ineptitude sure did not show while I was there. THANKS!  
**mary911**I have some of those that I bought at a garage sale one year, thinking I was going to use them. Haven't done it yet. If you ever need to borrow them, let me know!!! I also have a tripod to put over the fire with a cooking top, and a tent, and a big cast iron pot with a handle and a lid. Yeah, I'm all set. Um, sure. Friends of mine and I went up to Chain O Lakes last summer and stayed in one of the cabins up there for a few days. LOVED IT!!!! The worst part was no campfires were allowed. Kind of a downer, but the atmosphere and quietness were great!!!!

# The Scariest Night Of Our Lives...

…Â  happened just the other night.Â  It’s really frightening and a huge reality check to know that you could be sitting somewhere (camping and enjoying the beautiful outdoors in my case), totally relaxed, and the very next minute, there is a life or death emergency – literally.

Before you fret, let me disclaim that everyone is fine but this was almost not the case.Â  As you may have read in my previous blog post, we decided to take our 4 kids camping and have been in the great wilderness of northeast Indiana during the past week.Â  A few nights ago, my husband and I had gotten the kids to bed, and we were enjoying a horror movie on the porch of our cabin when we heard a strange noise – kind of like a kid laughing or coughing.Â  Then, through the window, we see our oldest daughter Taylor practically jumping down the ladder that leads to the loft area in our cabin where our two oldest kids have been spending the nights.Â  From her body language, it was obvious that someone was very hurt.Â  My husband and I ran inside the cabin, just as Taylor said something about her sister choking on a gumball, and that’s when we see our 5-year-old daughter Sammie in the loft, CHOKING.Â  My husband grew wings, flew up to the loft and gave her the Heimlich until the gumball shot out of her throat and across the room.Â  Sammie was catching her breath, but she was still drooling and not talking – the scariest moment of our lives!Â  I was already on the cell phone with 911, and the dispatcher was asking me if I could bring her up to the front of the campground, so they didn’t have to waste precious time by trying to find our cabin.Â  Miraculously, Sammie started to talk and act like nothing even happened – that’s kids for you!Â  Poor Taylor was scared and shaking, so we told her what an AWESOME job she did *saving her sister’s life*.Â  We are going to write to our local newspaper about what a hero she is – without her quick thinking and correct response to the situation (she was actually dozing when it happened), I shudder to think that we could have lost Sammie…Â  I just can’t bear to think of it.Â  Thank God everyone is ok!Â  The very cool (thank you Steuben County emergency dispatch!), calm and collected dispatcher asked if I wanted to cancel the ambulance that was already in route, and I agreed and thanked her before I hung up – so that makes FOUR times I’ve had to dial 911 on my cell for this or that, not fun!

But we have outlawed gumballs in our family – just not worth that kind of agony!Â  Maybe on their wedding days or on the days they move out of our house and gain their independence, maybe then we will be the family that celebrates with gumballs after outlawing them for decades!

### Comments

**derek**I hope the newspaper picks up the story. Indeed Taylor, you have done your sister a tremendous service- excellent work.  
**mary911**I'm SO glad all is well. I agree, GOOD JOB, TAYLOR! It's so hard to keep your cool in those kind of situations, but it sounds like you did AWESOME!  
**justj**I'm glad all is OK. Outlawing gumballs sounds like a good plan.  
**jamiahsh**As you know, We had a similar scare a few months ago. GREAT JOB, TAYLOR! REALLY PROUD OF YOU! Thank God, Sammie is ok! Grapes, Gumballs, and Safety Pins (another story), OH MY!  
**derek**Praise God! I will try to remember what never to bring as a gift now. That horror movie had nothing on reality I'm sure!  
**Phyllis Beyer**WOW! How scary. I had a similar experience when one of my daughters swallowed a small metal ball from a game. Fortunately it passed thru her system and we didn't have to do the Heimlich. What a wonderful job Taylor did.

# Blogging In The Great Outdoors

Now that school is out, we decided to take a last minute camping trip with the kids and dogs, and it’s been wonderful.Â  More on that later – I am in a cabin, “roughing it” in the great outdoors (so to speak – we do have beds, running water, a bathroom, a/c, even a little fridge and microwave), but it doesn’t even seem appropriate to be using a computer – just kind of takes away from the outdoorsy ambiance a little bit.Â  But it rained yesterday, with more storms forecast for today and tomorrow, so I figured I would use some of my free time to let my faithful readers know that I haven’t skipped town.Â  Well, I kind of have skipped town, but in a good way, and someday soon, I’ll be back to blogging like a maniac whenever I have the chance…

Until then…

### Comments

**derek**Happy summer! Though school isn't out here quite yet. Supersize is out after their 2-hour Friday, but the rest don't finish until at least next Wednesday. However, for me summer has pretty much begun as of today as I don't see myself finding many more jobs. I was lucky so far this week to have three though, so anything's possible I suppose.  
**mary911**Sounds like my kind of campking trip, actually. As long as there is air conditioning or at least power for a fan, and a real toilet that flushes I'm happy. Hope you're having/had a good time!  
**jamiahsh**And no forgetting everything anyone has the right to know about Miley Cyrus ;) Thanks, Goose

# Utter Chaos - The Good Kind

The school year is winding down…Â  my third-grader’s last day of third grade is today!Â  When I was a kid, we always went to school into the month of June –Â  never ended in May.Â  Well, except senior year when we graduated on May 31 – but the seniors always finished early.Â  I don’t understand Ohio and their strange school schedules (what with fog days and stuff, which are unheard of in Chicagoland where I went to school), but I do like them.Â  My third-grader is a HUGE help around the house, and I’m excited to have another pair of hands and someone to talk to during the day.

So anyway, yesterday was my ~~4~~ 5-year-old’s end of the year picnic for her school, rain or shine.Â  And rain it did.Â  EvenÂ  though we arrived right on time, all of the sheltered picnic tables were taken.Â  So, we had to slosh the double-stroller through the puddles and the mud to sit in the rain with 3 little kids and eat our lunch.Â  Luckily it was only drizzling, but the picnic table and bench were all wet – note to self to start keeping a towel in the car.Â  After lunch, they started to set up the large bouncy castles and my husband wisely took our 5 and 2-year-olds (Sammie and Disney) over to get in line.Â  Judging by the huge turnout for this event, we didn’t want to wait in line all day, especially if the drizzle turned into a downpour.Â  My kids were first in line, but Disney chickened out, so Sammie bounced without her sister on the regular bouncy castle.Â  Then it was time to check out the MEGA-bouncy!Â  It began with a crawl-thru maze, followedÂ  by a ladder up a vertical wall and finished with a steep slide, and it was totalÂ  chaos!Â  There were kids everywhere!Â  The adults were scrambling to regulate how many kids went inside, but somehow kids were getting stuck…Â  next thing you know, there were kids crying and yelling and adults couldn’t get to them because they were in the crazy maze of this gigantic bouncy!Â  My daughter Sammie emerged from the maze, and she climbed the steep ladder like a pro.Â  Matter of fact, Sammie was thru the entire boucy obstacle course 3 times before most kids got through once – she is a very good climber and couldn’t care less about the pile of kids at the beginning which is where most of them freaked out for their parents.Â  Disney kept saying she wanted to try it, and noramlly we like our kids to try new things, but the huge bouncy was littered with kids of all types and sizes: crying kids, climbing kids, big kids, screaming kids – I was sure my sweet little 2-year-old would get eaten alive in there.Â  So she watched for awhile and decided she still wanted to go in it, and we found a side entrance that bypassed the crazy maze of kid-doom.Â  To our surprise, Disney climbed the ladder (with helpÂ  from big sis Sammie) and went down the slide – and she had fun!Â  And Sammie loved seeing all her friends and her teachers and having fun with them.Â  Chaotic as it was, it was all worth it because it was for Sammie – and she loved it!Â  This is Sammie helping Disney up that huge ladder:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/sammies-end-of-year-picnic-09-002.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**That was nice of Sammie to help Disney. We have an indoor "Bounce Town" here that is filled with stuff like that. Austin loves it. Maybe I can take the girls there this summer. Can't believe they are thru with school. We have 1 week to go. I have to work 3 more weeks.  
**derek**Those air-filled things are great fun. I remember when my church had rented a few for special activity nights. I made a not though that some are \*not\* for out-of-condition adults! Finding a side entrance sounds not unlike the fast-pass at some theme parks... I guess that one should have had a lower age limit- must be capable of navigating a maze without bursting into tears of frustration.  
**jamiahsh**Awww... good job Sammie and Dis. Looks like a blast

# How To Murder A Ferrari

Have you ever seen the 80’s movie responsible for Matthew Broderick’s big break called [Ferris Bueller’s Day Off](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091042/)?Â  I’m sure it was popular everywhere, but growing up in the ‘burbs of Chicago, we watched this movie over and over recognizing new locales each time since it was filmed in our backyards.Â  If you’ve seen the movie, then you are most likely familiar with the scene where Ferris’ friend, Cameron Fry, has a major meltdown and pushes his dad’s Ferrari out of the glass wall of his garage.Â  This scene was filmed at an actual house in the upscale Chicago suburb of Highland Park, and the [house is now for sale](http://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-detail/370-Beech-Street_Highland-Park_IL_60035_1109385563?%20mp=1" \l "Request).Â  For a cool $2,300,000, you can buy the house and reenact the famous “Ferrari Murder” scene from Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.Â  Even if you don’t have that kind of money or don’t want to live in Highland Park (your neighbors would be Michael Jordan, Gary Sinise, and Harold Ramis), it’s still kind of cool to check out the real estate listing which has details and other pictures of the house besides this:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/ferris-garage.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**I read about this somewhere else. I guess some would call me "stupid" or "an idiot" for not knowing this, but I had no idea this building was so local.  
**jamiahsh**nope I would have laughed at the radio and said "HA! I knew that before." But all I did was say... I wonder how long it will take taylhis to bring it up ;)  
**taylhis**Funny... you wouldn't have had that thought if this post had auto-posted a few days ago like I had scheduled it. I wonder if the problem was me or the feature?  
**jamiahsh**I heard the news on the radio this morning and just KNEW it would be a post. fun movie,

# Memorial Day Weekend

In honor ofÂ  fallen US soldiers on

MEMORIAL DAY 2009

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/us-flag.jpg)The dead soldier’s silence sings our national anthem. **-Rev. Aaron Kilbourn**

**————————————————————————————————————————————–**

Despite the seriousness of Memorial Day and what it signifies, it is a day that is alsoÂ  known for kicking off the summer season in much of the United States – the season of swimming pools, backyard BBQ’s, and days of school-less freedom for kids accompanied by the school-less dread cast upon many parents.

We had an action-packed but great Memorial Day weekend, beginning with a fun game night Friday night, and we stayed up too late.Â  Saturday I slept late (though I still only got about 4 hours of sleep!), and while I was sleeping, the kids set up a garage sale and got quite a few customers – I wrote about this in a previous blog post.Â  Saturday night we decided we would take the kids to experience the drive-in movie theaterÂ  – best before the mosquitoes got too bad for the year (yeah right) and before it gets too hot out.Â  We arrived at the drive-in early (I wrote about [this place](http://www.fieldofdreamsdrivein.com/) in another post as well; it’s a drive-in movie theater that was built onÂ  a family’s farm in the middle of the country), and we gave LadderballÂ  (amazing what a dangerous weapon two balls on a string can be when in the hands of children) and Cornhole a try, but the kids had way more fun rolling on the huge area of open grass.Â  They delighted in petting the roaming farm dogs, and likewise – the dogs loved it too.Â  Before the movie started, we spilled 2 of the 3 cans of pop we had brought for the kids, and then disaster really struck – the mosquitoes came out in full force.Â  My oldest daughter, who has a propensity for attracting mosquitoes anyway, starting getting eaten alive and screaming about it.Â  Now the movie was starting – Oh, and it was Night at the Museum 2, something we really wanted to see.Â  So we had to pack up our little “camp” and quickly pile into the van to escape the carnivorous mosquitoes.Â  Once inside, it was hot and cramped.Â  Luckily my son was asleep, but the rest of us were all in the back of the van with the seats down trying to stake a claim on a piece of steamless window so we could see the movie.Â  More pop was spilled, and some blankiesÂ  became unusable for the night, which of course caused more tantrums.Â  There was about 20 minutes left in the movie whenÂ  everyone settled down, and our 2-year0ld fell asleep – 2 down, 2 to go!Â  During the interemission between the movies, we found out that many of the mosquitos went away, and my husband and I moved outside while the girls laid in the back of the van.Â  They did not see very much of Wolverine – our oldest didn’t make it past the opening credits.Â  While we weren’t really interested in seeing Wolverine a second time, we did so anyway since we had already paid for it and we were now kid-free.Â  It was such a nice night to sit underÂ  the stars and watch a movie, and it became perfect when a silent farm dog came over for some more petting, honestly, what could be better?Â  From what I saw of it, Night at the Museum 2 is really funny.Â  I definitely have to see it again, but from what I was able to hear, Hank Azaria is just hilarious!Â  And I guess I need to back up so I can tell everyone about my husband’s extremely embarrassing moment.Â  We had pulled into our spot at the drive-in facing the screen, and then we noticed everyone else was backing in and lifting their hatches so they could sit in the back of their vehicles.Â  Thinking this would be a good idea, my husband went to turn the car around while I stood in our parking spot.Â  I looked over to see when he was coming, and that’s when I saw our van backing over one of those posts they have at the drive-in – OH NO.Â  Worse yet, I heard the sound of laughter as people laughed at my husband – I felt so badly for him!Â  The good news is, he was embarrassed, but mostly he was relieved because at first he thought he had hit a person!Â  So no harm done, even the pole was ok.Â  But this explains why turning the car around again was NOT an option when we got chased into the vehicle by mosquitoes!

Sunday we went to church of course, and we continued the Fearless series by hearing the story of Joshua, all of which was fitting for Memorial Day weekend.Â  After church, we decided to do something fun and met friends at the new great restaurant and shared Saganaki, which gained some new fans, I think.Â  Then we ventured up to Michigan, where they have a little fun park place with go-karts and bumper boats.Â  We had a blast!Â  Then the kids fell apart a little bit and presented a perfect example of my husband’s patented “trickle-down crab-onomics” theory.Â  Even so, we had lots of fun, depite the invasion of frogs at the fun park – you heard me, FROGS!

I am afraid of frogs, and I don’t know why.Â  It’s not really something I fear in my head rationally, but rather a “physical” fear.Â  When I see frogs, my body reacts inÂ  any one or more of the following ways: shaking, screaming, crying, “heebie-jeebies” where I’ll just get this creeped out feeling like something is behind me or going to crawl up my back or something.Â  So anyway, on the way over to the bumper cars, there was a grate over a deep manhole that had a BIG green frog in it.Â  That guy was creepy, but I actually felt bad for him – I hope they can get him out.Â  They said next time it rains, the well should fill up and he’ll swim out, but I don’t know…Â  I wanted to throw some bugs down there for him.Â  And then while we were bumper boating, there was actually a FROG IN the bumper boat pool!Â  Luckily for me, this one wasn’t too big, but it really freaked me out – looked like a shark or an alligator floating like that with its head above the water.Â  Once I got over the initial frog freak-out, I was worried it would get smashed by a bumper boat.Â  But it didn’t, and the workers said they get frogs all the time.Â  On the way home, we decided to stop by a large lake where we looked for more frogs, snakes, turtles, and birds, of which, we saw lots.Â  But, we got home late AGAIN and didn’t even stay awake through our rented movie, oh well.

Monday we decided to take it easy and stay home, especially since we had lots of stuff to put away from the busy weekend.Â  And we also had to get all of our garbage out since we get one garbage day per month where we can put out anything we want, no matter how large it is.Â  We had tons of garbage from when we cleaned out and re-did the spare room, but when I woke up, all the garbage was already out there and the house was picked up!Â  What a nice surprise; hubby is the BEST!Â  We decided to go out and get a grill to add to our backyard Eden since we got our fence and our patio set the other day.Â  We went to Walmart and got the grill and some food, and had a cookout, which went pretty well – it was easier and cheaper than taking the kids to a restaurant, and they were better behaved outside then they usually are inside.Â  Overall, another GREAT weekend – I am thankful for the beautiful weather we had all weekend too!Â  Tomorrow it’s supposed to rain, but hey, maybe the frog will be freed.Â  A good thing, as long as he doesn’t hop down to Ohio!

Here’s hoping that your Memorial Day weekend was safe and fun, and hopefully you paused to reflect upon the entire reason we celebrate this time of year – to remember, honor, and be thankful to those American citizens who lost their lives fighting for our country.

### Comments

**mary911**Afraid of frogs? Hm....that is surprising. My brother and I used to go back to the pond with a pillowcase and catch as many as we could, then dad would clean them. Do I dare say that frog legs are DELICIOUS!?!  
**derek**Frogs and mosquitoes... If you equate mosquitoes with flies or gnats then you have two of the Egyptian plagues. :o The kids this past weekend at my church had their Jericho lesson this week as well, though I think the focus was Rahab rather than the battle itself (the only survivor from Jericho due to her faithfulness to God in hiding the Israelite spies). In main church we have been talking about missions. A pastor from Romania had a very passionate message on the topic just a week ago.  
**jamiahsh**Joshua fit the battle of Jericho and the walls come a-tumblin down. Boy could be blow that trumpet. Great story. Fun Sunday... thanks for inviting me. I saw one of your green friends today at our BBQ and thought of the poor thing trapped in the pit.

# WHERE IS THE RAT?!?

My daughters are having a garage sale today.Â  They’ve been working it all by themselves (along with their older friend), and it’s fun to peek out the window and watch them.Â  They’ve gotten a lot of customers, and people are buying our old junk and popsicles and some have even donated money just because the kids are so cute.Â  It kept them busy all morning, and things were going great until they went upstairs to get their bathing suits on because they were hot.Â  That’s when they noticed that one of our four pet rats was not in his cage!Â  Where do you even begin to look for a missing rat in a house?!?

Not only that, but one of our dogs is a terrier mix and has been yearning to taste a pet rat.Â  We needed to find that rat before the dog did!Â  My oldest daughter is a worrier, so of course she started panicking about her rat – near hyperventilation and everything.Â  I started to look for the rat, but then worse-case scenarios started running through my head – what if it got outside and we never found it?Â  What if it was dead somewhere?Â  What if the kids found it dead?Â  What if no one found it dead and it stank up the house for weeks?Â  What if we couldn’t find it and it starved?Â  I went to look under my bed (funny that I thought I saw something running across the floor this morning.Â  I chalked it up to a hallucination caused by lack of sleep which happens to me a lot – I sometimes see my cat running across the floor, and she died over a year ago!), but then I realized that I wouldn’t really WANT to find the rat under there.Â  I’m not scared of rats in the slightest, but today I was not in the mood to look under my bed and have a rodent come running at me.Â  As I was debating what to do next, my daughter found the missing rat (Bobby Jack) in her sock drawer.Â  Apparently the sock drawer was a “safe place” for Bobby since the girls have been putting him in there (!), and he likes it.Â  Nevermind their poor, unsuspecting laundry maid who has rats running all over her work, sigh.

But the good news is the rat is safe and sound.Â  Now we have to figure out how that happened in the first place.Â  My two-year-old admitted to letting the rat out, but my husband thinks she is giving a false confession because she is usually scared to pick up the rats.Â  Hopefully someone let him out and forgot about him and he didn’t get out on his own.Â  IÂ  am just thankful we locateed the MIA rat before the dog did!

### Comments

**What supplies do I need for a new pet rat? | Homemade Pet Food**[...] WHERE IS THE RAT?!? | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**Mary**Yes, indeed. Thank God you found the rat! I think I might have been a little leary about visiting again till the little guy was safe and sound! Cute as they are, I'm just not ready to feel one crawling over my foot......

# Facing Fear

In church as of late, we are in the midst of a pastoral series called Fearless.Â  IÂ  am enjoying this series because so far we have been able to study the BiblicalÂ  story of David and Goliath and also the story of Moses and the Parting of the Red Sea – two stories I’ve certainly heard about, but hadn’t heard the details or about how they relate to modern-day Christianity until now.Â  Last Sunday at church, our pastor told of an amusing story during his Fearless series, and I thought I’d share it.Â  Also in this service, the band accompanied an amazing Bossa Nova / Spanish-style vocalÂ  duet unlike anything I’ve seen in church so far – it was awesome!Â  I can’t reproduce the song unfortunately, but here is a summary of the pastor’s fun story:

*A beautiful village nestled on the bottom of a valley erupted in flames.Â  All of the surrounding villages’ fire engines came to fight the fire, but they all stopped at the top of the hill on the road leading to the burning village in the valley, for they figured the village would not be savable and would only pose a danger to their own firefighters.Â  A rickety old fire truck soon showed up from a distant town, and it didn’t hesitate as it crested the hill and rode straight into the valley to fight the fire.Â  The fire was extinguished, the village saved, and there was a grand ceremony of celebration.Â  When the fearless fire department who put out the fire rose to accept their rewards and thanks, the fire chief took the stage.Â  The mayor of the saved village asked him, “What are you going to do with your rewards and with your thank-you money?”Â  The fire chief of that heroic fire department whoÂ  fearlessly rode downÂ  the hill to save the neighboring town said, “The first thing we are going to do is to fix the brakes on that fire truck!”*

The moral of the story?Â  Here’s my take:Â  The “fearless” fire-fighters didn’t even mean to go into the fire to fight it…Â  But they did just that, and once they got down in the valley accidentally (because of the failed brakes on the fire truck), they faced their fears and conquered that fire, even though they didn’t originally intend to and also despite their fears.

The story tied in nicely with our church’s Fearless series.Â  And our pastor told us that story, I think, to get our attention and to get us thinking…Â  And that it did.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yes, indeed... very cool ;)  
**derek**Cool! 8)  
**Taylhis**Actually, in the same sermon as the fire truck story we also heard the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And a few weeks ago, the pastor talked about David and Goliath. And hubby pointed out the irony of the subject of the series, given recent events where we had to draw upon "fearlessness" to stand up to a group when their opinion differed from ours. Church has definitely been a positive thing for us!  
**derek**Good story :) The Bible is filled with many examples of fearlessness. Generally, it relates to how much faith one has in God. Daniel and his friends we know as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; the Apostles; and of course Jesus Himself. For boldness in yourself for sharing your faith when worldly consequences are certain, we are to call upon God for boldness which He will give. So, have faith, get boldness/fearlessness. I am really happy that you have not only found this church, but that God is really growing you through it. Just posting about your faith as you're doing is being bold for it- bold for Christ. I pray you'll continue.  
**jamiahsh**I can think of several (seemingly) fearless individuals who have dared to face adversity head on... successful or not.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, indeed a modern David slew the Goliath.

# CUBS Vs Sox

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/cubs1.jpg)

I haven’t had a chance to blog much, but a few posts ago in my “To Hellinois…Â  … And Back Again” blog series, I mentioned that I might be partaking in a “very exciting, awesomely fun event” to which I promised, “more on that later”.

Now that the event is definite, I am bursting with excitement, so I will share –Â  hubby got us tickets to see the Chicago Cubs play the White Sox LIVE!Â  I’ve been wanting to go to a Cubs game for awhile (since our last visit to Wrigley in 2004), but last summer was out because I had a baby and unscheduled surgery from which I had to recover.Â  So, June 28 at ~~Comisky Park~~ US Cellular Field, we will venture into Chicagoland once again to cheer on the Chicago Cubs while on the turf of the Chicago White Sox – AWESOME!Â  My mom was nice enough to agree to watch all 4 kids for the day (and the eldest 3 for the rest of the week, BOOLYAH!), and the tickets for the BIG GAME arrived in the mail the other day.

They accidentally got thrown away in the garbage with the junk mail, but LUCKILY hubby was heads up and asked about the whereabouts of the tickets.Â  That’s when I realized that I probably had thrown them away – by accident of course!Â  Good thing he asked when he did – the tickets were found not too near the bottom of the garbage and salvaged, thank goodness!

But anyway, I am looking forward to this event like you wouldn’t believe.Â  Not only is it **LIVE** baseball, but it’s MLB, not AAA or AA.Â  And it’s the Cubs I get to go watch, and they’re playing the SOX – their arch-rival (especially as far as I’m concerned – I HATE those White Sox!!!).Â  So I would say yeah, even though it’s not even 2 months after our last Chicago visit, this visit will be well worth it!Â  So watchÂ  for us – we’ll be decked out in Cubs gear to be sure to properly invade the South Side Sox turf.Â  The game is at 12:05pm local time on June 28 – the last of a 3-game series between the two teams, so it promises to be that much more exciting!Â  It’s scheduled to be shown on WGN, so if you get that channel, check it out, you just might see Taylhis and Co.!

GO CUBS!!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/cubs.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I bet you did.  
**taylhis**ME TOO!!!!! I almost cried with relief!  
**jamiahsh**HOW AWESOME! Glad you noticed they were missing before the tickets were really thrown out.