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# Misc Kid Updates

My 10 month old’s physical appearance is about to change dramatically.Â  Well, first, let me start here – he’s been suffering from lethargy, crabbiness, diarrhea, and diaper rash lately.Â  You seasoned parents out there know what I’m talking about – teething!Â  Sure enough, the other day when we were playing and he was upside-down, I saw not one, not two, but THREE little tooth buds on his top gums.Â  Poor little guy.Â  So pretty soon, he will have a *mouthful* of teeth!Â  I just hope that’s the end of his awful diaper rash – he’s been taking about 3 baths a day; it’s one of the things that helps his sore little bottom.Â  And being 10 months old, he’s been doing all sorts of other things: climbing stairs, pulling things down, pulling himself up on everything…Â  they grow so fast and it seems that his trouble is just beginning!

His 2-year-old sister, Disney has gotten a Dora the Explorer obsession from somewhere.Â  She wants to watch Dora constantly, and it’s so cute to hear her talk back to Dora on the tv – she is even learning Spanish as a result!

And today is their sister Sammie’s birthday!Â  She is officially 5!Â  We already had her birthday party, but I think we will take her out to dinner and maybe to the store.Â  She has been a little better behaved lately, but still not as great as she was a few months ago – her behavior comes in waves, I guess.Â  At least we’re not stuck in horrible-acting Sammie-ness as a constant any longer – there have been glimmers of hope!Â  She is getting ready for Kindergarten in the fall and has been practicing writing her name.Â  A note about this – she would have aced the writing her name part already if we had just named her “Maps”, a word she writes over and over!

Taylor is 9 and almost ready to go to middle school next year.Â  You read that right – where we live, kids go to the middle school for 4th-8th grades.Â  She is VERY responsible with her school work and also when it comes to taking care of their 4 pet rats, so I think she’ll do well in middle school.Â  We have noticed an increase in her displaying a poor attitude – typical tween stuff, but I wish my child was somehow exempt.Â  Is there an exemption card I can get for this?

So anyway, there’s just been a lot going on with the kids lately, and I wanted to share some things before time passed me by and they moved out of the house before I had a chance to blog it.Â  TIME FLIES!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SAMMIE!!!!!

### Comments

**derek**Err, HAPPY 5th SAMMIE- though I'm sure that somewhere a Sammy is enjoying a birthday too... :oops:  
**derek**Well, regardless of the building, I have trouble believing 4th grade there is actually middle school, and will continue to until I find out she's in an actual middle school program. I tried to see one way or another by looking at both Bryan's school website and the Ohio Dept. of Education, but came up empty. Simply put, 9 years old is just too young for a real middle school program. I really hope for her benefit that it is just a standard intermediate program just housed in the middle school. The only real clue I got on the Bryan website is that they separate the middle school into two different pages, one for 4-6 and the other 7-8, so there may yet be hope that there is a difference in the program. That young they still need the consistency a single teacher brings with only the "specials" (typically PE, music/drama, and gym/health) having different teachers. I do realize though that even around here that "single teacher" definition I put is bent all out of shape with students often switching for core subjects like math, but even then that one teacher acts as more than a simple homeroom teacher middle schoolers get, who typically only sees his/her 25-30 students (at least around here) 40 min per day plus whatever the homeroom time is (and sees the rest of the students in that grade throughout the day, around 120 students per team per grade around here). Anyhoo, all that aside- HAPPY 5th DIDDLES, AKA SAMMY!  
**taylhis**To clarify for non-locals, Jamiahsh is talking about the schools in his town, not ours. Taylor will be at the middle school next year, the building is 4th - 8th. They keep the grades separated pretty well. Wow, Jamiahsh, high school kids with 6th graders? Yikes! I think the schools around here are a little different than the ones I grew up going to - it's probably not much of a concern here. In the larger schools, you have many more bad apples influencing the young kids.  
**jamiahsh**Our small school will be all under one roof in a few years. I believe we have one building holding 6-12 grade and the older building K-5.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Happy Birthday to my angel. Yes, Sammie is one of my angels. I can't imagine Taylor goes to middle school. I hope it's not like the one I work at.  
**jamiahsh**Happy BIRTHDAY SAMMIE! YAY!!!!

# Tri-State Weekend

We were all over the place this past weekend.Â  I guess it was the nice weather…Â  wait, it rained Saturday!

It started with game night on Friday night – my intentions were to take it easy and end somewhat early so we could rest up for a big day with the kids on Saturday.Â  It didn’t end up that way – we began the weekend by staying up too late!Â  But it was a fun game night, kind of a different crowd, so it was interesting to mix it up a little.Â  Our new friend brought presents for the kids to game night, and I can’t express enough gratitude – she basically saved game night!Â  Our will-be-5-yr-old-tomorrow Sammie was in a mood, and seeing the new friend (the presents didn’t hurt either!) actually got her out of the mood she would have otherwise stayed in all night probably – thanks Mary!

Saturday we were going to take the kids to the Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek, Michigan.Â  My husband and I (and Taylor in her fetal days) went there in ’99, and we loved the zoo.Â  We found out it was only about an hour and a half drive from here, so we decided to check it out.Â  An hour and a half drive doesn’t seem like a long time if there’s no traffic and the kids are good!Â  Besides, an hour and half drive home after a busy day can sometimes (if we’re lucky) cinch the deal and put all 4 of them asleep *for the night*.Â  Well, anyway, it was raining on Saturday.Â  And we didn’t want to take 4 kids through an unfamiliar zoo in the rain.Â  So we ended up at Crazy Pinz in Fort Wayne, Indiana.Â  It’s a place where they have arcade games, bowling, mini-bowling, mini-golf and the kids’ favorite, Ball-O-City – a giant play area with levels and tunnels and balls to shoot at each other.Â  I was really happy when my husband pointed out the Chicago Cubs game playing on the huge tv in the bar.Â  So I stood over there and watched the Cubs wriggle out of a dicey situation – they had been winning 4-0 when all of a sudden, Houston scores 4 in the 9th and ties it up!Â  They also had bases loaded, but the Cubs got out of it somehow and came back with a win in the bottom of a 9th!Â  The bar at Crazy Pinz erupted in a cheer – Cubs fans everywhere!Â  So we stayed there for awhile and then got home late but not too late for us to catch up on watching the season finales of our two favorite tv shows – Lost and The Office.

I guess I should save it for another post, so let’s just say we were really happy with the finales of BOTH shows.Â  Lost actually answered a lot of questions that were outstanding, and it can finally be seen how events are starting to come full circle for the characters.Â  Something awesome occurred on the Office, well, it was alluded to anyway, but I think it was obvious what the next *development* is for the Pam and Jim characters.Â  Ahem.

Sunday after church we decided to reclaim our Saturday plans and head up to Battle Creek to [Binder Park Zoo](http://binderparkzoo.org/).Â  Sunday was a gorgeous, picture-perfect day weather-wise, and it ended up being a great decision – it would not be fun to tour this zoo in the rain with 4 little kids.Â  The zoo is mostly outdoor, and there is a bit of walking if you want to see the majority of the zoo.Â  You climb aboard a (free) zoo tram that takes you 5 minutes into the wilderness, err Wild Africa as the zoo calls it.Â  But whether it’s the wilds of Michigan or the savannas of Africa, the view that awaits you when you arrive in Binder Park’s Africa is breathtaking.Â  Beyond the authentic-seeming African village is a wall, and beyond the wall:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/5-16-and-17-09-crazy-pinz-and-binder-park-zoo-017.jpg)

Click the picture to see a larger version – those are zebras and Thomson’s Gazelles grazing in the huge pasture.Â  And a clutch of ostrich eggs (real?) on the edge of the exhibit (lower right middle of picture).Â  The giraffes can go out there too, but they are usually over here:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/5-16-and-17-09-crazy-pinz-and-binder-park-zoo-022.jpg)where you can FEED them!Â  It was a great day at a great zoo, and we even saw an animal I had never heard of – the Patagonian Mara.Â  Fully grown they are about 35-40 lbs. (the one here at Binder Park is 9 mos. old and about half that), and they are rodents most closely related guinea pigs.Â  At Binder Park, the keeper was in the cage with the mara, and she was jumping onto his leg and doing tricks for food – very cool.Â  I didn’t get the best picture; there was a tree in the way – again click for a larger pic, maybe you can actually see the mara:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/5-16-and-17-09-crazy-pinz-and-binder-park-zoo-011.jpg)

The Binder Park Zoo also has a cute rabbit exhibit where the kids can crawl through a tunnel and end up “in” with the rabbits, a cool children’s zoo (housing the happiest Guinea pigs I’ve ever seen – the first time I’ve seen Guinea pigs that weren’t squealing with fright or freaking out), and a carousel, among other fun things.Â  Here is my son on his first carousel ride:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/5-16-and-17-09-crazy-pinz-and-binder-park-zoo-024.jpg)

And two of my 4 happy kids at the zoo:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/5-16-and-17-09-crazy-pinz-and-binder-park-zoo-023.jpg)And my other two riding a giant ant:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/5-16-and-17-09-crazy-pinz-and-binder-park-zoo-005.jpg)

So…Â  a great weekend, even if we were never home sweet home.Â  I was going to share my pastor’s story he told on Sunday, but this post is long enough, that will have to wait for another post!Â  Until then…

### Comments

**derek**Nice pics. I hadn't realized when I watched that Office ep that it was the season finale. It was decent- "Dwight? Send in the subs." Hey, I'm a sub... :P  
**Phyllis Beyer**This looks like a great zoo!  
**jamiahsh**Yes... The Office finale was great! What is that The Smallville finale was kind of disappointing so 50/50. Now watching Joe Schmo 2 to fill in for the summer reruns... won't take long. Hilarious... that poor falcon. Binder Park looks like FUN!

# Northwest Ohio Is Cracking Up!

So much for my blogging break – I had a pocket of time and blogged like a maniac the other day!Â  I knew that would happen, as soon as I wrote about how blogging is going on the back burner, I would find time for it again.Â  That’s actually part of the reason why I wrote the “blogging break” post!Â  Â  Not that I’m promising my 5 posts a week anymore, but I will do what I can – I do love to ramble on and on and on about everything while sharpening my typing skills!

Back to the point of this post.Â  A few months ago, we noticed that our front porch is crumbling away to nothing!Â  It’s a rather large cement porch, and parts of it have started falling off, seemingly overnight!Â  We called various construction places to get estimates, and according to them, it’sÂ  a common problem around here this spring.Â  Something about a moist winter, then it got really cold while there was a lot of moisture, so water that was in the cracks of the concrete expanded as it froze, causing things to crack and crumble.Â  I’ve noticed it every where in the area – other houses, strip malls, parking lots.Â  But it really stinks.Â  I love my front porch, and it’s going to cost over $2,000 to fix it!Â  It’s kind of something that needs fixing asap before it gets any worse.Â  Replacing it with a wood deck is cheaper, but I really love it just the way it is – well, before it started crumbling to bits anyway.Â  The concrete where the garage meets the driveway is even worse, and I don’t think repairing that was even in the estimate!Â  Ah, the joys of home ownership!

### Comments

**derek**Err- that was poorly worded. I hope you can find \*a better\* option is what I meant.  
**mary911**I feel your pain. I agree, it is a lovely porch and I would hate to replace it with a wood deck. The concrete adds to the charm....Good luck!  
**derek**Ouch! I hope you find the best option- two grand is a huge amount.

# One Of The Best Email Forwards Ever

I recently recieved a videoÂ  via an email forward that I really enjoyed – that’s somewhat rare because I get tons of email forwards and many of them are senseless garbage.Â  But the few I’ve gotten that I’ve enjoyed have made all the other ones almost worth it.Â  The following video definitely falls into that category:

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**I enjoyed the Vaudeville style as well. And I love how "in tune" (pun intended, haha) this couple is with each other. I read somewhere that they have been married 62 years and that they played this just before his 90th birthday!  
**derek**Vaudeville piano! Though even our most aged population is probably still too young to have actually been a Vaudeville act unless they were children at the time.  
**jamiahsh**Charming indeed. Wonder who footed the bill for the beautiful piano.

# He Just Got Too Tired...

… to even eat his lunch!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/5-14-09-christopher-fell-asleep-while-eating-003.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**When you gotta sleep, ya gotta sleep. Or something like that...  
**Phyllis Beyer**How adorable!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
**jamiahsh**AWWWW.... poor Beeber.

# When Squatters Go Bad...

**SQUATTER** [skwot-er] – *a person who settles on land under government regulation, in order to acquire title.*

Well, ok, so the official definition isn’t exactly what I’m talking about.Â  You may have heard the story that was in the news a month ago about the elderly man who couldn’t get the stranger out of his garage.Â  If you’re wondering how such a thing could happen in our wonderful country, [read for yourself.](http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2009/apr/17/couple-want-backyard-back/)

Apparently occupancy rights laws suck.Â  My dear friend is currently going through a situation as well.Â  I will spare the details, but the reason I’m writing this is because I desperately want to help and I don’t know how.Â  I find it amazing that there are other such stories in the news right now ([click here for another one](http://www.dailyherald.com/story/?id=287381)) – a side effect of the horrible economy, maybe?Â  It’s not so much the laws that are failing my friend, more likely it’s the fact that she is too nice and generous and doesn’t want to kick people out even if they are taking advantage of her generosity.Â  I actually haven’t talked to her about it in awhile, so hopefully the situation has improved – here’s hoping!

### Comments

**derek**That first story was just crazy. I hope they finally were successful in having those people removed. I hope your friend gets things worked out. I'm afraid I can't be much help either. She should probably at least insist on some sort of payment, in work if need be, in order for them to stay. She is doing Christ's work by letting them in in the first place, but if they are taking advantage of her it's time for them to earn their keep.  
**justj**I've always wondered if you can cut off the utilities. Unfortunately, I know there are people out there that wouldn't care that there was no water or electricity. That would be a pain to clean up when they did leave.  
**jamiahsh**I haven't heard about it in awhile either. Hopefully, no news=good news?

# Dr. Sanderson's Game Library

I could kick myself for not taking a “Before” picture of our game closet.Â  ForÂ  those of you who don’t know, my husband and I have a hobby of collecting board games.Â  We go to area thrift and Goodwill stores, and we buy every game in sight we don’t (think we) have.Â  It’s gotten out of control, really it has.Â  In our defense, we have a semi-regular game night with friends where we try out many of the games we obtain.Â  But the game collection outgrew its closet, and we began stacking games on the floor of the closet until even the floor started to overflow with games.Â  So, after we cleaned up what used to be the craft room in our house (gonna call it the ‘East room’ for now I guess – we can’t decide if we want it to be a family rec room or a kid-free parents’ cave), we decided to move the game closet into the closet of the East room because it’s bigger.Â  And now that phase of the project is complete!Â  And it’s awesome!

We threw all of our props and memorabilia from the community theater shows we’ve worked on in the East room.Â  Since my husband was the handsome ‘Dr. Sanderson’ in the show *Harvey*, we somehow ended up with the name plate for his office door.Â  We stuck it to the closet in the East Room, and that is where our game closet now resides.Â  Therefore, I’m announcing the opening of Dr. Sanderson’s Game Library!Â  Pick a game…Â  ANY game\*!Â  However, the following picture is just a sample of the library – a fraction of the closet.Â  Not only could I not rotate the image (so imagine the scene as 90Â° to the right), but I couldn’t get much of the library in the picture!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/new-game-closet-5-13-09-001.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/new-game-closet-5-13-09-002.jpg)

*\*unless you are certain game night regulars who are known for kicking butt at the Disney Trivia game – we have “accidentally” misplaced that game, hehe!*

### Comments

**Risky Business | Morat's Blog**[...] gather to play a WIDE assortment of games.Â  I think we have barely scratched the surface of the game closet.Â  I love all types of games (Monopoly not so much… think I mentioned that before).Â  Tonight [...]  
**jamiahsh**OOPs... my faux pas  
**taylhis**That is Disney Charades in the picture, not Disney Trivia :)  
**jamiahsh**So can I... however, one of them is the same as the one that was apparently misplaced.  
**justj**If needed I can always bring a Disney Trivia game or two.... ;)  
**jamiahsh**HMMMMM..... How about Oodles? 2 versions of Clue. Strangely, I think I Spy the "accidentally misplaced" Disney trivia game underneath Bargain Hunter. This must have been done after the picture was taken.

# Blogging Break

I don’t know what’s happened to me lately.Â  For over a year, I was pretty diligent about publishing my 5 blog posts per week, one for everyÂ  weekday.Â  Sometimes I did more, sometimes less, but rarely as few as I’ve been writing lately.Â  I figured that if I were to lose enthusiasm for this blogging thing, it would have happened already and I’d be done with it.Â  But that’s not the case.Â  I’ve stuck through it while being pregnant (of course it was easy to sit on my pregnant butt in the summer heat last year and blog – didn’t want to do much else!), and I even caught up after having the emergency surgery and the recuperation period associated with that, also while caring for a new baby and 3 older kids.Â  And I also caught up after spending a week in Florida with no blogging!Â  So yes, it’s something I enjoy, and something I’m going to stick to.Â  I think I’m just going to back off a little bit for now and not publish quite as many posts as before.Â  I still have a lot to say, and a lot of things with which to bore my readers, so have no fear!

But the weather is nice, and I have 4 kids to deliver to places around town constantly.Â  We’ve had to recently make some sacrifices – I always wanted to give my kids the opportunity to be in every activity they wanted, but I’m finding out that it’s just not possible with 4 kids.Â  My oldest is in Girl Scouts, and she also wants to take piano lessons, swimming lessons, be in 4-H and be in plays.Â  Our very-soon-to-be 5-year-old is old enough for Safety Town class this year, and we kind of wanted to get her involved with swimming lessons also.Â  Not to mention all of the projects that Mom and Dad have volunteered to do; the list seems endless.Â  I think our summer is jam-packed already and it’s only May!Â  Plus, we’ve embarked on some rather large home improvement projects that need finishing…

So don’t wonder where I am or if everything’s ok – it’s GREAT to be Ãœber-Busy!

### Comments

**justj**I guess I'll have to start reading more books. ;)  
**jamiahsh**WOW.. now If I can just find something to blog about...

# Happy Mother's Day!

Another weekend has come and gone – and quickly too, it was a busy one!Â  And this post title is already outdated because I’ve been so busy IÂ  haven’t had a chance to write until 2 days after Mother’s Day!

Friday night saw me doing some volunteer work for a local theater board.Â  It wasn’t really work; basically it consisted of me making sure the audition process for our summer show (Joseph – my favorite!) was flowing smoothly.Â  It was fun, though I’d be lying if I didn’t express my concerns about my hubby giving his audition his best shot.Â  More about THAT later, based upon whether he makes the show or not…

Saturday was my daughter’s 5th birthday party.Â  As usual, none of the 18 kids from her class called to RSVP, but I was tired of worrying about it – been there, done that, ever since our oldest started inviting friends to *her* birthday parties.Â  I don’t know why parents can’t figure out how to RSVP.Â  The day before the party, when we hadn’t heard from anyone, I did make sure we called one friend of the birthday girl’s who always attends her classmates’ birthday parties, and luckily she showed up.Â  We allowed our older daughter to invite one of her friends, just so we could be sure we’d have at least some kids joining the lame birthday party crowd of Mom, Dad, Grandma, and Uncle Bud.Â  Thank goodness we did that, otherwise my daughter would have had NONE of her own friends show up at her own birthday party!Â  Luckily, she was fixated on the slumber party that would take place at Grandma’s hotel later that night, so she didn’t really seem to mind the one-kid turnout.Â  Of course, the one kid that could come was a very high-maintenance kid, and she also had an accident minutes after arriving at our house.Â  AND, in order for her to be able to come at all, she had to be dropped off at noon – 3 hours before the party was to start!Â  But like I said, it was all worth it for our daughter to be able to have a friend at her party.

Saturday night my mom was very generous with her offer to take *all 4 kids* in her hotel room!Â  Hubby and IÂ  ran like the wind, seizing an opportunity to go to a drive-in movie theater kid-less, even though neither of the movies sounded very intriguing.Â  But we had never been to a drive-in together, and we found a place 45 minutes away.Â  It was so cool; it was out in the country; basically a farm that people converted into a drive-in.Â  A very far cry from the crowded drive-in I used to visit asÂ  a teenager in a suburb called West Chicago – not a very good area now, and evenÂ  back then, there was always a squad car patrolling inside.Â  Not the case here – we were in the middle of the country, and this place even had a little snack truck and games you could rent for free while waiting for the movie to start (cornhole – a regional favorite and some mini-golf holes).Â  The movies – Wolverine and 12 Rounds – were not very thrilling, and the peaceful night air and late hour did us in and we both fell asleep.Â  Well, it had beenÂ  huge day and they can’t even start the first move until almost 9:30 when it gets dark enough, so no wonder.Â  And, Jill the GPS routed us into some construction on the way back so it took us an hour to get home at 1:30 in the morning!Â  Construction in the pitch black middle of no where late at night when you’re SO tired can be veryÂ  disorienting!Â  We didn’t have any kids all night thanks to my mom, but we had to get up early the next morning to get breakfast before church so by Sunday night, we were dragging!Â  I should have really taken a nap, but I was having such a great Mother’s Day…

We went out to breakfast Sunday morning, and then my mom and uncle stayed to check out our church.Â  It was aÂ  lot of fun for the kids to show them around, and I loved Sunday’s message about motherhood.Â  It was punctuated by a few wonderful videos, and the pastor took a break from our ‘Fearless’ series to focus on mothers and our special day – I really enjoyed it.Â  Especially the surprise Willie Nelson song they played at the beginning of service!Â  The pastor made sure to mention how difficult Mother’s Day must be for those who have lost children or for those who can’t have children,Â  and IÂ  couldn’t help but wonder about the people whose mothers have passed on – must be an extremely difficult day for them too.Â  I have a few friends in that position; including one who lost her mother not more than a few months ago.Â  So as much as I was enjoying my Mother’s Day, my thoughts and prayers were also with those who didn’t find the day a cause for celebration.Â  Here’s hoping you had a great Mother’s Day in 2009 with many more to come!

### Comments

**taylhis**Thank you Mom, for a wonderful Mother's Day. I think the message at church was made extra special by being in your company. Thank YOU for being a great mom!  
**Phyllis Beyer**I, too, had a wonderful Mother's Day enjoying the company of your family. I really enjoyed the service at your church. I can hardly think of a better way to spend the day. Thanks, Lisa, for being such a wonderful Mom and giving me 4 wonderful grandchildren to enjoy. I love you all.  
**jamiahsh**A drive-in where you fall asleep. I remember doing that when I was like 5. Well... I guess you aren't teenagers anymore, either and this isn't the 50s. I hope your supremely talented husband is cast in Joseph (ONE of my favorite shows), too. Glad you had a good Mother's Day!

# EUREKA!

There’s been a lot of buzz around here about a few new restaurants that are to be opening soon in our county.Â  One is a replacement for a restaurant that closed due to the tough economic times.Â  The old place had good food, but their prices were kind of high for the area, and their service was always veryÂ  slow – perhaps two reasons that led to their demise?Â  I don’t know much about their replacement, except that it’s to be called ‘Union Street Grille’ and will open in May sometime.Â  Hmm, grille.Â  Does that mean burgers and the like?

Next we will have a Sonic drive-in.Â  For those of you who aren’t familiar, Sonic is a fast food place, with burgers, french fries, chicken sandwiches and the like, but they also have outdoor booths where you can sit in your car and eat after your food is delivered to you.Â  I try not to eat too much fast food, but I do enjoy Sonic from time to time, and they have excellent slushies, ocean water, and especially flavored iced tea – YUM!Â  And Sonic has a Happy Hour from 2-4 when their drinks are half-price, so I’ll be there…

The other new restaurant in the area is a place called ‘4 Seasons’ and it’s about 20 minutes away.Â  They have (among other things) Greek food – my favorite!Â  Not a full spread, but enough to make me happy!Â  Their gyros are great (awesome tzatziki sauce), and they even have homemade hollandaise sauce for eggs benedict.Â  I think I’ve already rambled on in a few blog posts how important it is for good eggs benedict to have homemade hollandaise.Â  My husband and I have searched many states for good hollandaise sauce, and many places will say their sauce is homemade even if it isn’t.Â  I guess to a lot of people, “homemade” means that they’ve mixed the powder into the water.Â  But not to us – you can really taste the (ew) difference if there is powder involved.Â  The other night, we ate at 4 Seasons, and I made a comment – now we just have to ask them when they’re getting Saganaki (one of my favorite Greek dishes – it involves goat or sheep cheese, whiskey, fire, and yelling OPA!Â  Good stuff).Â  So my husband asked the waitress about it, and that’s when we found out that they HAVE it!Â  Of course – we find out when we’re way too full to even consider trying it, and on the eve of one of the busiest weekends we’ve had in a long time.Â  We will be up there to try it soon – no doubt!Â  Before that lovely piece of news, we thought the nearest Saganaki was Toledo or South Bend, Indiana!

Anyway, 3 new restaurants opening up within miles of my house is a big deal for us – especially for one to have THREE of our favorite dishes!Â  We eat out a lot, partly because the prices are reasonable in our area, partly because we’re very busy people and I’m not home a lot to cook, and partly because it’s really difficult to cook with 8 extra little feet in the kitchen to trip over!Â  Maybe some day I’ll have the time and the patience to cook more often, but until then, new restaurants opening in our area to give us more variety is a cause for celebration!Â  EUREKA!

### Comments

**derek**Yum to both (saganaki and hollandaise sauce). Did you know: there's a sci-fi show called Eureka? Good show. Now you know. :)  
**justj**Not yet, I never had it. I was hungry so I picked something I knew I would like.  
**taylhis**NICE! Did you try the Saganaki?  
**justj**And I was able to enjoy 4 Seasons this evening after Honk!.  
**jamiahsh**AH... how well I remember pricey ripoff place in Weehawken.  
**taylhis**Their prices overall are higher than most restaurants in Williams County, probably because of their location near the turnpike. But I would still consider them reasonable. And, I forgot to mention that they're open til 10, which will give hungry play rehearsers from Montpelier a place to grab late dinner.  
**taylhis**There is no chance of confusing the two. 4 Seasons hollandaise is the SECOND best we've ever had - next to a place in Illinois. And at HALF the price for BETTER quality eggs benedict... well, there's really no comparison between 4 Seasons and Pricey RipOff Place in NJ!  
**jamiahsh**But a Sonic will be nice to have in the area. And it is a good thing that 4 Seasons has homemade hollandaise and didn't try to pass off the powdered stuff. Must not be associated with the famous hotel in NYC if their prices are reasonable..  
**jamiahsh**EUREKA! Derived from a brilliant mathematician or scientist who made a brilliant discovery while in the bathtub. He sprang to his feet, ran out of his house, shouting EUREKA! (I've found it) up and down the street. Just can't remember who that would be.

# Rehabbing

Where have I been all week, you ask?Â  Ok, maybe you didn’t ask (actually [Mare Mare](http://mary911.tangents.org/2009/05/09/hey/) asked in her blog, but ironically, that was after I had started this post!), so I’m going to tell you anyway.Â  My husband and I have embarked on our first major self-done home improvement project!Â  We are now almost finished, and I think it’s safe to say that it went well!

We had a spare room on the first floor that we made into a craft room.Â  We put a bunch of arts and crafts in there for the kids, along with a big table.Â  They used it a lot, almost every day, but they would never clean up after themselves.Â  So, it became a storage room; which really means a place to toss junk and clutter.Â  Complicating the problem was the fact that our elderly dog was having accidents in there, so it smelled so bad no one even *wanted* to go in there.Â  So we ripped out the carpet, got on our hands and knees to pull out the nails the carpet left behind, scrubbed the floor, primed it and painted it.Â  Viola!Â  No more stench!Â  It was a lot of hard work, but it was fun, and now we have a brand new room for our family!Â  What to do with the new room?Â  We began with the idea that it was going to be a playroom for the kids, but then we realized that they don’t really need a play room – all their toys fit in their bedrooms or in the living room.Â  Plus, after all that work, we kind of want the room to ourselves.

So now the idea is to reward ourselves by repo-ing the room (we did save ourselves over $700 by avoiding the carpet installation!), and we’re thinking we’re going to make it a theater room.Â  We got some theater chairs last week on clearance fromÂ  our Kmart going out of business, and my husband is going to see about getting a projector and screen.Â  I think we’ll also have room for a table and our storage bins so the kids can still have their place for crafts and homework.Â  And, the room has a huge closet – so the plan is to move our famous game closet over to that room since our game collecting addiction has outgrown its current home.Â  All this means more work ahead, of course, but nothing can be as bad as crawling around on our hands and knees on the cruddy old floor – everything from here on out is the fun part!Â  Before and after:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/east-room-rehab-001.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/east-room-rehab-003.jpg)

### Comments

**taylhis**Oh yes... should have taken a BEFORE picture of the room before we did anything, including all the clutter... oh well. Lots of work indeed - to say it is talent is flattering, really it just took the determination to get it done and not sidetracked (not an easy task with 4 kids!), and lots of elbow grease!  
**jamiahsh**NIICE... i like the theatre room idea. yes, I can see that my expertise in painting was sorely missed ;)  
**mary911**Welcome back!!! I hoped nothing was wrong!!! Your room looks fabulous! I wish I had some of that talent to be able to fix stuff like that! Glad you're back!!!! :)  
**derek**That had to be some work indeed! That room was quite cluttered last I saw it. You did get gas masks first though, right? :P So either that room looks really good now as you say, or someone has been practicing with Paint Shop Pro... Just kidding- as I said, looks good. Glad to see you back to blogging. Now to get JustJ to come back too.

# Stress Relief

I received a helpful email forward that I thought IÂ  would share in case any of my readers have some stress and theyÂ  are looking for ways to unwind…

Just in case you are having a rough day, here is a stress management technique recommended in all the latest psychological journals. The funny thing is that it really does work and will make you smile.

1. Picture yourself lying on your belly on a warm rock that hangs out over a crystal clear stream.

2. Picture yourself with both your hands dangling in the cool running water.

3. Birds are sweetly singing in the cool mountain air.

4. No one knows your secret place.

5. You are in total seclusion from that hectic place called the world.

6. The soothing sound of a gentle waterfall fills the air with a cascade of serenity.

7. The water is so crystal clear that you can easily make out the face of the person you are holding underwater.

There!! See? It really does work. You’re smiling already. Feel free to forward this if you know others who might benefit from this technique…..

### Comments

**derek**Heh. :D {*filler material to make post acceptable to filter*}  
**justj**Not one of mine, too simple ;) Not much mystery involved.  
**mary911**I love it!!!!!  
**jamiahsh**Let me guess... one of justj's murder scenarios?

# ...And Back Again

*(continued from the previous post – To Hellinois…)*

So FINALLY, after yet another GPS debacle orchestrated by Jill (might be time to change the persona of the GPS again and fire Jill!) we arrived in Aurora, and it’s the first time I’ve seen my parents’ dogs in years.Â  Loopy is looking a little bit gray in the muzzle, but also much slimmer since last time I saw her.Â  And Happy… well, Happy is herself, I guess – hyper and happy to see my kids, I wouldn’t expect any less!Â  We visited with my momÂ  for a little while, and then it was off to lunch, which my husband and I had carefully orchestrated.Â  My mom was nice enough to watch our girls so that we could enjoy a little time out with just the baby, and after all that driving + the morning’s (more than) two hour tantrum, boy, did we need some time to ourselves!Â  So we went to Sweet Tomatoes – a restaurant that specializes in an ultra-fresh salad buffet, my husband’s favorite, and I don’t think he was disappointed!Â  They also have 6 kinds of soup and 3 kinds fresh hand-tossed pasta – YUM!Â  We drove around for a few minutes after lunch searching for a dollar store or two – next to zoos and cuisine, “exotic” dollar stores are my favorite things to see while in different areas,Â  but we couldn’t find one, so we went to a Petland instead.Â  So I put aside my opinions that Petland is a leading trader inÂ  puppy mill pups, and we went for a visit.Â  And this Petland had LOTS of animals with very nice habitats.Â  They did have a huge bunch of puppies though, and almost all of their “getting to know you” puppy rooms were taken (let me just vent real quick by saying – why can’t more people consider shelter dogs so we can reduce the amount of homeless pets in the country!!!)Â  And I asked the staff members a few questions – some to learn things but most to test their knowledge on subjects – and they passed.Â  They no longer sell seahorsesÂ  because they require ultra-clean water and exceptionally large tanks.Â  I was glad to see that Petland was no longer putting the lives of seahorses in jeopardy just to make a quick buck, but they lost me when they offered to order me some – oh well.Â  There were the cutest little Robinsky hamsters – about the size of a silver dollar – and they were in constant motion.Â  They are so fast that they kept flipping each other over in the hamster wheel and making each other go upside down!Â  They were adorable, but how anyone could handle having such a busy pet is beyond me – you couldn’t even pick them up since they were so fast!Â  Here is a picture of someone who actually got one of these things in their hand:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/roblovski-hamster.jpg)

So then it was on to my nephew’s first birthday party – he is only 2Â½ months older than my son, and the two of them together were SO cute!Â  My son is on the left, birthday boy on the right:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/ryans-first-bday-5-2-09-004.jpg)

The party was lots of fun, and it was nice getting to spend time with my family and my sister’s in-laws, who we don’t see very often.Â  We had to leave a little bit early to try to get on the road at a decent hour, but before we left, my kids did a good job of trashing my sister’s house.Â  One of them clogged the toilet, one of them crumbled their birthday cake all over the floor (requiring my brother-in-law to haul out his Shop-Vac!), and one of them had too much cake and ice cream and spit up all over Grandma and the floor.Â  I bet they’re glad we don’t come over very often!Â  Just kidding, I’m sure it was understood that with 8 kids at one party, something was bound to get messed up – but why did all the messes have to be traced back to ***my*** kids?

After the party, I dropped my husband off at a Walgreens for some clearance shopping – his favorite! – cuz I wanted to stop by [White Castle](http://www.whitecastle.com) and get a case of slyders to bring home.Â  White Castle is an institution in Chicagoland, and one of the things I miss that we don’t have here.Â  For those of you who aren’t familiar, slyders are what locals call the little hamburgers that White Castle sells – the secret to the awesome flavor is steamed onions.Â  My hubby must love me a lot to put up with the smell of steamed onions for the 4 hour drive home!Â  And no, the frozen ones they sell at Walmart are not the same as the ones you can buy at the restaurants – which is why I try to bring home a case every time I go!Â  But on Sunday, I kept getting behind slow drivers (what happened to the drivers in Illinois?Â  I swear, during this trip ***I*** was the most aggressive driver I ran into, what’s happened to all the a\*\*holes that used to be on the road over there?Â  Could it be the red-light cameras?), and then they took forever at White Castle.Â  And what do I do?Â  I drive off with only my drinks, forgetting my cheeseburgers.Â  So I get back in line, and of course I’m behind the slowest lady in the world – I was in line for 20 minutes, just to get food I had forgotten!Â  By the time I got back to Walgreens, my husband was ready to put out an APB on our van.Â  And of course the baby cried the whole time because he was tired and wanted his bottle, and I couldn’t reach the spot in the car where he had thrown it.Â  So I was flustered by the time we finally started for home.Â  Luckily for me, we achieved a quadruple pass out though, so the drive home was peaceful.Â  We got home around 1 am, and much to our surprise, our pet sitter and great friend Carol was still in our house!Â  The kids started to wake up, so we rudely hushed Carol and brought the crying kids upstairs.Â  Luckily we only had one straggler who stayed up for a little while, and I apologized to Carol for my rudeness (and my stench of coming off a 4-hour drive sitting next to steamed onions with baby spit-up on me).Â  We were more than happy to share the White Castle bounty, and my husband drove poor Carol home since her car had died and she was trapped at our house – I felt badly getting in so late!Â  I was so tired that I forgot to call my mom to tell her we made it safely – I don’t think that’s ever happened, oops!

Sunday we somehow got up for church, and we got to see some people get baptized which was a neat experience.Â  The sermon was about Moses and the parting of the Red Sea, which interested me because I don’t have much religious background and didn’t know the story.Â  But I learned some useful tools that I think might help me during this ultra-trying time that Samantha has been putting us through lately.Â  After church, they had a program they call KidStuff – they have it twice a year – and Sunday’s KidStuff was about obedience – perfect!Â  Just the message we need to drill into our kids’ heads lately!Â  It was a really cute skit about how it’s important to be obedient, and I thought it was very well done.Â  There was lots of physical comedy for the kids, goofy characters, an air horn (kids love noisy things!), and they stressed the importance of obedience repeatedly.Â  And, they gave us an orange “O” to put on our fridge to remind the kids about being obedient!Â  I was so excited to get home and apply these lessons to real life!Â  But alas, after the pizza lunch at church for KidStuff, Sammie had to rub it in how much she DIDN’T learn from the skit – our friend is a professional photographer and met us at the park to get some Spring pics of the kids.Â  But our family picture is minus one – Sammie refused to participate in the picture taking.Â  Even seeing a robin’s nest up close didn’t soften her enough to be cooperative.Â  So all my hopes about her learning something, even a little bit, from the obedience skit flew out the window.Â  But the baby robin was adorable – there were two eggs and one that had hatched, couldn’t have been more than a day old.Â  I’ve never seen one so little, it barely had any feathers or baby bird peach fuzz!Â  Awww!

Overall, a great weekend.Â  I call it Hellinois, but I’m (half) joking.Â  You couldn’t pay me to live there, but there are worse places we could have to visit!Â  I think we might be going back sometime soon for a very exciting, awesomely fun event – more on that later!!!

### Comments

**derek**God made sure your kids made it for that message. :) As you saw, baptisms are not just for the ones getting baptized. Some of the testimonies I have heard are just incredible.  
**jamiahsh**HMMM... a very exciting, awesomely fun event. Can't wait to hear about that! I know a five year old who is in the throes of non-obedience... one of the perks of being able to see her go home at the end of the day. How I would like to be in a Petland or other store to see your testing method in action.

# To Hellinois...

I’m not a big fan of the place and try to avoid it like the plague for the most part, but there are about two times a year I am willing to travel to the place of my birth which I lovingly refer to as “Hellinois”, a nickname for Chicagoland, with its insane traffic patterns and millions of unfriendly citizens: around April for my nephews’ birthdays and also around Christmastime.Â  Making the 4-hour trek across two states twice a year is doable and definitely worth it so that my kids can have fun and get to know their relatives.Â  So Friday afternoon, we took off and headed over to the Land of Lincoln.Â  I don’t understand why it took me two hours to pack our family of 6 for a one day trip, especially because there were plenty of things that were forgotten, but more on that later.Â  We arrived outside the Loop right about 6:30 on a Friday evening local time, but much to our surprise, we barely hit any backup.Â  What the?Â  Unheard of for a Friday night!Â  But on our way past the Chicago skyline, we did have fun trying to find the new Trump Tower and comparing it to the John Hancock and also to the other new skyscrapers that have sprung up, seemingly over night.Â  I have to admit that Chicago’s skyline is more impressive than that of New York, at least in my opinion – just for the heck of it, I played tourist and actually took a picture of the Sears Tower.Â  While I was there, I heard that they’re going to build balconies on the observation deck of the Sears Tower with glass floors.Â  They got the idea after watching all the tourists bump their foreheads on the windows while trying to look straight down.Â  I have to admit, I’ve done that myself a few times.Â  Wonder if I could keep my new-found vertigo in check enough to give the new balconies a try when they’re complete?

We arrived at our hotel and got the kids ready to go down to the pool, and that’s when we realized that we forgot my son’s bathing suit, as well as ALL of my husband’s clothes that had been put in the dryer before we left and forgotten.Â  So we all had to sacrifice – I had to sleep in my clothes and give my pajamas (sweat pants and a t-shirt) to my husband to wear to the birthday party the following day.Â  He had to wear pajamas to the party and also roast inside a sweatshirt all day since the t-shirt was ripped.Â  My son went swimming in his pants – luckily I had learned a little something from the New York trip and brought plenty of extra baby clothes with me.

We were only down at the pool for about 30 minutes, but the kids had fun – my son kept clapping.Â  We had called fellow blogger Derek to join us, but we kicked him out soon after we got back from the pool since the room was very crowded and the kids needed to settle down for their big day ahead.Â  We ordered pizza (MMMmmm, Chicago-style pizza!) and tried to get the kids to settle down, but it took a long time.Â  We got so tired that we forgot to close the drapes, which led to everyone rising bright and early in the morning – big oops.Â  Our almost 5-year-old Sammie, the handful (putting it mildly) of the bunch, decided to draw a bunch of block letter T’s all over her cousins’ birthday cards.Â  No problem, until she ran out of room for any more T’s and threw a 2-hour tantrum about it – I am not even exaggerating.Â  By the time we checked out of the hotel, so many people had walked by glaring at our family; it was not a good way to start the day.Â  We were so not in Kansas (err, Ohio) anymore.Â  IÂ  have trouble getting used to that every time I visit other places.Â  It feels weird to not say hi to everyone I pass, or worse yet, to say hi and get a weird stare in return.

We had decided that my husband was going to take Sammie somewhere else rather than for us to subject my elderly grandparents to her screaming, but luckily she calmed down on the way over to their house.Â  We had a nice visit, and as usual, my grandma made too much food.Â  What was supposed to be a light lunch (so we could fit in as many other samples of fine Chicago dining as possible during our short stay) turned out to be a buffet spread of strawberries, black raspberries, cheese, smokies in biscuits, deviled eggs, pickles, cheese spread and crackers, not to mention 3 kinds of dessert!Â  So anyway, we had a really nice visit with my grandparents, although we were walking on eggshells with Sammie, who got an early birthday present from them, which was nice.Â  But then fights broke out over the birthday present, and rather than stress my grandparents, we beat a hasty retreat.Â  My grandpa did manage to make a joke, despite all of his discomfort from the Parkinson’s and who knows what else.Â  He asked how our 10th Anniversary vow renewal ceremony went, and we said great!Â  So then he said, “You made the same mistake twice, huh?”Â  Obviously, I don’t feel I made a mistake once (or twice) marrying my husband, but it was funnyÂ  anyway and soÂ  great to see the old tease that is my grandpa back in action.Â  So we left their house in Schaumburg and headed to Aurora to see the rest of the fam.Â  After little sleep the night before and the 2 hour tantrum in the morning, I offered to drive so my husband could take some much needed rest.Â  Wanting to think as little as possible, I turned on Jill the GPS and sat back and let her lead me through the tangle of expressways that is Chicagoland.Â  Except that Jill had apparently had one too many morning cocktails.Â  She directed me to stay on I-290 rather than to merge onto I-355.Â  I knew better than that – I had made that trek many a time when my husband and I were dating.Â  But my brain was fried, so I lemmingly went along with Jill’s directions, and next thing I know, we’re traveling east TOWARD the city, instead of west toward Aurora!Â  Finally I saw the toll road we needed – I-88, and now we were finally headed in the right direction, after going 10 miles out of the way!Â  Oh, well, at least we were running early since my kids had decided to get up at the crack of dawn!

Just writing about this makes me tired.Â  I think I’ll take a break here, unpack a little and save the rest of this huge weekend for another post!

### Comments

**taylhis**Thankfully, today's church activities helped to make me think of things in a new perspective... more on that in the next post...  
**derek**Glad you made it back okay, even if your mind didn't quite make it in one piece.  
**jamiahsh**Jill Strikes Back

# Thrice Upon A Potty

Yesterday saw the official beginning of potty-training for our 2-year-old.Â  She has used the potty a few times before, but now it’s official – we went out and bought the toddler sized potty.Â  She was excited about using it and has done so twice yesterday and once today!Â  I just worry about the time it takes to stay consistent.Â  She still needs reminding and accompaniment, and those things might become impossible to do at times depending on what her baby brother is doing at the moment.Â  But for now, we’re really excited about her progress, and maybe we can build up some consistency so that she can tend to her own needs in case baby brother is running me too ragged to help.

There are MANY methods of potty-training.Â  There’s the famous video/book set, Once Upon a Potty, but that is a bit graphic (I don’t think it’s important at this age to learn WHERE the poo-poo comes from), and I don’t know about your kids, but mine find it difficult to relate to a little girl named Prudence.Â  The “diaper free infant” method of potty-training is becoming increasingly popular.Â  This entails holding the newborn baby over the toilet and not letting him wear diapers.Â  I’m not one to complain about other people’s parenting methods, but ‘diaper free infant’ parents seem like lunatics.Â  The average newborn baby needs his diapers changed 8-10 times per day, and I don’t even know how they determine what a ‘day’ is when referring to newborns since they are often up all night, needing their diapers changed in the middle of the night as well.Â  Who is going to hold a newborn baby over a toilet 8-10 times a day and all throughout the night?Â  A lunatic.Â  But seriously, as I said, the popularity of this method is increasing, so I guess some people are having success with it.Â  Personally, I wait until the kid is old enough to understand.Â  She understands that older people and especially older kids use the potty and don’t wear diapers.Â  She’s old enough to not like getting messy anymore, and she’s old enough to understand rewards.Â  We had a very hard time potty-training our oldest daughter.Â  The daycare she went to at the time gave us a suggestion that finally worked – sprinkles.Â  When a kid successfully uses the potty, give them sprinkles (the kind you put on cookies, not the kind they’re putting into the toilet).Â  Once the sprinkles came into the picture, our oldest was potty-trained almost immediately after months of trying everything else.Â  Our second daughter was a snap to potty-train, well, ok, first we had to wait for her to get out of her “painting with poop” phase, but again, I wait until they’re old enough to understand things.Â  During the “painting with poop” phase, she wasn’t even 2 years old yet, and so it was really difficult to explain to her why the poop should go in the potty rather than being artistically displayed upon the walls, her crib, her toys, and even her face… YUCK!

Ok, this post has taken a turn for the worst, so I will take that as my cue to sign off.Â  The point is, CONGRATS to Disney for doing such a good job on the potty!

### Comments

**derek**Sounds like a fad, that diaper-free method. People just love to try something different, especially when it has the potential to save a lot of money as in this case. However, when most find it costs more in patience and work than they save in money, it will pass, I think, like all fads tend to do.  
**mary911**Thanks for the giggle! Good luck in your endeavor!!! Maybe having two older siblings that are independent on the potty will help her!!! My nieces got a star on the board every time they did their duty correctly, and one taken away for it not done correctly. When they accumulated 25 stars, they could trade them in for a Barbie. It worked great!!!  
**justj**Just the thought of potty training makes me glad my kids are older. ;)  
**jamiahsh**YAY, DIS! I think that is what my siblings did... wait until they are old enough to know what is going on. They also had a story about Molly on the Potty. Dunno if the boys had a similar version..

# Simultaneous Sports

Last night was rare – my husband and I were watching two different sports on two different tvs, and football was not involved!Â  My husband is a huge fan of the Chicago Bears, and tries to catch every one of their games.Â  But it’s not football season, so we decided to check in on the Chicago Bulls since they are in the playoffs.Â  We tuned in right at (what was supposed to be) the end of the game, and it was really exciting!Â  Let me back up to 1997 for a minute – a few weeks after we met, my husband took me on a date to a Chicago Bulls game.Â  Not just any game – it was game 6 of the NBA Finals, and the Bulls were going for the win over the Utah Jazz.Â  Not only that, we got to see the “Dream Team” in action – Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Dennis Rodman, Luc Longley, etc.Â  And the Bulls ended up winning that night!Â  It was so fun…Â  well, except for when I passed out on the street before the game – it was in such a bad neighborhood that people thought I had OD’d.Â  But I had just not eaten or drank much water that day since my car had overheated, and I had to walk to a pay phone and try to get a hold of my husband, er boyfriend at the time to pick me up where I was stranded.Â  We were almost late to the game, and it was obviously a hot day and I think I dehydrated…Â  Anyway, that was my first and only live NBA game, and it was enough to let me appreciate basketball, especially exciting games with high stakes.

SoÂ  last night, the Bulls were on the verge of getting eliminated from the series, when the score was tied and they went into overtime – not once, not twice, but triple overtime!Â  And the Bulls ended up beating the Boston Celtics – tying the series at 3-3.Â  Winner of the next game takes all!Â  It was a lot of fun to watch, and Saturday’s game will be even more fun!Â  So that game was onÂ  the tv, and on my laptop I had put on the Cubs game which also went into an extra inning, but I won’t talk about that too much – theyÂ  didn’t end up winning.Â  But the game was very exciting up until the 10th inning, and I noted how unusual it was to have duelling sports on in my house – especially because it’s not the time of year when MLB and NFL seasons overlap!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**strange indeed. Sorry about the Cubs... I really get a big kick out of your old stories :D

# Bowling Obsessed

For date night this week, our movie options were limited.Â  We are lucky enough to live nearby cheap movie theaters that allow us to go to the movies weekly, so we see almost everything that comes out.Â  Well, everything we have an interest inÂ  seeing, anyway.Â  There are movies such as Krank 2 that you couldn’t PAY me to see – I would rather just skip the movie altogether – same with the upcoming Star Trek (no offense to you Trekkies – just not my kind of movie!).Â  So this week we were left to choose between Obsessed, a stalker-thriller with Beyonce Knowles and the new boss Charles (who already left) from the Office or a movie called The Soloist, which is about a Julliard-trained musician who ends up homeless because his schitzophrenia stands in the way of his success.Â  The Soloist actually seemed to have some substance, but it also seemed like the kind of movie that could wind up being a tear-jerker or just plain boring.Â  So we went with Obsessed, despite its 4.0 rating on imdb.com (which had slipped to a 3.8 as of today – ouch).Â  Obsessed is a movie about a successful business man who had a beautiful wife (Beyonce) and child – essentially the perfect life – until an obsessed temp gets in the picture.Â  This woman is truly psycho, and I really enjoyed watching how she made this poor man’s life unravel.Â  The movie wasn’t bad until a few clues shed the light on the movie’s secret – Beyonce can’t act.Â  Add in bad character development and a weak script, and I can definitely see where the 4.0, er, 3.8 came in.Â  There was one line near the end of the movie that was one of the stupidest lines I’ve ever heard in any movie.Â  I won’t spoil it for you, but let’s just say that my husband and I got dirty looks for laughing out loud at its absurdity.Â  On top of all of that, the movie was completely predictable – it must have been based upon (copied) every popular stalker movie ever made – The Crush, The Temp, Hand That Rocks the Cradle…Â  Would I recommend it?Â  To the right person, maybe…Â  you have to like thrillers; so much so that you’d want to see one that is almost a thriller parody.Â  You have to go to this one in a cynical mood, looking for stuff to make fun ofÂ  – and you won’t be disappointed.

After the movie, we decided to mix it up a little and go bowling –Â  something we haven’t done in a LONG time (I blame my 4 pregnancies – bowling is NOT a recommended sport for expecting women, and I’ve been pregnant for about one tenth of my life!)Â  So anyway, for my first game, I’m embarrassed to say that I got a measly 99 – not very good for someone who used to bowl in a weekly league for years.Â  My second game was back on par with a 137 – but I was still surprised at how quickly I got the sore muscles of bowler’s fatigue.Â  I guess picking up 10 lbs with three fingers uses muscles that haven’t been thought about for years.Â  While I’m happy to report that I wasn’t sore at all the next day, I do have to say that my first attempt at bowling as a 30-year-old wasn’t pretty.Â  I guess I have to practice, especially if I’m ever going to go ahead and join that league I’ve been talking about doing for years.Â  I just hope I don’t hurt myself too badly.

Out of respect for my wonderful hubby, I will not disclose his bowling scores.Â  Let’s just say that he didn’t stand a chance against the former high school ‘Female Intramural Bowler of the Year’.Â  ðŸ˜‰

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I dunno... I never saw the da Vinci Code... although i do like Tom Hanks' movis  
**mary911**I don't know....I don't think I've ever seen Hugh Jackman in a bad movie, so I'm sure I'll see his movie. I'm also looking forward to the new Star Trek, but I am NOT a Trekkie.....well, maybe a little, but if/when you meet some of my friends, you'll know what a true Trekkie geek is....(I think Travis actually has a uniform....and he has the entire trading card set...) Anyway, the one I'm really looking forward to is Angels & Demons. Bowling. I, too, was on a league for a couple of seasons. It was fun, but I wasn't the greatest at it. Sounds like a fun night!!!  
**derek**X-Men? Nah. I'll wait for the DVD. Star Trek? Will be the first movie I have seen in the theater in over a year, for sure! I'm sure I'd be on par with C for a bowling score these days, whatever the score was.  
**jamiahsh**I do recall the drawbacks to the league and agree but it has been a while since I have gone 10 frames.  
**taylhis**We checked out the theater bowling league idea, and it will have to wait a little bit - at least for us anyway. League bowling is not cheap, and we just can't make that kind of commitment right now. Besides, a theater bowling league would have to accommodate people in shows! No rehearsals on bowling night, and talk about busying up a person!  
**jamiahsh**YES... THAT, TOO  
**justj**1 day to Wolverine!  
**jamiahsh**And Beyonce in a movie? I did not need to read the post to realize what a talent she is. The former Charles' role must not have been noteworthy. 8 days to Star Trek ;)  
**jamiahsh**I believe we have bandied the theatre bowling league before... yes? Could be a fun game night in any case.  
**justj**Bowling? A bowling league? Theater team? Can I play? Short sentence post?

# You Have Now Entered... THE TWILIGHT ZONE!

It’s unusual for me to blog twice in one day, but hey, today itself has been unusual.Â  First, the swine flu has officially spread to Chicago.Â  Why does that affect me?Â  Because we were planning a trip there this weekend for my nephew’s first birthday party.Â  We were up in the air about going for financial reasons, but we decided to go ahead and do it because we really wanted to.Â  Plus, my grandparents live there, and they are elderly and housebound, so going to Illinois is the only way I can see them and the only way they can see my kids.Â  I hated leaving everyone up in the air until the last minute about our visit (we were waiting to hear about my husband’s business deal – no word yet!), so we just decided to bite the bullet and commit to going.Â  So I called my Grandma and my sister yesterday, and I told my daughter and emailed my mom this morning, and everyone is ecstatic.Â  But now I see that this dreaded swine flu has hit Illinois – especially the counties where we are going to be visiting.Â  I don’t know how big of a deal this is – I mean, it seems as if it will be here in NW Ohio in no time as well, but I don’t know that I want to be the family that brings it!Â  Ok, I shouldn’t joke about it.Â  But with 4 little kids, it is an issue that makes me reconsider our decision.Â  I guess all we can do is wait and see where things with this are on Friday or Saturday when we plan to leave.Â  Darn swine flu!

There were a few other weird things that happened today (surprise 99Â¢ / gallon milk at Walgreens, for one!), but they are just little things, too many and too little to mention.Â  Add them all up, and that’s why I’m making a second post of the day.Â  The other major weird event is this – I got a mysterious letter in the mail today, and I have to say, it scared me.Â  I think I’ve been watching too many stalker movies (blogging about that tomorrow).Â  But this letter had my name on it – just my name, not my husband’s name or The \_\_\_\_\_ Family or anything – just MY name.Â  And it seems to be typewritten, not even printed on a computer – *typewritten*.Â  Seeing a letter in a security envelope with your name and address typewritten on it without a return address is enough to give anyone pause, I think – but I am also a paranoid person.Â  If I had gotten this letter in 2001 during the Anthrax attacks (someone was sending the deadly material Anthrax through the mail, and people were killed), IÂ  definitely wouldn’t have opened it.Â  So anyway, I opened the mysterious letter I got today, and guess what was inside?Â  A thick green piece of paper that turned out to be blank – weird.Â  Even more strange was that there was a Meijer gift card wrapped in the greenÂ  paper.Â  An *activated* gift card – the TO and FROM are blank.

So who sent this?Â  Is it a joke?Â  An anonymous good deed?Â  A scary stalker?Â  I just don’t know…Â  I do appreciate it, if the generous gifter is reading this, I want you to know that I’m thankful, but I’m also a little bit freaked out.Â  It’s just a very strange thing to happen, and I hope to get to the bottom of it, at least so the person can get their deserved “thanks!”.Â  If you or someone you know sent it, maybe drop me a hint…Â  I am thoroughly confused!

### Comments

**derek**I undoubtedly saw the episode, which was why the plotline was vaguely familiar to me. I haven't seen that Bunch in years.  
**jamiahsh**Very good Derek. Someone sent a locket to middle child Jan and the mystery of who sent it came down to a typewriter that dropped its "y"s  
**derek**Brady Bunch?  
**jamiahsh**a typewriter that drops its "y"s (a few comments above) was an important clue in an episode of a television series featuring a live-in maid.  
**taylhis**elaborate on what? I've missed something somewhere... I have to admit I don't know what we're talking about :) I doubt it was the rat people - they don't really look at having pets or getting rid of them the same way most people do. They acted like they were giving us something - which they were, they were free rats and a free cage... but they never go to Toledo either.  
**jamiahsh**Taylhis... your post... can you elaborate?  
**derek**That was some movie Jamiahsh, right? Sounds familiar.  
**jamiahsh**does the font drop its "y"s? If so, do you know any good maids?  
**mary911**I've got it!!! Could it be the rat people? Maybe they felt so guilty for dumping their pets on you that they would maybe pay you for some of your trouble????? Eh, I'm going with the good deed returned thing....from what I hear from all your friends, you are quite worthy.... ;)  
**taylhis**And I'm sure there's a font that replicates typewriter, but the INK just seems so typewriter-ish.  
**jamiahsh**Really? I think I have noticed a streak of generosity from you as well.  
**taylhis**Thank you all for thinking so highly of us... But it was addressed to JUST me, and my husband is usually the ringleader of generosity... I just don't know. If they are reading my blog - THANKS AGAIN! We really appreciate it!!!  
**jamiahsh**GREEN paper? The color of the paper MIGHT be a clue.  
**jamiahsh**I may NOT know who it was but I definitely know who it was NOT  
**justj**Derek I have a daughter getting married, one graduating and a grandchild on the way, do you really think I have any extra money lying around for a gift certificate. Heck we just got them a new microwave. ;) I know it wasn't me, I would send cash....  
**derek**It was you JustJ, just admit it! :D  
**justj**Look what I found.... http://simplythebest.net/fonts/typewriter\_fonts.html  
**justj**Years ago, our family was having a hard time, financially, around Christmas. Someone anonymously sent us $50 in a Christmas card. It was a wonderful gift, and we never found out who sent it. Now with this, I thing Mary has a valid point. You did something nice for someone and they found a way to pay you back. I have a feeling that unless the person/s wants you to find out, you never will. You give so much of yourselves, I don't think there would be many ways to narrow down the search parameters. Hmmm... A mystery! Somebody with access to a typewriter, security envelopes, green paper. Everything on that list is easy to come by, except for maybe the typewriter. I can't remember the last time I saw one. On the technical side, is there a computer font that replicates old typewriters? That expands the field a bit, but could narrow it down to us tech types. I'll have to get my magnifying glass and deerstalker cap out...  
**jamiahsh**very perceptive.  
**mary911**Sometimes I feel I already know all of you....just from reading blogs, crazy!!!! I guess she just seems to be the type of person that would do something good for someone and refuse anything in return.  
**jamiahsh**EXCELLENT pont, Mare. Are you sure you haven't met them before? ;)  
**mary911**Maybe you did something nice for someone and they know you would never accept anything in return from them, so they just decided to send it in the mail. If you find out who it was from, I'll forward you my address to give to them..... ;)  
**jamiahsh**WOW... a mystery. A generous stalker. I have no idea.

# This Economy Stinks!

A few weeks ago, we found out that one of our favorite summer activities will not be an option this year.Â  [The Fun Spot Amusement Park](http://www.funspotpark.com/) in Angola, Indiana will not be opening in 2009.Â  This park was absolutely perfect for a family with kids the ages ours will be this summer: 9, 5, 2, and 1.Â  They have (had) lots of rides for the little ones, as well as zoo animals like tigers, lions, parrots, and deer.Â  They also had a few awesome coasters for Mom and Dad, and we were planning on bringing along a friend or a Manny (man who is a nanny; see some of my previous posts) so we could indulge in some coaster action together, a rarity for us.Â  But alas – Fun Spot is a victim of this bad economy.Â  The message on the home page of their website says it all:Â  “Due to the Economy, Fun Spot Park and Zoo Will Not Be Open For The 2009 Season”.

Where is President Obama?Â  I thought his campaign promises entailed the repairing of the economy?Â  The Fun Spot in Angola was perfect for our family – it was only about 45 minutes away, the price was right –Â  it was only $56 for our entire family to see the zoo and ride the rides and even the waterslides all day.Â  And that was before using any coupons that were always available (they would even offer good grade discounts that allowed our oldest FREE admission!)Â  Compare these prices to Cedar Point, which is 2 hours away AND would cost our entire family $128 for one day, not to mention that Cedar Point is much less targeted to young kids – plus Cedar Point has long lines in which to wait, something that wasn’t a concern at Fun Spot.Â  I can only hope Fun Spot will re-open in 2010 or at least before my kids grow up – we have some amazing family memories of Fun Spot, and I can only hope there will be more to come!

Adding to my angst about losing Fun Spot, I just found out yesterday that Ball Quest in Defiance, Ohio will not be open this season either.Â  Ball Quest had a mini-golf course, a driving range, and batting cages.Â  We had lots of fun there last summer as well, and it was a place we visited often with friends.Â  We even had some batting cage tokens left over!Â  But the sign on the gate of Ball Quest says, “Not open due to increased taxes.Â  Thank County Commissioner Kime”.Â  Ouch – a little bitterness, it seems?Â  Ball Quest was a small family owned business.Â  My friend once showed me the “tea room” they had decorated beautifully in a Victorian motif.Â  I wonder what will happen to gorgeous room and its antique furniture, complete with an antique wooden high chair?Â  I really loved min-golfing at Ball Quest – the course went up a small hill that overlooked beautiful NW Ohio farm fields…Â  and I’m not sure if there are other batting cages nearby!Â  Yet another source of family entertainment – GONE!Â  If they keep going at this rate, we’ll be left with nothing in no time!Â  People complain all the time that families just don’t do as much together as they used to and as they should, but if family entertainment keeps getting shut down, that trend will only continue and increase!Â  Here is a picture of my girls having a blast at Fun Spot last year – their baby brother was to be born only two weeks later.Â  It was over 85Â° that day, and I was physically miserable, but we all still had SO much fun!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/fun-spot-6-27-08-004.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I am bummed too. I was hoping to go back to Fun Spot with you guys.  
**justj**What no Ball Quest!!!! What am I going to do this summer??? Need batting cage...  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I liked Fun Spot, too. A really nice place to take younger ones who are not ready for the Cedar Point day... and cheaper, too. Hopefully, it does not turn into an abandoned park and comes back in the near future.

# Fly On The Wall

“… her wedding – her husband *ruined* my wedding”

guy who was acting like he was undercover overheard at the Verdict

### Comments

# Nightmare On Alumni Street

As has been the trend lately, they are going to remake a popular horror movie from my youth – [Nightmare On Elm Street](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087800/).Â  When the movie came out in 1984, I was too young (and scared) to watch it, but the main character, [Freddy Krueger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freddy_Krueger), was everywhere.Â  Everyone wanted to be Freddy for Halloween, and just his picture was enough to scare me silly.Â  I think even people who don’t like horror movies know who Freddy Krueger is – a burn victim with a hideously scarred face who has knives for fingernails and invades the dreams of his victims.Â  We tried watching Nightmare On Elm Street as adults not too long ago, and it wasn’t scary – it just came across as dumb.Â  So maybe a remake IS in order.Â  I just hope it’s not horrible like Rob Zombie’s Halloween remake.Â  Actually, the Friday the 13th remake wasn’t so great either.Â  I did enjoy the Texas Chainsaw Massacre remake though, and I really liked the remake of My Bloody Valentine – two movies that prove slasher films can be successfully remade.Â  So I hope this Nightmare on Elm Street is on par with the latter two I mentioned.

The reason I’m bringing this up is because I read an article about how they are going to be filming this remake in Chicago, with some scenes being filmed at the high school my husband attended.Â  The students had a surprise assembly on Friday, where they were told that their high school is going to be used to film a movie and that extras would be needed.Â  How cool of an assembly would THAT be?Â  The article mentions that the movie will be out April 16, but it doesn’t specify which year – I’m hoping they mean 2010 because I’m anxious to see it!Â  I just hope they don’t try to do any funky computer stuff for Freddy’s face or glove.Â  I think good old fashioned makeup is sometimes what makes things scarier!Â  [Here is the article about the choosing of the high schools](http://www.dailyherald.com/story/?id=289286).Â  And just for fun, here is the trailer from the original Nightmare on Elm Street:

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 don't normally watch horror/slasher films, but I may have to make an exception when this is released.  
**derek**I didn't have to check a box to post- are you talking about the one at the bottom about emailing when there are new comments? I never cared about that option. Just so you all know, horror anti-buff that I am, I did used to watch them including the original Nightmare movies, though I stopped for the most part before New Nightmare came out.  
**derek**I just finished yesterday's paper and I didn't see this article. Pretty neat for the kids at those schools. I'll be at the middle school down the street from C's alma mater tomorrow.  
**taylhis**Maybe the other HS has a pool - that's why they're using two? I think it IS 2010 - the blurb on imdb mentions 2010. And I don't find myself needing to check the box multiple times - once I am subscribed, I stay subscribed, I think! I hate when I accidentally subscribe to my own posts - then I get TWO emails for each comment!  
**jamiahsh**I would imagine that it means 2010. I don't think movies of this type and budget take long to produce. Interesting that Hersey (reportedly) does not have a pool which is necessary for the movie. But that would be awesome.  
**jamiahsh**Why do we have to check the box every time we post a new comment on each post... annoying esp. when you forget to check it.  
**jamiahsh**Nightmare was the first horror movie I ever saw on cable tv. I don't remember if I was excited, scared, or excitedly scared with anticipation. I do remember liking it a lot... maybe lost a few nights over it. However, I too think it has aged badly. The series progressively became campy and Wes Craven himself was not pleased with the path it took. I did "kind of" like Craven's New Nightmare in which the actors of the original returned as themselves. I remember reading that the new movie was going to be shot in Chicagoland. Perhaps another guided tour through the landmarks will be in order at least one, anyway.

# This Swine Flu Business

I’ve been a bit of a hypochondriac for as long as I can remember.Â  My parents had a big thick medical book at their house when I was growing up – that’s where I learned about a condition called Black Hairy Tongue, and the book had a photo of it, it’s self-explanatory.Â  I would always look through this medical book, mostly to use the self-diagnosis charts.Â  As a kid, I diagnosed myself with everything from thrombosis to cancer.Â  So it really shouldn’t come as a surprise that I’m pondering the illness I had last week as a case of the “it” illness of the moment – the swine flu.Â  Never mind that no cases have been reported in my state yet; I think I may have had the swine flu.Â  I’ve never had a stomach illness that lasted 6 days before last week (those are usually 24-48 hour deals), and it was accompanied by a sore throat, runny nose, body aches and a scratchy voice (though I did enjoy singing with my scratchy voice – it gave me a whole new sound).Â  I thought I got hit with two viruses at the same time, but maybe it was all one nasty thing.Â  I’m half-joking here, I don’t really think I had the swine flu – but it did cross my mind.Â  I don’t understand though why it’s been all over the media lately.Â  What makes this flu any different or worse than the others?Â  I do know that it’s spreading at a rapid rate – this morning there were 20 confirmed cases in the United States, and now we’re at 40 as I write this.Â  But then again, can’t it be said that most cases of the flu are extremely contagious?Â  The media is treating this swine flu as if it’s the next Bubonic Plague.Â  Remember the bird flu and SARS?Â  Those are two illnesses that were expected to be pandemics, but I don’t think either one was nearly as bad as the media was making them out to be.

Whatever it was that I had last week, I’m happy to report that I’m over it, and I think I got the worst of it pertaining to my other family members.Â  My stomach hurt so bad; I couldn’t imagine my poor little babies dealing with that!Â  And hey, if it was the swine flu I had, then that means that I am now immune to it since I’ve already had it, right?

### Comments

**Lynn**How do I set up my own blog on this site and become a member?? I can't figure it out!  
**mary911**I'm glad you're feeling better! It sucks being sick. Lorraine County had one reported case in Ohio. It was a young schoolage boy whose parents took him on vacation to Mexico. They took him to several farms....must have had pigs. He's doing quite well, and the schools have closed down for a period until the threat of spreading is over with. I think it was Lorraine County, anyway.....I heard it this morning on the Defiance radio station, and I was only half awake.... ;)

# A College Student Could Have Done Better

Recently a fellow blogger mentioned a dorm fire at the university where his youngest daughter is to attend.Â  While I’m sure that much was learned from that particular tragedy in order to safeguard future students, it gave me a flashback to my own college days when there was a fire in the dorm where my friends lived.Â  That particular dorm building was 28 stories high, and I was hanging out somewhere around the 25th floor on the night when the fire alarm went off.Â  Obviously, we couldn’t use the elevators to evacuate the rather large building, so we had to use the stairwells.Â  I remember that after descending flight after flight of stairs, the monotony of the flights started to mess with my head a little bit, and by the end, it became difficult to even move my legs in the motion to go down the stairs – maybe a testament to just one of the challenges faced by those in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001?Â  Luckily in our case, however, the fire was not threatening to our welfare, and we all made it out of the building safely.Â  When we got out, we gathered around to watch the flames being extinguished – and much to our surprise, the flames were licking the part of the building where some of my best friends lived.Â  Turns out, the fire had started in my friends’ room (not where I was hanging out that particular night) and demolished it.Â  The couch where I had crashed many a night had turned to just ash and a metal frame.Â  I found it interesting that the firemen gave us a walk-thru of the room afterward – apparently something they do on college campuses?Â  They taught us about the ‘flashpoint’, where the fire must have started and how hot it was there, and they also pointed out various objects from around the room and explained the temperatures it must have been in the room for the fire to have that effect upon that particular object, etc.Â  – very informative!Â  So anyway, the point of this post is **that** building – it’s called Watterson Towers, and it’s located at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois.Â  Not the pertiest thing, ain’t it?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/watterson3.jpg)

First off, the thing is HUGE; it houses 2200 students.Â  Illinois State University is a college campus located amongst farm fields in central Illinois – a far cry from Chicago – and Watterson Towers is the highest building between St. Louis and Chicago – a distance of nearly 300 miles.Â  Also, the design of the structure is…Â  well, it’s bizarre –Â  for lack of a better adjective.Â  I think a college student could have done better at designing a building, hence the title of my blog post.Â  It has been rumored that the [designer of Watterson Towers committed suicide](http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080222172228AAaexZG), but I’m not sure if this is true or not.Â  Click on the link I supplied above to read more about this – someone asked if the designer committed suicide because he thought the towers would eventually collapse, and the person who asked the question mentions that firefighters told them that if there were a fire at Watterson, students wouldn’t make it out alive – go figure since I and hundreds of others are proof that that theory didn’t pan out – thank goodness!Â  Obviously those rumors are overblown, at least some of them, cuz I can’t find any info about the designer or his fate.Â  But the bottom line is, it **is** a very strange design for a building, especially one that is to house college students.Â  Sadly, more than a few students have jumped from the windows of Watterson over the years to escape the pressure that college students often needlessly feel.

More than a decade after residing in Watterson, it’s still interesting for me to research the building and its design.Â  It’s amazing to me to remember that college kids used to get up early to stand in a line reminiscent of heavily-sought after concert tickets to get a room in Watterson.Â  Seems like any of the other dorms on campus would have been much safer and cheaper, for that matter…Â  But WattersonÂ  was where it was at – at least when I was in school.Â  It was the most centrally located dorm, and it had the largest rooms by far.Â  I can understand how space would be an issue when you are rooming with someone (or multiple people, as could be the case in Watterson’s huge rooms) you might never have met.Â  So anyway, here is the breakdown of the design of Watterson – it is almost maze-like when you’re inside, and I still think a college student could do better at the design part!Â  Just imagine Move- In day!Â  2200 students, all their stuff, and their parents!Â  And remember, it’s a 28-story building, but there are only FIVE elevator stops – and if your student does not reside onÂ  an “elevator floor”, you must carry their stuff up or down flights of stairs to reach their rooms!Â  To those who are uninformed of Watterson’s design, Moving Day must play out like a cruel joke!

From Wikipedia.com:

*Watterson is composed of 10 houses, each considered its own residence hall. The houses are named after the first ten men to hold the office of United States Secretary of State. The entire building is divided into two towers. Each tower is divided into five houses. Each house is divided into five floors. Each floor divided into four suites, except on the third floor, which is divided into two suites for elevator access. In the North Tower, the houses, from bottom to top, are Jefferson House, Randolph House, Pickering House, Marshall House and Madison House. In the South Tower, bottom to top, the houses are Smith House, Monroe House, Adams House, Clay House, and Van Buren House. The houses are located across from each other, joined by a breezeway only on the third floor of the houses.*

*The building’s unique design prevents it from having full elevator service. Of the 8 elevators that operate in the building, there is a maximum of nine stops, eight of which students have access to (maintenance level is for staff only): Service Level, Formal (Lobby) Level, Smith-Jefferson Breezeway, Monroe-Randolph Breezeway, Adams-Pickering Breezeway, Marshall-Clay Breezeway, Madison-Van Buren Breezeway and the Informal Level. Each breezeway level is the third floor of each house. A resident who lived on Clay 4 would stop at the Marshall-Clay Breezeway and then need to walk up one flight of stairs to reach his room.*

And that’s the simplest of the directions…Â  if a student was assigned to Randolph 1, he or she would have to get off at the Monroe-Randoph elevator stop, then walk the breezeway, then descend the two flights of stairs until they got to Randolph 1…Â  it seems that ISU should have offered a degree just for those who figured out the navigation of Watterson Towers!Â  And oh yeah, I forgot to mention that Watterson’s elevators were notorious for breaking down!Â  In the two years that I attended Illinois State, I got stuck in the Watterson elevators *twice* myself and heard of **many**others who met the same fate!Â  I wonder if they’ve fixed any of the problems plaguing that building in the last 10-15 years?

### Comments

**taylhis**Sharon, I'm not sure what year. It was 1996 or 1997 when the couch started on fire in the dorm room and destroyed the room, and before that when the couch was set on fire and put in the elevator. Thanks for your comment!  
**Sharon**What year did this happen? (Where the couch was set on fire and put into the elevator in Watterson Towers?)  
**taylhis**Hello John Torrio, thanks for commenting on my blog! I don't know how many flights I walked down that night, though it seemed like a long way down as I was smelling the smoke and wondering about the safety of the many people I knew that resided in the building. I used to live on the 10th floor of Hewett, and for exercise I would run up the stairs to my room. It felt like strenuous exercise at the time, but nothing compared to doing the 28 stories in Watterson - did you do it once or as a regular exercise routine?  
**John Torrio**Wow, you walked down how many flights? Poor you. I actually jogged up all 28 stories back in 1983. I think young people were in better shape back then, and they whined a helluva lot less.  
**jamiahsh**Strangely, I seem to recall hearing about that, too. hmmm....  
**Phyllis Beyer**I remember moving you into that dorm. It was a nightmare. However, if I remember correctly, you didn't stay there the full year (of course, I wasn't supposed to know that).  
**derek**NIU has some towers too, but I'm sure they have \*nothing\* on Watterson! Say, isn't that the last name of the Calvin & Hobbes cartoonist?  
**jamiahsh**WOW... I got dizzy just reading the post. Can't imagine walking down that many flights of stairs.  
**taylhis**Ah, si si, oui oui! Poor Jeff!  
**Chris**And that friend's dorm who burned... The same guy that "invited" (err.. DRAGGED!) me to the party where I met the beautiful author of this blog. :-)

# Foogle

I guess I will file this post under the category – “cool internet stuff” even though it doesn’t yet exist.Â  It’s about an idea I had…Â  now watch, in a few months, someone will steal this idea and do it – but you saw it here first!

The idea is for a food search engine – you enter the zip code and the type of dish, and the search engine lists restaurants with reviews on the selected dish.Â  Simple!Â  I would call it “Foogle”.Â  I thought of this when we traveled to New York city a month ago, and I was looking for restaurants near our hotel that had great eggs benedict and awesome saganaki – two of my favorite dishes.Â  I did find someone’s website who travels the country and reviews eggs benedict, and he was very thorough, it was pretty cool.Â  But I would like to use my “foogle” idea every time I travel – the zip code lookup feature would be so convenient!Â  I would use it on vacation or just in the local cities we often travel to like Fort Wayne or Toledo.Â  I realize this would be a challenging endeavor to keep up with the ever-changing restaurant business, especially in this economy.Â  Places would be constantly coming and going, changing their prices, menu selection, and recipes.Â  But if you build it, I will come!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**one on Coldwater in Ft Wayne (Tizio's)... close to Glenbrook Mall and a place called Diaggio's in Holland (near Toledo). Good Italian sounding names.  
**jamiahsh**how about some gelatoooooo

# New York Trip Diary - Volume 7... Nah, Forget It

I forgot to mention something in my New York Trip Diary, but it’s just a little thing – no need to make an entire volume of it.Â  I was just going to talk about how much my husband and I enjoyed seeing the Empire State Building.Â  We didn’t go up into it, but we passed by right next to it while riding a bus, and of course we also saw it looming over the NY skyline since it is once again New York’s tallest building after the collapse of the World Trade Center.Â  The Empire State Building actually wasn’t quite as tall as I would have thought, but the architecture is what I noticed.Â  The building has limestone panels on the outside, and it looked much different than the steel skyscrapers (like the Sears Tower and the John Hancock building) I am used to being a native Chicagoan.Â  The Empire State Building was completed in 1931 after only 410 days of construction.Â  It was finished during the worst of the Great Depression, and as a result, no one wanted to rent office space for its first few years of existence – leading to its nickname, “The Empty State Building”.Â  Five people were killed in its construction; including a worker who committed suicide because he was laid off.Â  In a macabre example of foreshadowing for the city of New York, the Empire State Building was hit by an airplane in 1945.Â  The crash happened between the 79th and 80th floors and killed 14 people.Â  One of the plane’s engines shot through the building and out the other side, where it landed a block away on the roof of a building and started a fire.Â  The Empire State Building’s elevator operator survived a fall of 75 stories inside the elevator and her record for ‘longest survived fall in an elevator’ still exists today.Â  Here is a picture of the accident:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/empire-state-building.jpg)

So anyway, fascinating building with a lot of history.Â  I just found it really cool to see an old-school skyscraper up close!

And since we were on the subject of the Sears Tower earlier, here is a video of lightning striking it – which I understand happens pretty often.Â  If only they could harness that energy for human consumption…

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**Ok... I see, he filmed a promotional shot for the series. Apparently, a show I don't have time for and glad for it!  
**jamiahsh**I read it in ther paper tonight, but was a bit confused... something about him being filmed in front of a green sceen with his hair being blown around.  
**taylhis**YES! Saw a clip of him on a morning show - thanking the judge who said he couldn't travel to Costa Rica for saving him from eating bugs. Yeah, right! I think he's full of it! I can't believe that show is still on!  
**derek**Last I heard the judge said no. Has that changed? I'm a day behind on the news.  
**jamiahsh**speaking of clips... has anyone heard about the disgraced Illinois politician who is going to be seen on some reality show?  
**derek**I just read where the producers blew a chance to earn money off of that clip too by arguing ad terms with Google for the past week. :D  
**Taylhis**Good to know. I was worried that all videos on youtube were getting stingy about embedding ever since I tried to embed the Susan Boyle video - but I think it was just because that clip was property of a tv show.  
**derek**Hmm. Working again. Seeing that it was affecting my page as well I disabled adblock, restarted Firefox and it worked. I re-enabled adblock and planned to tweak its settings- restarted Firefox again, and it still worked- no tweaking necessary. Just a browser glitch then.  
**derek**Hmm. It works in IE but not Firefox... I wonder if something changed to affect it- I'll see if past videos I have posted myself work.  
**Taylhis**Hmmm, the youtube video works on my comp, what's up with that? And I know what you mean. Although I don't much talk about Comisky Park, whenever we pass by, I call it the Rosemont Horizon. Good to hear that it happens even to locals.  
**derek**Youtube video no workie, but adblock left a tab so I could at least see the youtube link to go to it manually. Of course you meant the [Willis Tower](http://archives.chicagotribune.com/2009/mar/12/business/chi-biz-sears-tower-name-change-willis-march12) when you said Sears Tower... It will always be Sears Tower to me though, just like we still have Rosemont Horizon and Cominskey Park (I didn't mention the team, just the field!). 8^)  
**jamiahsh**Wow... and I thought you were going to enlighten us with a forgotten adventure. I loved the view from the ESB on my previous trips to the city... breathtaking. But don't think we would have been able to take the trip this time. I have also heard that the Sears Tower is a veritable lightning rod

# Flat Stanley To The Rescue!

The other day I got an email from my friend about an unusual request she had.Â  I found the email quite amusing, so I’ll share it:

*Hi Lisa!Â  I have a big favor to ask.Â  Can I borrow Disney & Christopher for a photo?*

*It’s a long story — My grandson Ben colored a “Flat Stanley” – do you know about him?*

*BenÂ sent Flat Stanley to me, and I have to send him back along with a story of adventures Stanley had while he was here.Â  – This is a school project.*

*Well, I got it all done and ready to send back when I realized that Stanley didn’t really have any adventures – just played with the cat, went to imagination station, went to Walmart – pretty boring stuff.Â  And my grandson colored him as if he was a superhero!*

*So now I want to get him out of the envelope, come up with a superhero type adventure, and getÂ one moreÂ photo before I send him back today.*

*If I can get a picture of the kids holding Stanley and cheering for his having saved their lives, it would make my day as well as Ben’s!*

*They don’t have to be cleaned up or in good clothes or anything – just everyday cute Disney & Christopher!*

*If this is ok with you, let me know when to come.Â  We can do it right there outside your house.*

*Thanks!*

So my friend came over, and we posed the kids with Flat Stanley and even threw in the parrot to make his adventures more exotic.Â  Here is the result:

*Dear Ben,*

*Thank you for sending Flat Stanley to stay with me for a few days.Â  We had a nice time together!  
The first day, Stanley played with Peanut, and then after lunch took a nap with him.Â  Later, we went to Imagination Station where Stanley climbed everywhere, and took a tumble on the highest level!Â  That night, he slept in the bed in the guest room where your parents sleep when all of you come to visit.Â  He had plenty of room!  
The second day, Stanley climbed a tree in my back yard.Â  He chased the squirrels up and down the trees, but they were much faster runners and tree climbers!*

*Later, we took a walk and had a real adventure!Â  We saw a baby who had fallen near the street, and his sister was crying because she couldn’t pick him up.Â  Suddenly, a huge brightly colored bird came swooping down toward the baby!*

*Stanley, being in his superhero costume, knew just what to do!Â  He jumped up and blocked the bird away from the baby, scooped him up and carried him to the steps of their house.Â  The sister was so happy that her little brother was ok, and their mother came running.Â  She was so grateful to Flat Stanley!*

*On the last day here, we went to Wal Mart to get these pictures developed.Â  I know Stanley had fun while he was here, but he was glad to be folded into his envelope for the trip back home.Â  I’ll bet you were glad to see him too!*

*Love, Grandma*

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/flat-stanley-pics-4-21-09-002.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/flat-stanley-pics-4-21-09-003.jpg)

The picture quality isn’t very good because those are actually pictures of pictures – my friend gave me printed pictures, and I don’t know how to use our scanner.Â  Needless to say (before you call the child welfare people on me), much of the drama in the story was added for the purpose of Flat Stanley having had an adventure – he was dressed as a superhero, after all!Â  But I just got a big kick out of the entire episode and thought it would make for some cute blogging material.Â  I had heard of Flat Stanley before, how about you?Â  Any Flat Stanley adventures you’d like to share?

### Comments

**taylhis**He's a paper character that children color and send to friends or relatives for adventures that they can tell about in their classes. Taylor never did Flat Stanley, so maybe the others won't either, and we'll never have direct contact with him.  
**derek**No adventures, but I did learn about Stan in teacher college. I haven't met him since.  
**mary911**Yes, I was the recipient of Flat Stanley last year by my then 9 yr old niece. I took him to work with me and we made paper handcuffs for him and took a picture of him in the back of a police car. I also put him in my chair at work and made it look like he was answering the 911 phone. It was quite an experience and everyone at work had a fun time. Of course some of the pictures taken were quite inappropriate, and those will never be seen by my niece!!! Shelby did like the picture of Flat Stanley eating a doughnut with the guys in the office....so typical of cops, you know... ;)  
**jamiahsh**I have heard of Flat Stanley but no stories to share. Almost sounds like a paper Mr. Bill?

# I Smell A Rat...

Make that 4 rats.Â  We now have 4 pet rats.Â  How did that happen, you ask?Â  A bit of mistaken identity when they were picked out at the pet store resulted in rat babies?Â  No, all 4 are male – I don’t think there’s any mistaking that.Â  What happened is this…

We got our two pet rats, and the kids’ friends decided they wanted pet rats.Â  This family has a history of obtaining and disposing of pets at a record rate.Â  It bugs the heck out of me, but I don’t want to say anything to them and step over the boundary ofÂ  telling people how to raise their kids.Â  We took a cat they decided they didn’t want anymore, but we had to give it back because our dog was constantly trying to eat her and I was more allergic to that cat than I am to most cats.Â  So anyway, this family is notorious for getting pets and then “getting rid” of them when they’re tired of them, want new pets, or just plain can’t take care of them anymore.Â  To a degree, circumstances like these are understandable.Â  We had to “get rid” of a dog because she bit my daughter inÂ  the face – understandable that we can’t have a dog in the house who bites kids when we have 4 kids.Â  Getting “rid of her” upset me at the time, but I also knew there was no choice.Â  I’m putting “get rid” in quotes because it’s a term I don’t like to use about pets.Â  I don’t like to think that this is something people should regularly do with animals.Â  I’m a firm believer in pets being commitments – you must keep them until they pass away (extenuating circumstances don’t count – stuff happens sometimes, but not to EVERY pet, as in the case with this family).Â  You need to do all the research about care before you obtain the pet; such as cleaning up after it and how much it will cost to feed it – which is why our daughter’s friend’s family needed to “get rid” of their rats.

It was a fine line to walk.Â  I don’t want to encourage these people to get more pets by taking their leftovers, but on the other hand, I’m an animal lover, and I can onlyÂ  imagine what would happen to unwanted rats (snake food, turned loose in a field = hawk or cat or coyote food, etc).Â  Besides, my kids have been just GREAT about caring for their pet rats.Â  I barely know the rats are in the house, except when I actually have time to play with them, which is exactly how I wanted it.Â  The girls feed and water their rats, clean the cage weekly, and play with them and give them exercise daily.Â  So how could I say no to getting their friends’ rats and yes to sending them to certain doom?

So, yes, we now have 4 rats in the house.Â  Please don’t start calling me ‘crazy rat lady'; it wasn’t entirely my fault; I was just trying to help!Â  Here are the new additions – Buckeye and well, I can’t remember his name, so here is Buckeye and what’s his name (his head is barely visible underneath Buckeye – he looks just like Oreo, one of our original rats).

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/our-4-rats-0021.jpg)

And while I’m at it, here are our original rats, Oreo and Bobby Jack:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/our-4-rats-001.jpg)

My Bookshelf O’ Rats – just what I’ve always wanted 

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/our-4-rats-004.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Buckeye and Well (at least it isn't Wolverine)  
**mary911**Rats, huh? Hm, I don't know how I feel about rats. I have had nightmares involving them, and I just don't know how I would handle being face to face with one, let alone 4. Good for you though, for taking on the extra responsibility. I'm sure your kids think you are the coolest!!!  
**jamiahsh**Totally agree, circumstances arose that caused you to find different arrangements for your previous pet... anyone could understand that. But if someone is not willing to devote the time necessary to a pet then they should not get them... not good for the pet, most of all.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I'm so proud of you. Being a true animal lover is in your blood. And I'm glad the girls are doing their part with the pet rats.  
**derek**Definitely no cats allowed now. :)  
**justj**Now all you need is a chinchilla or 6. ;)

# The Clinic - A Preview

As you may or may not know, my husband – the almighty admin – wrote a play called “The Clinic”.Â  We spent last Saturday turning it into a short film.Â  Here is a teaser…

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

**derek**Pretty cool. :)  
**jamiahsh**Yes, but the end result will be spectacular!  
**taylhis**We still have another day of shooting and much post-production work ahead before the film is finished.  
**Phyllis Beyer**How can we see the whole thing?

# ALS Is An Awful Disease

Well, ok, what disease is NOT awful?Â  But ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease) robs a person of his or her motor skills and leaves their mind intact.Â  So essentially, ALS victims are imprisoned in their own body.Â  And ALS often strikes at a young age, and most people struggle with it for less than 3 years before it takes their life.Â  We watched my husband’s father struggle with it for over 2 years.Â  We watched as it robbed him of his ability to walk, talk, eat and pretty much everything else.Â  He passed away very peacefully, a week before Christmas.Â  We were all in the room with him, and a hospital volunteer was playing Silent Night on the harp as he passed.Â  It was beautiful, but it’s still hard for me to hear that song.Â  The reason I’m bringing this up is because the most famous victim of ALS, besides Lou Gehrig himself, is Stephen Hawking, and I was sorry to read in the news today that he is very ill.

Stephen Hawking is a brilliant scientist and an inspirational man – he has lived with ALS for over 40 years.Â  Lou Gehrig had it for nearly two years before he died at the age of 37.Â  Gehrig’s was a New York Yankees player, and he was forced to retire when he was diagnosed with ALS.Â  His record of most career grand slams still holds at 23 today!Â  We watched The Pride of the Yankees (which tells the story of Lou Gehrig) with my father-in-law after his diagnosis, and that was tough.Â  Same thing with Tuesdays With Morrie…Â  why did my father-in-law want to do that to himself?Â  To get a better grip on what was happening to him, maybe?Â  I don’t know.

My father-in-law was a remarkable man.Â  He had the biggest heart of anyone I’ve ever known, second only to my husband.Â  He was kind, generous, smart, and funny.Â  He knew a lot about everything; especially movies and religion – he had the Bible practically memorized.Â  One of my favorite memories of him was when we took him to the zoo.Â  It was after the ALS had already taken hold of his body, but his humor was still intact.Â  As we were wheeling his wheelchair over a bumpy bridge at the zoo, he said, “Ahhhh” – not because the ALS had taken away his speech (it hadn’t yet) but because it was a bumpy ride and he was jokingly letting the bumps affect his voice.Â  He was taken from us too soon; I wonder what he would have thought of having 7 grandchildren?Â  He’s been gone longer than I knew him now – over 8 years.Â  His funeral was on our oldest daughter’s first birthday.Â  But anyway…Â  I don’t know why I’m going into all of this now.Â  Let’s pray for Stephen Hawking.Â  ALS is a terrible disease.

### Comments

**Gebruikend Vensters leeft Verre Assisstance, kan ik iemand gebruikend XP als im gebruikend Uitzicht helpen? | Windows XP Repair**[...] ALS Is An Awful Disease | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**Windows Installer-fout elke keer als ik een nieuw venster openen? | Windows XP Repair**[...] ALS Is An Awful Disease | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**mary911**It's good to remember those that have passed. It's all those good memories that keep them still alive in you. I did not realize either that Hawking had ALS. What a strong person that man is. I pray he finds peace.  
**jamiahsh**I wish I had had the opportunity tho meet C's father but I don't think I really need to seeing the remarkable man he helped to raise is the next best thing. I remember seeing Professor Hawking on an episode of The Next Generation and could imagine the brilliance inside that frail body in the wheelchair. And I have seen Gary Cooper in Pride of the Yankees several times... great movie. I dunno.. perhaps it WAS his way of coming to grips with the disease. Indeed, what a horrible disease striking so many in their prime.  
**derek**...with **his** now infamous speech... I hate when I make typos...  
**derek**Hmm. I think we all know about Hawking being wheelchair bound with is now infamous speech vocoder, but I guess I never looked into it enough to know it was ALS that had him in that wheelchair. And of course I remember C's dad. One of the memories I have of him is standing outside watering the lawn. My mother and I were driving down the road and she commented about how silly it was for him to be watering the lawn with a hose, not knowing who he was. I said I would tell C what she thought of his dad [what he was doing that is]...

# I'm Grounded

I will spare you the details, but apparently I’ve caught some sort of stomach virus (and it causes stomach pain – OUCH!).Â  Of course, I can’t call in sick to my job as a SAHM (stay at home mom), and just my luck that my husband has work today, so I’m stuck with the two little ones.Â  Actually, they’re stuck with me – I don’t feel well enough to go to Walmart or to take them anywhere else, so I can’t even kill time that way – I’m grounded.Â  And I do need to go to Walmart – I’ve already endured one tantrum about our lack of fruit loops.Â  I don’t think I could handle another one.Â  Is there fruit loops delivery?Â  I actually *want* to go to Walmart – like I said, it would kill the time anyway.Â  At least I can blog like a maniac right now while the baby is napping.Â  When he wakes up, I will be at his mercy.Â  He gets really bored around the house and wants to be held all the time.Â  But when I hold him, he just wants to grab things he shouldn’t and bang on my computer keyboard.Â  I guess I might say I’m bored.Â  It’s not that I have nothing to do; there are always blog posts to write (I’m sitting on 14 drafts right now!), newspapers from weeks ago to read, thank you notes and birthday party invitations to write, a messy house to clean, laundry to do, an anniversary photo album to put together…Â  it’s just that I don’t feel like doing any of that.Â  Or feel like doing much of anything, for that matter.Â  I guess I’ll sit here and watch Dora the Explorer all day.Â  I’m getting hungry, but I’m scared to eat anything because of my stomach.Â  I have a meeting I’d really like to get to later…Â  sigh.Â  Being sick sucks.Â  I hope I feel better for date day tomorrow!!!

### Comments

**mary911**That's a good thing! Glad to hear you're up and about. At least it's been raining the last two days. You'll be all better by the time the nice weather gets here this week!!! :)  
**Taylhis**I am feeling better, thanks. Not near 100%, but at least the stomach ache is not as painful and not constant anymore. I am happy to be up and about today!  
**mary911**Feeling better?  
**taylhis**And apparently there IS fruit loops delivery :)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Hope you feel better soon. I remember those days. It really stinks to not feel good and still have to do your job.  
**derek**Hope you feel better soon!

# Busiest Weekend EVER! Part Two

*(continued from a previous blog post)*

So here’s a recap of Sunday – church, brunch, Hannah Montana movie – and that is where I left off.

So we get to the Hannah Montana movie, and of course our 9-month-old son wakes up from his nap just in time for the movie (couldn’t be awake to play at church, couldn’t be awake to indulge in brunch, alas – that’s always the way when you have kids – they sleep thru everything good, and I swear it’s a rule – they always wake when the irony is thick!)Â  But, because the Hannah Montana movie is a musical, our 3 youngest were kept too busy to perform their usual awful antics at the movie theater.Â  It was a girly movie, especially with a double love story plot, but our little boy is only 9-months-old, so he didn’t notice the girlishness.Â  Instead he loved the musical interludes, and he clapped to each one enthusiastically.Â  For some reason, and I’ve written about this before, the movie theater turns our normally sweet 2-year-old into a little stripper.Â  Luckily, by the time the idea to take her clothes off occurred to her today, it was near the end of the movie, so she only got as far as taking off her socks and shoes – although she did make sure to note (yell) while doing so, “Don’t look at me – I take clothes off!”Â  Ok, Disney, if you don’t want people looking, why are you taking your clothes off?Â  Such is the logic of a 2-year-old, I guess.  
We had no major spills this time ( I’m referring to our last experience when we saw Monsters Vs. Aliens and we somehow dumped an entire soft drink into the lady’s purse who was sitting behind us – major oops!), and today our baby was on his best behavior as well because of all the music in the movie – something that I think saved us as far as our 3 youngest kids’ behavior at the movies today.Â  As for the movie itself, I enjoyed it more than I did Monsters Vs. Aliens, probably because I actually got to watch this one.Â  But an extra nice surprise for me was the country music add-ins – surprise performances from Taylor Swift and my favorite group, Rascall Flatts.Â  They sang one of their best songs acoustically as if they were relatives just sitting around jamming at a family get-together (can this be MY family get-together?), and it was thoroughly enjoyable.Â  Miley Cyrus evenÂ  showed her country roots in a song which attempts to revive line-dancing; I guess kids these days (now I sound like I’m 80 – GREAT, when did THAT happen?!?) have a dance they do to this song, but whatever, I kind of liked the song.Â  Overall, I truly enjoyed the country theme that was abundant in this movie – groovin’ country music, gorgeous farm fields, cowboys ropin’ horses…Â  what’s not to like?Â  There was also a surprise (for me) appearance by Jan Levinson Gould from the tv show, The Office.Â  Of course in this movie, she wasn’t Jan – she was some southern belle who played Miley’s dad’s love interest – almost as far away from Jan as one could be, but I still enjoyed the Office reference.Â  Also, keep in mind that this is a Disney film, so there are LOTS of prat-fallish types of humor, as well as recurring movie themes.Â  For example, ‘lobster trouble’ (ala Splash, circa 1984), ‘switching identities for different dinner dates’ (ala Mrs. Doubtfire, circa 1993), ‘major celebrity comes in to save a town’ (ala Wayne’s World 2, circa 1993 or ala Mystery, Alaska circa 1999), it’s always best to be yourself’ (ala…Â  wow, WAY TOO MANY TO MENTION – take your pick…)

So anyway, I have to (reluctantly) admit that I was pleasantly surprised with the Hannah Montana movie – plenty of stuff in this one for the parents as well as the tweens and even the stripping two-year-olds.Â  But the movie wasn’t as plot-less as I had hoped –Â  in other words, we didn’t get home until 2:55 – just 20 short minutes before we had to leave for a class we had signed up for through church.Â  So for the next 20 minutes we scrambled around – letting dogs out, repacking diaper bags, changing diapers, etc.Â  We arrived at our class pretty much on time, though a bit exhausted, thank you very much!

The class was great!Â  We learned a lot about our church – their beliefs, their history, as well as their foundations for building a relationship with Christ – a very well-spent 3 hours.Â  And we got to meet other couples at our table too – which is memorable for me because they were surprised to learn we had 4 kids – and I quote, “You don’t look old enough to have 4 kids!”Â  NICE!

Following the class was a great dinner of homemade pasta provided by a local chef.Â  Following the delicious dinner was a tour of the north campus of our church – we worship in the south campus, so it was nice to learn the ins and outs of the north campus – so awesome!Â  Our oldest daughter was so excited to show us where her Sunday school was held, and their rooms for youth were VERY impressive!Â  There was a room with a stage for youth productions, and it evenÂ  had backstage areas, which is almost more than I can say for one of our community theater’s stages, haha!Â  Also, there was a game room with multiple foosball tables and ‘carpet ball’ – something new to me, but a game I’d definitely like to try!Â  One of the youth rooms had state-of-the-art stage lights and restaurant-style booths for kids to ‘hang out’ in…Â  Overall, it was a fun evening, and I learned a lot.Â  But, as became common for today, we had to rush from the church class in order to be home in time for the community theater’s play reading committee meeting and my much anticipated Cubs game.Â  I was looking forward to this game for days.Â  It was a long series (most are 3 game, some are 2 game, this one was 4 game) against the Cubs rival – the St. Louis Cardinals, with whom the Cubs are vying for first place.Â  The game was at night, which is rare for a Sunday, so I was VERY excited about rounding out my weekend with such a game.Â  But alas, the darn rain had its way, and the game was postponed.Â  So only play reading meeting to look forward to for me – at least I didn’t have to rush the meeting and kick people too hard to leave my house since there was no Cub’s game!Â  And for once, I think we actually achieved a lot at the play reading committee meeting.Â  Probably because of the fact that there were only 4 of us in attendance – but hey, maybe that ‘s what needs to be done in order to achieve something…Â  too many people get in each others way, I guess.Â  It will be interesting to see what the absent members think of the decisions the four of us made while they were absent – I hope the decisions stick!

In summary, a great, if extremely exhausting weekend.Â  Come on now, would I have it any other way?

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**WOW! There is no way I could keep up a pace like that even when I was younger. Good for you. Sounds like you have found a good church for your family. I'll see it when Christopher is dedicated, if not before.  
**derek**Wow- you \*were\* busy. Carpetball and foosball? Add a couple of air hockey tables and it sounds like our 4th/5th grade room at church. I do believe I mentioned it last year- ah, here it is: [They're lovin' it!](http://sublife.tangents.org/2008/11/02/theyre-lovin-it/)

# Busiest Weekend EVER!

Whew!!!Â  It’s Sunday night – the finale of what just might be our busiest weekend ever!

Friday night we stayed up late to tie up loose ends and organize our film shoot scheduled for Saturday.Â  Christopher,Â  our 9-month-old, has decided to start waking up in the middle of the night again, so despite our best efforts (and going to bed early didn’t work out either since there was SO much work to do for the film shoot), we did not achieve the much-needed good night’s sleep on Friday night after not getting very much sleep Thursday night either.Â  Saturday we were up bright and early to take the kids 20 miles into the country to their new babysitter – our regular babysitter had stopped doing weekends some time ago, and it finally became time to find a weekend babysitter.Â  I know what you’re thinking –Â  a new babysitter in a different town = scary!Â  But of course we had met with her beforehand, and we liked what we saw.Â  Not only that, but she lives in a very small town, and her husband’s a teacher (so he had an established reputation, and also would need to protect it) AND she is a friend of a very good friend – ie, she had awesome references that checked out, and when it was all said and done, the kids had a GREAT time over there.Â  As for us, we had a VERY busy day trying to shoot our “short” film.Â  I put ‘short’ into quotes because the short film took so LONG to film – at least in some of the cast members’ opinions.Â  I actually thought the shoot went quite well, considering certain factors.Â  But the bottom line is, it was a heck of a lot different than doing live theater (how didn’t some of us see THAT coming – it seems obvious that film and stage would be like comparing apples and oranges), and we did not wrap all of the scenes in one day.Â  So guess what we’re doing next Saturday?Â  No complaints out of me,Â  as long as attitudes stay positive…

Saturday night after the shoot we were exhausted.Â  We were going to take the kids to the park, but it started to sprinkle, and so we were able to catch an AWESOME Cubs game on tv instead.Â  This entire series with the St. Louis Cardinals has beenÂ  so great to watch, even though I’ve actually only caught *parts* of two of the games – more on that later.Â  Saturday night saw us staying up too late again because it took awhile to settle down the kids after their big day.Â  And, lo and behold, Christopher was up all night again.Â  Right when we flopped into bed, he sat up in his crib.Â  I pretended like I was sleeping for a few minutes so I could be a fly on the wall and see what he did to entertain himself.Â  I almost giggled as he sat up and clapped his hands to himself – it was adorable!Â  I must have fallen asleep though because the next thing I knew (after a few hazy awakenings throughout the night when kids were crying), it was morning and time to get up and get ready for church.

Church this morning was entertaining (I always find it entertaining and enlightening, but I really do need to get some more sleep – I SO don’t want to be known as the lady who dozes in church!) as always, although our usual pastor did not give the sermon.Â  I liked the sermon, but not as much as when our usual pastor does it… oh well.Â  After church, we went to our usual brunch and there we decided to take the kids to the Hannah Montana movie.Â  Except that once we decided, we had only 20 minutes to finish eating, get to the theater, and find a row of seats – what it takes to hold our family at the movie theater nowadays.

Come to think of it, it was such a busy weekend,Â  and Sunday was busiest of all, so I think I’ll end the post here and make it a two-parter.Â  My regular readers canÂ  consider this a cliff-hanger because they know that any time we take all 4 kids to the movie theater, it’s nothing short of an adventure…Â  Until part two…

### Comments

**derek***(how do you do a red-faced embarrassed guy emote on the blogs anyhow?)* Ask/beg/"entice" your admin other-half to add it? Here: [Wordpress: Smilies Themer](http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/smilies-themer/) [Smilies Themer main plugin page](http://rick.jinlabs.com/code/smilies-themer/)  
**mary911**I'm anxiously awaiting the finale to your post.....your family and a movie theatre......HA!!!!! ;)  
**taylhis**that came across wrong in text - meant life experience and movie filming experience :) (how do you do a red-faced embarrassed guy emote on the blogs anyhow?)  
**jamiahsh**Gain your small band of actors some "life?" OOPS, sorry.  
**taylhis**A semi-professional small company from our neck of the woods filmed it - a fun project to get this little thing off to film festivals and to gain us and our small band of actors some life and movie-filming experience.  
**derek**Busy indeed, and how exciting to be filming a movie. Was the equipment provided by professionals? I trust it was shot in high-def.

# Not For The Faint Of Heart

After we got back from our trip to New York City a month ago, I did a bunch of research about September 11, 2001.Â  I guess seeing the World Trade Center site in person piqued my curiosity about some of the details of that dreadful day.Â  Some of the websites I found with information about the disaster were intriguing, and I’d like to share them – they are the stories of survivors of the World Trade Center.Â  But I warn you, the following depictions are very graphic, very disturbing, and most of all, very tragic.

[John Schroeder of Engine 10](http://911stories.googlepages.com/johnschroederofengine10:a911chronology%E2%80%93r)

[Witness Accounts from inside the north tower](http://911stories.googlepages.com/insidethenorthtower%3Awitnessaccounts%2Clobb)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Incredible reading. It makes it all seem so real again. I hope people never forget about all the people who died that day.

# The Story Of Edgar Sawtelle

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/e-sawtelle2.jpg)

I just finished the almost 570-page novel Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski.Â  It took me months to read this mega-novel; especially because I only read at night before bed.Â  There are some nights when I can’t read at all because I’m just too tired (and this book was heavy – both physically and emotionally – for reading late at night!).Â  Some nights, I only read a few pages, and then there are times like the night I finished the book – when I actually went to bed around 10:30 just so I could stay up reading for over an hour – and this is how I finally finished the story.

Edgar Sawtelle is an amazing book – it’s almost indescribable.Â  It took me a few chapters to get into the book however, mainly because of the author’s extremely descriptive writing style.Â  I wouldn’t say it was boring in the beginning, but the narrative is very detailed, and it took awhile to get used to as well as for any actual events to take place.Â  Once the action began, though, it didn’t let up, and I was hooked.Â  It’s one of those books that I looked forward to ending my day with and one I was sorry to finish.Â  Surprisingly, this is Wroblewski’s **first** novel!

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle is set in the early 1970’s in rural northern Wisconsin over one summer.Â  It follows the life of a mute boy on the brink of manhood who is forced to grow up really quickly due to a set of tragic family circumstances beyond his control.Â  Edgar’s family has been breeding a special breed of dog for generations, and they do more than just breed the dogs.Â  Almost from birth, the dogs are very meticulously trained.Â  The book has been compared to Shakespeare’s Hamlet.Â  Although I’ve never read Hamlet, I read a summary, and the stories do sound as if they have similarities.Â  The descriptive nature of the novel paints a beautiful picture of the Sawtelle’s farm and the countryside beyond.Â  There are some very well developed characters as well.Â  That’s as much as I’m going to describe of the story because I realized I’m not doing it justice.Â  I wouldn’t want to turn off anyone just because I’m writing an unintentionally bad review.Â  I loved the book; I really did – I’ll go into that more later.Â  For now, here are some of the raving comments the novel received – most notably from author Stephen King, who knows a thing or two about story-telling himself!

*I flat-out loved The Story of Edgar Sawtelle. In the end, this isn’t a novel about dogs or heartland America, it’s a novel about the human heart and the mysteries that live there, understood but impossible to articulate…. I don’t reread many books because life is too short. I will be re-reading this one.”  
â€”Stephen King, author of Duma Key*

*The most enchanting debut novel of the summer… this is a great, big, mesmerizing read, audaciously envisioned as classic Americana…. Pick up this book and expect to feel very, very reluctant to put it down.  
â€” Janet Maslin, New York Times*

*Nothing quite compares to my experience of reading The Story of Edgar Sawtelle. This debut…. is one of the most stunning, elegant books I have ever read…. what can deservedly be called a great American novel.  
â€” Lisa Jennifer Selzman, Houston Chronicle*

*I am completely smitten…. The most hauntingly impressive debut Iâ€™ve read all year…. Edgar might be silent, but his story will echo with readers for a long time.  
â€” Yvonne Zipp, Christian Science Monitor*

Overall, a great read, a book I highly recommend.Â  Be warned however, that The Story of Edgar Sawtelle is not for the casual reader.Â  I think that for one to truly enjoy this book, he or she has to be a dedicated reader –Â  someone who truly enjoys reading and has the time to devote to it, for reading this book is an experience.Â  If you are at all interested in reading the book, then stop reading my review now because there is something I must add that will be somewhat of a spoiler.

***\*SPOILER ALERT-SPOILER ALERT-SPOILER ALERT\*  
DO NOT READ BELOW THIS LINE IF YOU INTEND TO READ THE STORY OF EDGAR SAWTELLE!  
CONSIDER YOURSELF WARNED!***

The ending SUCKS.Â  As much as I truly enjoyed reading the book, the ending came close to ruining the experience for me.Â  Not because of death, but because of the way it’s handled.Â  The book ends rather abruptly, and I felt abandoned and ditched as a reader.Â  There isn’t any closure.Â  The main character, Edgar, learns and grows so much during the course of the novel, and he takes us readers with him.Â  But his knowledge isn’t shared with any of the other main characters, mainly his mother!Â  And his personal growth is also rendered pointless.Â  And then there’s the very last chapter, seen through the dog Essay’s point of view, which I just didn’t understand AT ALL.Â  What was Essay’s choice?Â  I just didn’t get it.Â  And I know I’m not alone.Â  It really says something when you do a google search for ‘Edgar Sawtelle ending” and all that comes up is a bunch of complaints from readers.Â  That being said, I think it’s still worth it to read this book – it was *that* good where a terrible ending didn’t ruin it.Â  But it came very close, and I was VERY disappointed when I first finished the book.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I like reading myself to sleep, too. Color me intrigued... compared to Hamlet in what way, I wonder. I guess 500 page novels would be mega to a mother of four. First novel... is it his only novel... by the sounds of reviews it could go to the heights of To Kill a Mockingbird (if it becomes an only novel)  
**taylhis**Our system goes through libraries across the entire state. Lots of copies, but lots of people too. Some libraries have different borrowing time frames too.  
**derek**So you have long waits at your library too. I would have never thought there could be a waiting list of 200 in your town. Wow.  
**taylhis**No, no. I wouldn't purchase a new book for myself; I get books at the thrift store. So I did get this one at the library. Had to check it out 3 times and wait through a list of over a hundred each time. But I'd put my name on the list when I still had a week or so left, so by the third time, I didn't have to wait very long. Once, I came up on the list on the very day the book was due :) That was a nice surprise. Actually, by the time I checked it out for the third time, the list was down to only about 30. But the first time, it was over two hundred. And between the first and second times I got it, I had to wait over a month - which is one reason why it took so long to read in the first place, 4 kids being the other reason. But I make time to read - I love reading myself to sleep.  
**derek**Wait- you have four kids and have time to read a book?? Amazing. :o You must have purchased the book- having to take months to read it sort of makes checking it out of a library useless.

# Sammie Hasn't Done This... Yet

Our almost 5-year-old Sammie is the firecracker of the group.Â  She likes to be the one to stir things up, and she sometimes has some crazy ideas.Â  My mom sent me an email with the following video and a message:Â  “I’m surprised Sammie hasn’t tried this.”

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.

I can’t imagine what those poor parents were going through.Â  First I’m sure horror and panic set in as they worried their little one would get injured or stuck in there – notice they wisely killed the power to the crane game.Â  Then, once she got out, they were probably extremely embarrassed!Â  I half expected to see them spank her little butt when it was the only part of her sticking out!Â  Not that I condone spanking really, but you know how extreme relief often gives way to anger, especially when kids are involved…Â  I’m certainly glad it was their problem and not mine.Â  I know I will **not** be showing this video to Sammie nor any of my kids for that matter – they don’t need any more “good” ideas!

### Comments

**derek**Nope, one-smiley posts don't work here either- just tried. :) This isn't the first time this has happened- I've seen other videos. You would think with kids able to do this the manufacturers would put something on the machine to prevent it happening.  
**taylhis**It didn't look to me like she left with a toy. And I agree - those things are usually rented and maintained and filled by an outside company. The video starts "Catawba Fish Camp" - so I'm thinking it was a bait store or perhaps a small grocery store.  
**jamiahsh**right, j... all the places I have worked at with vending machines have had nothing to do with the machines themselves. Thought this surveillance video might have been from an arcade or such that might have access to the keys.  
**justj**I would think that the only people to have keys for those machines would be the person/company that fills them up. As with most vending machines, they are probably filled by an outside vendor, and the establishment gets a 'rental' fee to allow the machine to be placed there. I couldn't tell, did the little girl get something out of the machine since she was in there?  
**taylhis**I dunno about long comments, but I've been admonished for ones too short on derek's blog  
**jamiahsh**OOPS... ok longer comment, so I gforgot to click the box again. Do we now have a post length warning as well as comment length?  
**jamiahsh**Maybe it was one of those: "Wait til I get you home" moments. Although, I would prolly be more relieved that the child was safe. Wonder what the kid thought when she was inside the machine. I know at least one who would have been screaming. But, couldn't that attendant simply opened the front of the machine? Or is it the the scenario of "losing" a quarter in a machine... no key/no refund/store not responsible? But yes... I remember getting those sparks of creativity from time to time ;) or do I still?

# This Boyle Madness

Have you heard about the newest media sensation, Susan Boyle?Â  She is a woman who appeared on the European tv show, Britian’s Got Talent and wowed the judges.Â  When I first saw the headlines, I couldn’t imagine how good someone could be to get that kind of attention.Â  I didn’t click on the headlines because they were only videos on cnn.com and I avoid those – I like to read my news when I get it from the internet.Â  But I’m a news junkie, and eventually I caught the Talent clip on the real CNN – and the story unfolded.Â  The woman has talent.Â  She can really sing, and she makes a difficult song seem effortless.Â  There are plenty of people with nice voices, so what’s the big deal?Â  I think it is about the way Susan Boyle looks.Â  When she stepped up to sing, people (and you can see this in the judges’ and audience’s reactions) did not expect her to be a good singer because she does not comply with society’s definition of “pretty”.Â  Simon Cowell, specifically, who is a judge on the show, is known for judging people on their looks first and even making comments about them, which I think is immature and disgusting.Â  But I have to sound off on this topic because it’s been all over the news lately, and this morning, Susan was on The Early Show.Â  For some reason that I can only attribute to the way she looks, the Early Show anchors were treating her like she was mentally challenged – they were talking slowly, etc.Â  One ofÂ  the Early Show anchors stated, “Let’s see if she can sing early in the morning”, prompting Susan to do an acappella version of the song that made her famous, I Dreamed a Dream from Les Miserables.Â  It was wonderful, but maybe that Early Show anchor should be treated as if *she* is mentally challenged – it was early morning in New York, but Susan Boyle was doing the interview from her home in Scotland, where it was 11:30-midnightish!Â  Duh.

I personally think it’s an extraordinary story because Susan Boyle is 47 and with a voice like that, I’m surprised she wasn’t discovered sooner.Â  I’m sick of everyone picking on her looks and using them to define her as a person.Â  I think it’s terrible that society says that people have to look good to have worth.Â  Maybe that’s why plastic surgery runs so rampant, but to me, plastic surgery tends to stick out.Â  A lot of times, I can tell when someone’s had something done.Â  I think it looks fake and strange, and it baffles my mind that people would risk their lives to get knocked out and sliced open just to change something aesthetic.Â  Not including those who get disfigured, of course – I can’t blame those people, and I feel really sorry for them especially after noting how society acts about looks.Â  Good looking people are assumed to be more successful, they’re listened to more often,Â  and they’re just overall held in a higher regard in society than people who look different or what society deems as “ugly”.Â  To me, ugly is the mean, heartless person who doesn’t care about others.Â  I think Susan should be applauded for conquering society’s “ugly”.Â  Bravo Susan, for a job well done – I hope you get to fulfill your wish of singing for the Queen!

For those of you who have no idea what I’m talking about,[here is a link to the clip](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lp0IWv8QZY&feature=related) of the episode of Britian’s Got Talent featuring Susan.Â  As one of the judges put it, she is a privilege to listen to!Â  I get chills and tears in my eyes as I watch those snooty judges eat crow while Susan triumphs!

### Comments

**mary911**What an inspiration. I bawled like a baby when I heard her.  
**taylhis**And I forgot to mention that after hearing all the hype, I was sure she wouldn't be as good as all the hype. But she was even better, and the clip was so much more than I expected! I first dismissed it as a way to get publicity for the show, but now I can see the reason for all the hype!  
**jamiahsh**and over 12 million views... sensational! Truly an inspiration to everyone who has ever dared to "dream a dream"  
**derek**Just checked it out- incredible. Did anyone else notice the number of comments on that video? Over 83 THOUSAND in five days! 8O  
**taylhis**Welcome, William, thanks for commenting! I agree with you - her pride is amazing and her personality is magnetic. Her story is inspirational - something she always wanted to do is perform in front of a large audience, she finally did it, she was awesome, and it affected people's lives for the better!  
**William**The taste of simplicity is so sweet. Most of us fit the mold of Ms Boyle, with the exception of her voice of course. I feel so blessed to hear her sing, to see the pride she emits, then to understand the struggles she endured. I pray to God to bless her with protection, happiness and love.  
**jamiahsh**we would not be human if we did not at one time or another  
**derek**Whoops, I meant that emoticon to be :|  
**derek**I guess I read the wrong news, because I've never heard of her. But I did find myself nodding to your post- quite true, and quite shameful of us to judge by looks- yes \*we\*, as I'm sure we've all done it at some point. I know I have at least. :o  
**jamiahsh**as are most of us  
**justj**I'm now wondering how I would have reacted without prior knowledge of the reactions of others. I know enough not to judge people by their looks, that would have never occurred to me. But I think I was surprised to hear that voice after I heard her speak. Her speaking voice isn't one I would expect to hide a great singing voice. I forgot all about Jim Nabors... So in my own way I am guilty of a bit of bigotry.  
**jamiahsh**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lp0IWv8QZY  
**Phyllis Beyer**Lisa, very well written. I agree with you wholeheartedly!  
**jamiahsh**BRAVO!!!!! Yes it is a shame that society (in general) tends to "look" at a person instead of "seeing" what is on the inside. "Stars" who opt for plastic surgery look exactly that: plastic... especially after having so many face lifts. A certain judge for AMERICA's Got Talent who shall remain nameless comes to mind. And to me American Idol and the like are not a true showcase for talent. Look at Jennifer Hudson... I think she was number six the season she was on Idol and within a year she won the Oscar for Dreamgirls. And while I am sure they are popular in their respective genres: Reuben Studdard and Fantasia are almost non-existent and Taylor Hicks was another winner who you never hear of (aside from his stint in Grease). But I guess, artists like Susan MIGHT not have been discovered if not for the show. I am sure that one day she will get to sing for the QUeen.

# Sundance, Here We Come!

This Saturday we’re going to do something that should be pretty cool – we’re going to film a movie!Â  In 2007, we staged a short one-act play for our community theater called The Clinic which was written by my husband (also our O Great Admin).Â  The play got a really good response from its audience; including two newspaper reviewers.Â  Recently, we’ve struck up a friendship with a guy who runs a small production company, so we decided to make The Clinic into a short film for submission to film festivals.Â  The part about the Sundance Film Festival in my blog post title was just a joke; it’s not like we’re expecting this to go anywhere.Â  If it does, awesome!Â  But mostly it’s just for fun.Â  And seeing as how the cast and crew contain some very good friends of ours, fun is exactly what we’re expecting on Saturday!Â  Once we wrap it and finish post-production, maybe I can put it on my blog or at least link to it…Â  and ACTION!

### Comments

**derek**Indeed. +1 to what Mary said.  
**mary911**Congratulations and good luck on the adventure!!! I'd like to see it sometime!!! :)  
**jamiahsh**HOOORAY FOR US! I can't wait! Even if it does not go anywhere, the experience will be well worth it! But one never knows... I still hear good things about the play, itself including from one of the reviewers a month ago at MMiSL.

# Time Flies When You're Having Fun

I was musing today about something…

Sometimes my son gets this look on his face where he looks more like a kid than a baby.Â  He’s 9 months old, so he’s still very much a baby, but more frequently I can see on his face how he might look as a toddler.Â  It’s hard to explain, but my husband feels the same way.Â  The bottom line is, time flies when you’re having fun, and I’m having the time of my life watching my kids grow up!

I got a little overtired and frustrated with them once during our last road trip, and I was thinking to myself, ok, no more doing **this** for at least five years.Â  Then it hit me – in five years, my kids will be 14, 10, 7, and 5!Â  No more little little ones, in just a short half of a decade!

So I asked my husband the question – why is time flying so fast?Â  Does it fly faster as I get older?Â  More quickly when I have more kids?Â  Is it just because our youngest is a boy and we’re used to how girls grow up after having 3 of those?Â  I just don’t know, but as hard as the work is with 4 little ones, 2 still in diapers, I still wish they’d stay little longer – I really do.

Sunrise, sunset, quickly flow theÂ  years…

### Comments

**justj**Who would have thought that we've known each other about 5 years now! Yes, time flies.  
**jamiahsh**It's the circle of life/and it moves us all/ through despair and hope/ through faith and love... :) Dunno what it is... good tunes, good times  
**Phyllis Beyer**"Time Flies When You're Having Fun" is the understatement of the year. I do wish it would slow down sometimes. You're right, the kids are growing way too fast. I can still remember vividly when you and Kim were little. I did enjoy watching you grow up and now I get to watch my grandchildren grow up. I think they call it "the circle of life".  
**jamiahsh**one season following another laden with happiness.... and tears. Don't we all. My oldest niece and nephew are now teenagers. I still remember being on the road and making calls everyday around Shelby's birth. And going to Toledo from BG to see Joshua who had to be in the hospital for a week or so. Could not be released until he got over the 5lb mark... or something like that. He was soooo tiny.

# No More Goat Heads, Please

Ok, we get it – the Chicago Cubs have had a goat curse on them since 1945.Â  It began when a tavern owner put a curse on the Cubs because they wouldn’t let him bring his pet goat into the stadium for a World Series game, and the Cubs have not played in a World Series since.Â  So why, here in 2009, does someone feel the need to leave a severed goat head outside Wrigley Field on the day of the Cubs home opener?Â  Not only that, but the pranksters were at it last year as well.Â  We get it – the Cubs have a goat curse on them.Â  Ha,ha, laugh, laugh, nudge, nudge.Â  Those Sox fans aren’t very creative, are they?Â  At least the head most likely was not specifically “crafted” for the prank – apparently there are a number of ethnic butcher shops in the city that carry goat’s and sheep’s heads – yum.

**GO CUBS!**

### Comments

**justj**Some strange happenings for that opener. Yes, they could skip the heads.  
**derek**I was once told the "curse" was that they would never win. Period. Not, "never win the world series." Therefore, the curse is patently false as they have won many games, and titles even since then. Just not the Series.  
**jamiahsh**stuffed sheep's head... delicacy of India (at least in one movie I have seen)

# I Quite Understandably Mistook The Photographer As A Zombie

Sure, that’s happened to everyone at some point, hasn’t it?Â  You mistake someone for a zombie?Â  No wait, that’s only Woody Harrelson, an actor probably known more for his advocacy to legalize marijuana than for any movie roles he’s had.Â  Maybe he shouldn’t smoke quite so much dope, if he truly believes this is anÂ  “understandable” mistake – check out the story below:

***From CNN.com by Alan Duke****Woody Harrelson defended his clash with a photographer at a New York airport Wednesday night as a case of mistaken identity — he says he mistook the cameraman for a zombie.*

*The TMZ photographer filed a complaint with police claiming the actor damaged his camera and pushed him in the face at La Guardia Airport, according to an airport spokesman.*

*“We’re looking into this allegation and if it’s warranted, we’ll turn it over to the proper authorities,” said Port Authority of New York and New Jersey spokesman Ron Marsico.*

*The photographer, who was not identified, captured the encounter on a small camera after his larger one was broken.*

*Harrelson, who is being sued by another TMZ photographer for an alleged assault in 2006, did not deny his involvement.*

*“I wrapped a movie called ‘Zombieland,’ in which I was constantly under assault by zombies, then flew to New York, still very much in character,” Harrelson said in a statement issued Friday by his publicist.*

*“With my daughter at the airport I was startled by a paparazzo, who I quite understandably mistook for a zombie,” he said.*

*TMZ.com posted two videos of the incident, including one recorded by the larger camera before it was damaged.*

*The first video shows the photographer following Harrelson and his daughter down an escalator and out of the terminal. It ends with Harrelson apparently reaching for the lens.*

*The second video begins with the photographer accusing Harrelson of breaking his camera.*

*After Harrelson returns the camera to him, a scuffle appears to ensue.*

*“Woody, this is assault. Woody, this is assault,” the photographer is heard saying. “Woody, chill out. Would you please chill out?”*

*The photographer continues to follow Harrelson for another four minutes as the actor and his daughter walk to the airport parking lot. At one point, Harrelson again turns toward the cameraman.*

*“I’m being chased by Woody Harrelson while I’m talking to you,” the photographer says as he talks to an unidentified person on a cell phone.*

*“He hit me in my face, he broke my friggin’ camera, he broke the camera in pieces,” he said.*

*Harrelson, his daughter and a driver get inside an SUV and the encounter ends.*

*In the movie “Zombieland,” Harrelson plays “the most frightened person on Earth” looking for refuge from zombies, according to the Internet Movie Database, imdb.com*

*Filming on the movie wrapped in Atlanta, Georgia, on Wednesday, according to director Ruben Fleischer’s Web site.*

*TMZ photographer Josh Levine filed a lawsuit against Harrelson last year for an alleged attack outside a Hollywood nightclub in 2006.*

*Video of that incident, which is also posted on TMZ.com, also appeared to show Harrelson grabbing a camera and clashing with the photographer.*

*Los Angeles prosecutors declined to press charges against the actor, but Levine filed a suit last summer asking for $2.5 million in damages.*

*“Woody Harrelson has a history of anger management issues with people and we intend to put a stop to this,” Cyrus Nownejad, Levine’s lawyer, said Friday.*

### Comments

**justj**Who are we talking about? Is this someone famous? He must have been high on the grass to actually see zombies. Does this guy really deserve this many comments?  
**derek**Everybody, Comic-book Guy voice: Worst. Excuse. Ever. Still, I understand him being angry with the photographer. Is Harrelson really worthy of Paparazzi-status? I never thought of him as a major star.  
**taylhis**Is one of your 5 the movie Grass? Apparently he narrated Grass, A Marijuana History. Sounds intriguing.  
**jamiahsh**BOY, we missed all the fun! AH... the fine post-Cheers cinematic brilliance of Woody Harrelson... i can't think of 5 without cheating.

# Incredible Baseball!

I am a baseball fan.Â  The baseball season started not even a week ago, and I’ve already seen, well, I won’t say that I’ve seen enough good baseball for the season – #1 because I don’t want to jinx the rest of the season, and #2 how could there ever be enough good baseball for a fan?Â  What I’m trying to say is, this season so far (all six days of it) has been incredibly satisfying – especially for a Cubs fan such as myself.Â  The Chicago Cubs, my team of choice, has been involved in two rubber games – for those who aren’t familiar, a rubber game is a game that will decide who wins a series.Â  Of the two series the Cubs have played so far this season, both have come down to the rubber game.Â  The Cubs won their first rubber game against the Houston Astros, thus winning the series, and tonight they are vying against the Milwaukee Brewers for the rubber game of their second series of the season.

The Cubs / Brewers series has been nothing short of incredible.Â  These teams are rivals almost as notorious as the Cubs / White Sox, but then again, nothing can compare to cross-town rivalry across divisions.Â  This weekend, we’ll settle for some up-the-lake rivalry.Â  I have to admit that on Friday night, I was disappointed.Â  I stayed out in the living room, sacrificing myself for our game night taking place in the dining room, to watch the end of the Cubs/Brewers baseball game.Â  The game was 2 – nothing Brewers until the 4th inning when the Cubs were able to score, making it 2-1.Â  The Cubs were able to score again in the 6th, when Koyie Hill hit a 2-run homer to allow the Cubs a lead.Â  But they just couldn’t hang on to it, and the Brewers scored and won in the bottom of the 9th.Â  But it was their home opener, so we should give the guys *something* for their efforts, right?Â  So they got a win, and Saturday night, we were back in business….Â  we listened to the game on the radio on the way home from the Toledo Zoo.Â  The game was a leapfrog match; 3-2 Milwaukee by the time we tuned in.Â  But somewhere along the Ohio turnpike, the Cubbies tied it up.Â  Then we got home and turned on the tv before we even unloaded our dollar store purchases and turned on the living room light.Â  We did get the sleeping kids out of the car, fyi.Â  I might be a fan of baseball, but I’m not criminally insane enough to abandon the wee-ones to slumber in the car – hehe.Â  We turned on the tv in the living room just in time to watch a little bit of leapfrogging, baseball-style.Â  Alfonso Soriano hit a 2-run homer to bring the Cubs into the lead and would eventually be the fate of the game, leading us to a rubber match on Easter Sunday.

As I posted earlier, we had a wonderful early Easter Sunday, and after church and brunch, we decided to have a lazy day.Â  Well, kind of, I had to tackle Mount Washmore, which I did, but then I was able to enjoy the baseball game once it came on atÂ  (very late for a Sunday) 8pm.Â  And this game is the entire reason why I’m writing this post – what an *incredible* game!Â  First off, Alfonso Soriano began the game with a homer on the first pitch – AGAIN!Â  That guy also hit a homer on the very first pitch of the season this year – not to mention the fact that his homer is what put the Cubs in the lead during last night’s game –Â  that guy is on FIRE!!!Â  So anyway, the Cubs got themselves 4 runs ahead of the Brewers tonight, and then the Brewers got a grand slam to tie up the game – but wait – Reed Johnson grew springs in his shoes, and he jumps up and grabs that ball from homerun-dom, saving the Cubs and their lead!Â  Across the remaining innings, they increase their lead and win the rubber game for the second time this season of the two series they’ve played – WHEW!Â  It’s baseball time again!!!

And I should mention, the Cubs winning this second series of the season is probably due to my hat.Â  I’m very superstitious about my Cubs baseball hat.Â  I was so busy with my 4 kids that I forgot to wear my hat until Saturday (when the Cubs needed some help, I might add), so I wore it all day on Saturday, and they ended up beating the Brewers, which means that my hat has the power this year to do great things.Â  Even though we had a lazy Sunday and didn’t go anywhere today, I wore the hat around the house and what happens – CUBS WIN!!!!!

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I believe Beeber already has a Cubs outfit. Since it was given to him shortly after birth, it shall supercede any other team gear he should receive. GO CUBS!  
**jamiahsh**A very good question that is... one i have asked many times. And... Beeber's bday? Hmm... never mind  
**taylhis**How did Chad end up a Cubs fan anyway, raised upon a bunch of Yanks? And what about Beeber's first bday?  
**jamiahsh**I think my Uncle gave Alex a yankee outfit when he was a wee babe. Chad was pleased ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yep saw it. So... there goes my idea for Beeber's 1st b-day.  
**taylhis**Sure thing... as long as you don't start calling my kids Yankees fans or any such cuss ;) That catch was... well, I'm speechless! Want to see it? Just make sure to watch the highlight reel - all week! It was that good!  
**jamiahsh**Maybe I should start wearing my Yankee's hat... 3-3 so far. Couldn't hurt. And since my team of choice is not on yours regular season schedule... my comments should be allowed.  
**jamiahsh**I watched the Cubbies win tonight, too and that catch was AMAZING!

# Cutest Cubs Fan Ever!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/disney-the-cubs-fan-4-12-09-002.jpg)

Enough said.

### Comments

**derek**Don't look at me- I am not a fan of sports at all. I just like to stir up the rivalry when I can. I constantly say "Go Sox when I see a student in Cubs gear, and Go Cubs when they're in Sox gear, followed by a "just kidding" of course in either case. ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**You "other" fans don't stand a chance. All Avell kids are under a spell. Cubs fans are in our family tree.....Grandma, Papa, Mom, Dad.  
**derek**:D So, if I said, "White Sox stink" that would be disapproved since I mentioned them? {insert whistling smiley here}  
**taylhis**Yes, quite lucky you are it's a holiday. Normally, you mention that "team" on my blog and your comment would stay in "pending" if not be disapproved! You mention it in conjunction with one of my kids, and GRRRR.... Quite lucky it's a holiday indeed ;)  
**derek**Just wait... There's still time for her to turn into a White Sox fan. {the "twisted" smiley would normally be used here now, but since it's still Easter...}  
**jamiahsh**Aww... Dis... almost slipped, but took a close look.

# Happy Easter!

I was right about something – I said it was going to be a great weekend and it was, even now, Sunday afternoon, when it’s time for the Easter comedown the kids get when their sugar highs from all that candy wear off!

We celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary (again!) Friday night with a game night, and as usual, we had lots of fun!Â  Without announcing it to anyone, I decided to have a sort of Mexican theme, which simply meant making a taco dip and margaritas.Â  It’s not like I usually have themes for game night; I just happened to read a recipe for the taco dip earlier in the week, then we almost got the kids a snow cone machine which inspired the margaritas.Â  Even though we didn’t get the snow cone machine, my husband said we have a little device that crushes ice; except when it came time for the margaritas, he decided he didn’t want to crush the ice, and we ended up with glasses full of crushed popsicles (?) instead.Â  So anyway, I don’t remember telling any of my friends it was Mexican game night, but about 4 of them showed up with salsa and/or taco dip!Â  When the last person arrived a little late and brought salsa, we gave her a standing ovation – hey, most of us are theater people; it seemed like the thing to do!Â  I forgot to mention that before the game night, we went to Walmart where they had an Easter bunny to visit.Â  My youngest daughter was afraid of him, so that explains how I got in the picture:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/easter-weekend-4-11-and-12-2009-002.jpg)

Saturday the community theater had their first-ever Easter egg hunt.Â  We were actually going to go to the drive-thru zoo / safari park in Port Clinton, Ohio, but we decided to stay and support the theater’s egg hunt instead.Â  And that was a great decision – the egg hunt was a blast!Â  There were organized games for the older kids while the toddlers hunted, but our little 2 Â½ year old daughter, Disney, was a little shy about picking up the eggs.Â  The eggs had prizes in them, ranging from candy to tickets for large prizes to coin dollars – and Disney got one of those!Â  The older kids enjoyed aÂ  variety of games; including a relay race where they were to race to a table and finish two boxes of Peeps – no hands allowed!Â  It was a riot!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/easter-weekend-4-11-and-12-2009-008.jpg)

The kids enjoyed doing an actual egg hunt, unlike at our town’s annual Easter egg hunt where they’ve resorted to throwing candy on the floor of the middle school gym rather than try to plan around the weather every year and do it at a playground where they can actually *hide* the candy.Â  They even sold lunch, whichÂ  was great because after the hunt, we were ready to take off for the zoo and the kids had already been fed!

So we got to the Toledo Zoo and it was a little less than two hours before closing, so we had to pick and choose exhibits to see.Â  Our oldest daughter really enjoys the Aquarium, so we began in there, and made our way around the back half of the zoo, ending with the great apes.Â  The orangutans were bedding down for the night, and the gorillas were eating – allowing for some great up close views since a few of them chose eating perches right in front of the viewing glass.Â  Because the weather is getting nicer, many animals were outside, and we enjoyed activity from the tigers and sloth bears – one of which is our “friend” and enjoys smelling us through the glass and playing with dangling car keys and hats.Â  My favorite animal of the day were the hippos – the Toledo Zoo has full-size, humongous hippos (not the smaller pygmy variety found in many zoos), and Saturday they were hungry!Â  The keeper had them cordoned off while he put out their food, and we got to watch as he let them at it, one by one.Â  The poor hippo who had to wait got anxious and was opening his mouth really wide and rolling over in the water – hippo version of begging, I guess…Â  but after seeing that huge animal charge and buck in the water like that made me realize just how dangerous a boat ride on the Nile River would be!

The zoo closed, so we went to a few of my favorite types of stores – $1 stores, which was lucky I thought because I was sure they would close around 6ish on a Saturday.Â  I thought I remembered that about stores from my youth – I remember being disappointed about not being able to stay at the mall later on Saturdays…Â  but I’m glad I was wrong and they were open until 9 because I was able to stock up on some snacks and birthday party goodie bag trinkets for our soon-to-be 5-year-old’s upcoming party.Â  When we got home, I was dead tired, but I did catchÂ  the end of an awesome Chicago Cubs game before playing Easter bunny.Â  The Cubs came from behind the Milwaukee Brewers to tie up the game and then win it with an Alfonso Soriano home run – that guy is on fire this year!!Â  We got the kids’ Easter baskets ready and hid the non-perishable eggs and went to bed.

Sunday we let our baby wake us – usually my husband wakes with the baby and lets me and the other kids sleep in when possible.Â  But today I wanted to be up in time to hide the real eggs, so we put our two youngest in the bath, started the coffee, and began hiding eggs.Â  But not soon after, our oldest starting coming down the stairs, so we had to re-direct her and give her a “job” to do upstairs while we finished so she wouldn’t see us.Â  We had a great time, but my camera’s battery died, so I don’t have any pictures of that…

Then it was off to church to learn about the real reason we celebrate Easter (how did coloring eggs get involved anyway?Â  Maybe something to look up later when the kids are in bed and the Cubs are creaming the Brewers!).Â  I never get bored at church, but I do get awfully tired – today my coffee wore off despite the energizing music and the pastor’s entertaining sermon involving hot dogs and Jesus, of course!Â  I guess I just get so relaxed since I don’t have to worry about any of the kids for an hour – that’s a good thing!Â  We did go to bed late last night though…Â  maybe I’ll catch a nap while the kids play Easter bunny to their pets.Â  They are hiding carrots in plastic eggs for their rats and hiding dog treats in eggs for their dogs.Â  The bird got a new toy also, but he screamed at me while I was doing laundry again, so he’s back on the sh\*t list.Â  My friend is running an ‘ugly pet contest’ for a play she’s in, and I think I’m going to enter the bird for revenge – he’s molting and his feathers are nappy right now – HA!

Happy Easter everyone!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**And, YES the former Yankee is doing well. GO CUBBIES!  
**jamiahsh**There is a reason for the egg coloring that I know I learned somewhere but it escapes me. As the ads say : I LOVE MY ZOO  
**taylhis**That's sweet! I miss your mom. Maybe one of these times we're in town she'll be around...  
**derek**Perhaps another picture for my mom's fridge. Seriously, she loves seeing your family. Sounds like the bird's attitude for sure is ugly, if not his appearance. Happy Easter/Resurrection Day!  
**Phyllis Beyer**What a fun day you had! Cute picture of the kids (and you) with the Easter Bunny. I had a nice Easter too. Had breakfast with Kim, Tim and the boys and then went to church with them.

# Audrey's Adventure

It all began with my husband suggesting the play Little Shop of Horrors to our community theater’s play-reading committee.Â  Somehow, they actually chose it and my husband was chosen to direct it.Â  That was months ago, and the play is slated for production in October, which is rapidly approaching.Â  Realizing the enormity of the scale of a production like this, we’ve begun to work on it, even though it’s only April.Â  Among the many challenges we will face are casting, music (do we cram a band into the theater or use pre-recorded music?), blocking / dancing, and props – which are going to be a doozy for this show.Â  Normally these things are all part of the fun of staging a production, but given a unique set of circumstances, we are in for quite an endeavor – mainly, the fact that we are to perform this thing on a very small stage with an even smaller back stage area.Â  If you are familiar with the show, then you know that the plant involved is HUGE – it must be big enough to eat a person.Â  Not only that, but there are actually *four* of the plants – it starts small and gets bigger during the show, and at least 2 of the Audrey’s are VERY large.Â  Also challenging will be filling the role of the plant – it is a VERY physical role, as the person actually has to get inside the plant and use all of his/her muscles to move the thing around – very challenging, and it’s not like they will get a lot of glory in that role; their face will never be seen on stage.Â  I expect it to be challenging to fill such a role in community theater where most all of the actors I know LOVE the glory that comes from a role well-played.Â  I am really looking forward to the challenge, however, and I think great things can be accomplished!

What we need is a lot of HELP!Â  Manpower, brains, talents all intersecting to achieve what might seem impossible – to stage an awesome production of Little Shop in a small theater.Â  The good news is, we’ve already had LOTS of volunteers, with some people actually stepping up to helpÂ  already – and it’s only April!Â  Take [JustJ](http://justj.tangents.org/), a fellow blogger for instance.Â  Yesterday he ventured to Lima Ohio with us, an hour and a half away (thought it took much longer than that to get back – you’ll read why later),Â  to pick up Audrey II, the man-eating plant needed for the show.Â  And it was an adventure, to say the least.Â  Let’s begin by saying that the three quotes I’d gotten from costume shops and other theaters to RENT an Audrey range from $900-$1200 – WAY out of our theater’s price range.Â  So when I found a theater downÂ  in Lima who was willing to see us all four Audreys plus some miscellaneous props for $250 to KEEP, not rent, I was excited and charged ahead with the arrangement like an idiot who made a New Year’s resolution to curtail her bad procrastinating habits.Â  Was $250 too good to be true?Â  I guess that’s something I should have thought about before we made the drive.Â  Their $250 Audrey II was a heap of foam mess on the floor.Â  They did throw in a curtain for the last scene of the show, a huge (and awesomely scary looking) dentist’s drill, some “seedlings” for the flower shop and a flower display case, but the Audrey II was in a state of …Â  well, I’m going to say disrepair, but only because today is our 10th wedding anniversary and I’m in a good mood.Â  But you know what?Â  We’re going to set up a PMS Team (**P**rops and **M**ovable **S**et Team – what were **you** thinking?) who will start working on repairing Audrey II and breathing some life back into her ASAP.Â  I am going to be totally optimistic, and that’s why we’re starting so early – it’s going to be a GREAT show!

Back to the adventure portion of this post…Â  We loaded the heap of foam that was Audrey into JustJ’s pickup truck, along with all of the other props, and it all fit!Â  Well, sort of…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/little-shop-adventures-obtaining-audrey-4-9-09-002.jpg)

Of course it had to be somewhat windy yesterday, and that complicated things.Â  We’re driving along, and next thing we know, JustJ and my husband (who was riding shotgun) are seeing pieces of Audrey flying down the road in their sideview mirrors!Â  So we pull over, and my husband goes to retrieve whatever lost pieces of Audrey he can find while JustJ adjusts the tarp that we had to stop and buy earlier in the day.Â  My husband didn’t quite get all of Audrey’s pieces, so don’t be surprised if you read about little man-eating plants sprouting up somewhere in the farm fields outside of Lima, Ohio!Â  We get back in the car for take two and didn’t make it more than a few miles before Audrey is flapping in the wind again.Â  The cycle continues, and now Audrey is breaking (eating?Â  Nah, she has a taste for only flesh) bungee cords too, so we have to stop at the first hardware store we came across – a little hole in the wall place in ~~Bufu~~ Cooper Ohio, whereever that is…

The good news is that only seven stops later, we finally made it back to the theater with Audrey, just a little worse for wear.Â  Hey, she needed much repair in the first place, so what’s the difference?Â  Now she is ours and she’s here!Â  So any takers for the PMS Team?Â  And thanks, JustJ for making the trek and keeping your cool during Audrey’s adventure.Â  A producer job is yours if you want it!

### Comments

**taylhis**Oh yes... I haven't checked with the set designer yet, but if it's not much effort, please do check. The more resources and heads put together, the better!  
**mary911**AND....we may still have some of the backdrops that our resident artist painted for skid row....it's all on styrofoam....if you're interested, I can check and see......  
**mary911**After May 30th, I'm all yours. If you set up any dates and times to start working on stuff, let me know!!! I've got a few ideas that you may be interested in set wise, or at least you might be able to alter to fit what you want. I'm thinking giant turntables........ ;)  
**jamiahsh**Of course, I would be glad to help... it is going to be a busy summer. Who said it was going to be easy? But working with people you adore will be tremendous fun!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Sounds like quite an adventure. While I have had some challenges in costume making, nothing compares to what you have ahead of you for this production. Good luck!

# Small Town Networking

The other day, I had signed up to work the annual county business and industry show – this is my 4th year working the show; third year for working it for the community theater.Â  I always sign up for this job because I find it fun.Â  Lots of people in the theater thank me profusely for working it; I guess they don’t find it fun?Â  I wonder why I like it so much… Well, first of all, I get to hang out with adults all day – that’s a plus and not something I’m used to.Â  And there’s the food – Dairy Queen has a booth about 5 away from ours every year where they give away samples of ice cream cake – YUM.Â  And then there are the spice people in the gym – they give samples of delicious spiced chicken.Â  Also in the gym are the dairy farmers with their samples of cheese – usually, but I didn’t see them this year; darn economy, I guess.Â  But a new booth this year was [Myro’s Pizza](http://www.myrospizza.com/), and they were giving samples of their baked potato soup (for a donation – you can’t give that stuff away for free, it’s TOO good!).Â  Most of all, I like working the Business and Industry show because I like meeting people from the area, spreading the word about the theater, and just being a part of and learning about things going onÂ  in the county.Â  I always see many people I know; people I haven’t seen in awhile and some I see every day, and that’s always fun.Â  I usually work the show with a friend beside me, and we can chat in between “customers”.Â  That person usually introduces me to people whom I’ve heard of but haven’t yet met which is also fun.

This was an exciting year; we were very busy until about 2-3 pm, and during the busy time, we had many people who were interested in our theater – from audience to backstage stuff to kids stuff to donating things – I saw interest in almost every facet of the theater.Â  And there was interest in auditions for parts in plays; including a *male* who *sings*.Â  Those are an endangered breed around these parts.Â  I sure hope he shows up for auditions for our musicals.  
At our booth, we had a display of pictures from our last show.Â  A passer-by pointed at one and said, “He used to be my neighbor.”Â  And I said, “That’s funny, he used to be my neighbor too!”Â  Turns out, the lady has been my next door neighbor for 2 years, and I didn’t even know it!

And the Humane Society had 6 adorable 6-week-old kittens at the B and I show!Â  I want a cat so badly – I did research on the internet to find out if they’ve come up with some miracle cure for cat allergies, but they have not.Â  In fact, webmd.com kept saying that people with cat allergies should refrain from getting a cat.Â  That’s enough to stop me for now, but I don’t know for how long…

So anyway, it was a great showÂ  – I did actually get a little bored, but only because the action slowed down right as my co-worker had to leave.Â  I read our theater’s cookbook cover-to-cover, which was nice because I’ve barely had a chance to look at it before now.Â  It’s a nice cookbook, and I’m going to try a recipe from it for game night – had another frustrating trip to Walmart to shop for the ingredients.Â  But I don’t want to go off on a Walmart tangent right now; things are calming down for nighttime.Â  I did notice that the cookbook has my peanut butter bars recipe (MMmmmm, peanut butter bars!) under Halloween treats, where they don’t belong as they’re just a regular dessert.Â  Oh well, they’re somewhat easy to make and really good – I have to make those again soon!

### Comments

**taylhis**The baked potato soup at Myro's is great, and their Cream of Mushroom is just about the best I've ever had. Their Wisconsin Cheese soup isn't bad either - I still have to try their French Onion.  
**jamiahsh**me, too ;) it's been awhile, though  
**justj**I always eat too much when I go to Myro's. I'm fond of their roast beef pizza. And their soups, and their bread sticks, and their desert pizzas, and their....  
**derek**We do have a *Slice* of Chicago though. :)  
**jamiahsh**ok... apparently neither.  
**jamiahsh**Out of curiosity... ARE there East of Chicago's in Chicago... or West of Chicago for that matter? HAHAHA  
**derek**Ah, I got it now, and I remember the name now that you said it.  
**taylhis**No - that's East of Chicago in Defiance. I was saying the reason we didn't go to Myro's is cuz E of C has games for the kids - didn't want 2 pizza buffets in one weekend.  
**derek**Wait- that's not where we went Saturday, was it?  
**taylhis**Sure... we usually go on Sundays and don't want to get sick of it, plus there's games and stuff for the kids at the one in Defiance. But we'll make it a point to go to Myro's next time. They will make pizza on request - LOVE their Greek pizza!  
**derek**I see Myro's Pizza has a buffet- any reason we can't do the dinner buffet next time I'm over there?  
**jamiahsh**I would have liked to join you for the B & I. I thought it was fun last year. A new guy who can sing who is interested? Hmmm...

# Chasing The Frog

When friend and fellow blogger Derek came to visit last weekend, he brought along his blu-ray player.Â  For those of you who don’t know, that’s a type of movie player which plays a special kind of dvd in high definition – hope I explained that well enough; it’s not like I know that much about it myself.Â  So anyway, we chose the movie 21 – even though I’ve seen it, it was interesting to see it in superior visual quality.Â  I really didn’t think I’d notice a difference – it’s not my style to care about such things, but I actually did notice the clarity.Â  I could actually see the grain on the paper of the deck of playing cards.Â  And the opening scenes of the movie are sweeping views of the city of Boston, which were really enjoyable eye candy on the blu-ray.

So anyway, while watching the movie again, I began to wonder exactly how much of it is a true story.Â  I have my laptop right in the living room, so I looked it up while watching the movie.Â  It was interesting because Jeff Ma, the “real” Ben Campbell (the main character in 21) actually makes a cameo in the movie -and I found this out in enough time to be able to spot him.Â  I found out a bunch of other interesting info as well, and [here is a cool site](http://www.chasingthefrog.com/reelfaces/reel_faces.php) called chasingthefrog.com where you can compare famous movies with the stories upon which they were based.Â  Here IÂ  found out that Jack Dawson’s sketches in the Oscar-winning movie Titanic were actually drawn by the movie’s director, James Cameron.Â  Not that I can stand that movie – it think it’s horribly exploitative to invent a romantic plot not even remotely based on reality about an historical disaster which claimed thousands of lives.Â  I decided to give it a shot once, and I tried to open my mind a little, but I still didn’t like what I saw – it seemed cheesy, hokey, and unrealistic, not to mention that it almost cheapened the very horrendous event whose story it attempted to tell.Â  Anyway, I also found out from this site that there was only one black victim of the Titanic disaster – a second class passenger named Joseph Phillippe Lemercier Laroche.Â  As the website tells it, he loaded his wife and daughters onto a life boat and went down with the ship.Â  Even more sadly, his wife gave birth to their son later that year.Â  Here is a family picture:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/jsphlrche.jpg)

The site only has a handful of movies to compare to actual events, but its comparisons are very interesting and insightful; including a picture to picture comparison of people and the actors who portrayed them – very cool, check it out!

### Comments

**derek**I'm not sure why, but I've never been a Leonardo fan, though we did watch one such film in art today. Oh, sorry, that was a Leonardo **DaVinci** film... Anyway, maybe it was his Growing Pains performances that turned me off of him for all time. {shrug}  
**taylhis**Yes, documentary - that would be the way to go for me also or a book. I meant to mention documentary; guess I forgot.  
**jamiahsh**A Pirates marathon would be excellent! I lack the third one. We got the parents a Blu-Ray for Christmas. I saw Man in the Iron Mask which wasn't too bad if I remember correctly... o/c Mr. Dicaprio didn't have that much screen time in that  
**mary911**I for one am still trying to see the difference between VHS and DVD... ;) I didn't like the movie Titanic either. I would MUCH rather watch a documentary about the ship on PBS.  
**taylhis**I think he was alright in Gilbert Grape, but I don't really remember that movie - saw it a long time ago.  
**derek**Never watched Titanic myself, never will. I'm glad you enjoyed the blu-ray, L. Maybe one time we can have a Pirates of the Caribbean marathon as I still have the three movies, unopened. I'll have to upgrade to something like WinDVD before that though- I can't believe all of those issues with HP's Quickplay.  
**jamiahsh**I also found Titanic to be horribly hokey and unrealistic. During the loooong, drawn out sinking that seemed to take an hour itself, I actually laughed as the ship tipped and people fell to their demise. Somehow, I ended up with the videocassette. Has Leo been in anything actually watchable. During his Growing Pains year, I was not impressed.

# Why Your Dog REALLY Goes Outside

I really hope I’m not condoning cruelty here, but I found the following video I got in an email forward so amusing.Â  I figure in this era of photoshop and trick videography and the like, no one was harmed in the filming of the video, right?

Why your dog REALLY goes outside:

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

**Phyllis Beyer**I knew you would like this video. I laughed so hard when I first saw it.  
**jamiahsh**Next thing you know, he'll be sitting around the poker table with his doggie buddies. ... amusing  
**taylhis**Hey, I laughed. I'm not going to edit it. :)  
**derek**Wait... that last line was just...dumb. Where's that edit button now?  
**derek**So \*that's\* where the cigarettes went! :D And now we know why dogs have such shorter lifespans than us...

# Celebrating A Decade Of Love

Well, more than a decade, actually – Friday is the 10th anniversary of our wedding day, although we were together for a few years before we got married.Â  We would actually have celebrated our 10th anniversary over a year ago if we had gone through with an elopement at the chapel in the Mall of America we contemplated back in the day, but we had a beautiful wedding a year and a half later instead.Â  At the time, I was sure I had the man of my dreams, so it wasn’t cold feet stopping me, but I guess I was just too immature to get out from the parental nest at the time to get married after only knowing my husband for a few weeks – I was only nineteen, after all, twenty by the time we actually tied the knot – not even old enough to legally toast my own marriage – hehe!Â  But anyway, back to the awesome weekend here in 2009…

We had a wonderful anniversary celebration.Â  Our family and friends are so awesome; we had a great time and got lots of lovely gifts, including a brand-new top notch microwave – now I just have to figure out how to work it!Â  But seriously, that was so nice; they didn’t have to do that – we were just glad they came to celebrate with us.Â  We had a little ceremony at the community theater that’s become such a huge part of our lives, and I was SO nervous for WEEKS beforehand about getting on stage and talking in front of people.Â  The Sunday before the ceremony, my husband and I actually had it worked out where HE would read the vows I wrote to him.Â  But as the week went on, I just couldn’t rest with that decision – **I** wanted to say how I felt and be the one to read my own words – and I’m really glad I found it in myself to do so. Â  Besides, my anxiety about the event actually calmed as the day went on – the miracle I was praying for, maybe?Â  A small miracle; no one’s life or health was at stake, but I was far from my normal “freak out”, and that was new for me.Â  So maybe I will find it within myself to auditionÂ  for Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, ha.Â  I do love the show and could probably handle being in the chorus, but I don’t think I’d be able to sing in front of the director to try out.Â  And what if I actually did that and didn’t even get cast in the chorus – YIKES!Â  Just not worth it to me – I’ll have to settle for taking my usual role as “groupie” and seeing every performance if my husband makes it into the show.

So anyway, back to this weekend – after the ceremony, we went across the street and had dinner, whichÂ  was very good.Â  There was dancing, ahem, “dancing” – better put it in quotes because, well, you’d understand if you saw the video, hehe.Â  But the usual party dances were fun as always – The Chicken Dance, YMCA, The Macarena – though time has allowed me to forget how to do that one – I’ll have to practice for the next party!Â  It was awesome to spend the evening with family and friends and to watch my little ones dance in their gorgeous matching outfits my mom had made for them – here’s a pic of my two middle girls, Disney and Samantha with their cousin Austin:



[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/disney-sammie-and-austin.jpg)

And it was super-fun to be able to slow dance with hubby again – been awhile since we got to doÂ  that too!Â  Thank you sweetheart, for the best 10 years of my life – I love you!

And for all the guests who attended and are reading this, thanks SO much for coming – it was a BLAST!!!Â  See you in 10!Â  Well, ok, see you before that, but we do plan on doing this again for our 20th anniversary!

### Comments

**derek**Yeah. It was a good time. Congrats again.  
**mary911**What a wonderful night! Congratulations!!!  
**jamiahsh**Let's see... all we have to do is keep coming up with reasons for the two of you to be on stage together. ;)  
**jamiahsh**It was (as always) a sheer delight to be with my second family and share in their extreme happiness. Here's to a decade of decades more.  
**Phyllis Beyer**It was a totallly awesome evening. I had so much fun. I didn't know you almost eloped. The things you find out about your kids years later. I'm glad you waited because your wedding was beautiful.  
**justj**It was a wonderful evening, even with the dancing.

# The Kirby Nightmare

### Comments

# My Bad Day

I’m taking yet another diversion from writing about my great weekend to write about a bad day I had today – I need to vent.Â  And yes, it involves Walmart – when *don’t* my bad days involve Walmart?!?Â  First, my husband’s business clients blew him off, yet again.Â  We were on the verge of a big business deal, but now the clients are stalling andÂ  becoming difficult to get ahold of – not a good sign.Â  So I took the kids to Walmart to get them out of the house so my husband could have some peace when he called the clients – not that it mattered; they “weren’t home”.Â  Sigh.Â  So anyway, at Walmart, I discovered that they finally did it – raised the prices on diapers.Â  I knew it was just a matter of time; the diapers have been the same price since my almost 5-year-old was a baby.Â  So after absorbing the reality of the price increase on diapers (I have two kids in diapers!Â  Time to rush the potty training, I guess.), I go to check out, and I’m next in line, ready to put my stuff on the counter, and an employee says “I can help you on lane 6″.Â  So I went over to lane 6, but it turns out, the employee was wrong.Â  They wanted her to take over on lane 5 instead of **open** lane 6.Â  So I went back to lane 5, right where I had started, and now someone has gotten in the line with a SUPER-full cart in front of me.Â  Of course.Â  And I had hungry kids who now had to wait in a line with all that candy at eye level.Â  Have I mentioned that I hate Walmart?

Then IÂ  get home and starting making dinner, and I have a crying baby underfoot – I don’t know why he *always* cries at home.Â  He’s the happiest little guy everywhere else, but when we’re at home, he only wants to be held, and I can’t hold him while I’m cooking, doing laundry, cleaning or blogging, so…Â  he cries a lot.Â  IÂ  guess I can get rid of most of the toys that are starting to take over my living room since no one plays with them!Â  And all day I’ve been looking forward to a nice hot relaxing shower, so after dinner, I went to do just that.Â  But apparently running the dishwasher, giving the kids a bath and hand-washing a dinner pot drained the (new!) hot water heater, and my shower was lukewarm with a cold rinse at the end.Â  Of course it was.Â  I can only hope that my day turns around when the Cubs begin their season-opening game tonight – I’ve been looking forward to this for months,Â  so hopefully my bad day wasn’t a precursor to the tone of tonight’s game.Â  To quote Tom Hanks from A League of Their Own: “May our feet be swift, may our bats be mighty, may our balls be plentiful…”Â  GO CUBS!

Earlier this morning, we ruined our chances of sleeping in (since our oldest daughter is on spring break) by signing up to bring a pet to my second-oldest daughter’s school – we forgot about spring break when we signed up for pet day for first thing in the morning, oops – so adding to everything is the fact that I’m tired today also.Â  We let our little ones play at my daughter’s preschool; they had a blast, and we had fun watching them.Â  My husband read a book to the kids, and we brought the rats for pet day – and it was SO fun to see certain teachers pale and shriek with fright – hehe!

So I guess the day wasn’t all bad; it was just Walmart getting under my skin, AGAIN.Â  Oh, and get this – I saw the store manager (I’ll call him Mr. Palindrome, since his last name reads the same backward and forward) park in one of the handicapped spots right in front of the store.Â  To be fair, he does have a handicapped tag, but I know from my sources that the handicapped tag is not for him but rather his elderly mother whom he cares for.Â  But I still think he should only be able to park in the handicapped spots when she is with him, and I definitely don’t think he should take those spots away from his customers when he is perfectly able-bodied.Â  Well, just my opinion, the guy irritates me because of all his dirty price games he plays at the Walmart and the small businesses the store pushes out of the way.Â  Not that it’s a small business, but Kmart is the latest victim of Walmart in our town – it’s closing for good in May.Â  What a shame – and to think the Kmart in our town was opened as the test store to see if Kmart would work in small town America.Â  The test was successful, but that was decades ago, and times have changed – just like Walmart’s prices!

\*\*\*UPDATE\*\*\* – The Cubs are on, and they’re winning – YAY!Â  Soriano opened the game with a home run **on the first pitch of the game!** How cool is that?Â  But, for some reason, the game is not on ESPN 2 like tvguide.com said.Â  My husband bought me mlb.com, but that seems to be broken at the moment – they’re showing video during the commercials and nothing during game play.Â  Not only that, my husband’s clients have called (but I guess that’s a good thing), leaving me with the two little ones at their crabbiest time of day.Â  So I have 2 screamers and no Cubs game.Â  At least they are winning (I think).Â  When I put the little ones to bed here pretty soon, I’m tempted to join them just so I can start over tomorrow – every attempt I make at relaxing tonight has just made things worse!

### Comments

**derek**Thanks for saving your bad day until \*after\* I left. :P Seriously, my days aren't much better what with me being super-tired. The melatonin seems to work, but yesterday I was up at 5:45 looking for work after staying up until 11 the night before failing to get a job. Follow that with picking up a job at 11PM last night for an early position limiting my sleep once again. Tonight looks good though- I have a job later in the morning for Art and that also means I don't have to stay up until 11PM looking for work either. Come 10:00 I crash, if not sooner. Hopefully the caffeine I expect to drink with dinner will allow me to blog a little as it has now been over a week since my last post.  
**mary911**I'm sorry about your frustration with Walmart. I'm not a fan of the one in Bryan. I do like the the one in Defiance, because the things that I buy are cheaper there. I understand your frustration with Walmart....crowding out small business and all. But with my tight budget, I have to go where it's cheap....thus the cycle continues....\*sigh\*  
**jamiahsh**We won't discuss the Yankees opener and the $161 million, seven year man C.C. Sabathia. Better days ahead.  
**jamiahsh**Funny... it is on ESPN2 at my house? Strange.

# Country's Biggest Night!

After my extremely busy weekend (more about that in my next post!), I’m just not up to the task of doing a live blog about the Academy of Country Music Awards like I did last year.Â  I had a lot of fun doing it at that time, but this year we were lucky enough to share our awards experience with friends at our house, and I want to be a good host (well, as good as I can be with both eyes and ears on the awards show!).Â  It’s bad enough that I had to practically kick out people who were here for our voluntary monthly organizational meetings so I could watch the awards show when it started at 8 –Â  hehe.Â  I was accused of “chomping at the bit”, to get to the awards show –Â  but then again, I did sacrifice and miss the entire red carpet coverage…Â  so I guess a point was made – I WAS chomping at the bit, so to speak!

Watch the show we did, and it was great – although I didn’t win the tally for the most awards guessed ahead of time.Â  My picks for winners of the most popular categories are following in blue with the winners in **bold** (the ones I got right are in **bold blue** and my commentary is in *italics.*I’ll let you know how our guests and I did at the end:

**Entertainer of the Year**â€¢ Kenny Chesney  
â€¢ Brad Paisley  
â€¢ George Strait  
â€¢ **Carrie Underwood**â€¢ Keith Urban

*Big shocker here, for real.Â  Kenny has won this one for the past 4 years straight, so you can’t blame me for voting the way I did – SHOCKER he didn’t win tonight!*

**Top Male Vocalist**â€¢ Kenny Chesney  
â€¢ Toby Keith  
â€¢ **Brad Paisley**â€¢ George Strait  
â€¢ Keith Urban

**Top Female Vocalist**â€¢ Miranda Lambert  
â€¢ Heidi Newfield  
â€¢ Taylor Swift  
â€¢ **Carrie Underwood**â€¢ Lee Ann Womack

**Top Vocal Group**â€¢ Lady Antebellum  
â€¢ Little Big Town  
â€¢ **Rascal Flatts**â€¢ Randy Rogers Band  
â€¢ The Lost Trailers  
*A given – Rascal Flatts has a ton of talent and are one of my favorite bands!*

**Top Vocal Duo**â€¢ Big & Rich  
â€¢ Brooks & Dunn  
â€¢ Joey + Rory  
â€¢ Montgomery Gentry  
â€¢ **Sugarland**

**Album of the Year**â€¢ Carnival Ride â€“ Carrie Underwood  
â€¢ Back When I Knew It All â€“ Montgomery Gentry  
â€¢ **Fearless â€“ Taylor Swift**â€¢ That Lonesome Song â€“ Jamey Johnson  
â€¢ Troubadour â€“ George Straight

So there you have it.Â  I didn’t do so well, compared to past my past performances guessing on country music awards shows – I got 4/10 correct.Â  But we had a great time watching…Â  some highlights include Trace Adkins’ performance with the West Point Glee Club, very moving, especially because the performance was introduced by a young veteran in a wheelchair.Â  Another highlight, Carrie Underwood’s humongous dress during her resurrection of Randy Travis’ “I Told You So”.Â  (notice they didn’t show her getting on or off stage in that dress – think she was “snapped” into it?Â  That thing was HUGE!!!)…Â  But I guess I’m a country fan-child of the 80’s and 90’s, sigh.Â  The awards shows during that time period were so much more exciting to me because of the awesome music that was performed, unlike tonight.Â  Just another sign that I’m getting old, I guess, since I much preferred our friends’ conversation tonight to the live performances…Â  just nothing special on the modern country artists’ part, I guess…

But congrats to those who won, and it was a great show to watchÂ  and predict, evenÂ  if I didn’t do so well.Â  Until the CMA’s in the fall – maybe I will do a LIVE blogcast for that one – we’ll see!

### Comments

**mary911**Thank you for the run down! I missed it this year!  
**jamiahsh**I shoulda had one more correct pick but still would not have done well. Started off well and went downhill from there.  
**jamiahsh**It was very fun and you were an exceptional hostess as always. Bit chomping is permissible when you have had as busy of a week as you and wanted to enjoy a little down time.

# Wagon O' Cuties

With the return of warmer weather comes the return of our locally famous wagon o’ cuties:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/random-march-09-pics-0011.jpg)Except what’s that in the wagon, a little red elf?Â  Now I might be biased here, but that is the cutest elf I’ve ever seen!Â  This is the first time I put that little sweatshirt on my son.Â  I wish I had found it in time for Christmas last year – I don’t think it’ll still fit him by December for next Christmas.Â  And it seems the kids are starting to overflow the wagon…Â  Might be time to make our oldest walk or ride her bike…

### Comments

**mary911**Cute kids!!!  
**jamiahsh**Let's go ride a bike, up to the highest height... oops. Fly a kite. I don't think beeber will be wearing the sweatshirt long. HOW ADORABLE :D

# My Dog Is Not A Cat

… but she thinks she is!Â  We used to have a cat, but she passed away last year.Â  We got our dog as a puppy just 4 months after we got the cat as a kitten, and they lived together for 10 years, so it’s no wonder my dog thinks she’s a cat.Â  Despite her old age, she will jump on the furniture, and even walk on the top of the couch – very cat-like behavior.Â  She is also more independent like a cat, and she’ll only come when called to snuggle if she wants to, like a cat.

The other day, she decided she was done waiting for the kids to eat their lunch.Â  We had left it out because the kids hadn’t eaten well, and we thought they could come back later and have a bite – WRONG!Â  Our dog Charity (the cat in disguise) took it upon herself to climb **UP ON** the dining room table and get their lunches.Â  She is our spoiled rotten baby; what were we going to do, yell at the old lady?Â  So we took a picture instead, note how she uses her feet to tip up the plates and hold them in place so they don’t slide away while she’s licking:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/04/random-march-09-pics-006.jpg)

And Charity has such a personality; she hates being laughed at, so I think she learned her lesson.Â  Besides, once the motivation to get the food was gone (eaten), she was stuck up on the table.Â  We wrestled with the decision to help her down; she is 11 years old and I didn’t want her breaking bones or worse, but in the end she got herself down successfully.Â  First she kind of growled and grunted around up there while we giggled at her from the living room, then she used her new vantage point as a barking stool, but just as I got sick of it and went to help her down, she got down herself.Â  She is such a jerk but what a personality that dog has…Â  We love you Charity!

And now you need to see how cute she really is, one blue eye and all.Â  So here is one of my favorite pictures of her in a Chicago Cubs shirt – opening day is on Monday, so GO CUBBIES!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/go-cubs-go-charity1.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I don't think even Happy would do that! Of course, Charity is a lot more lavable and cuddly.  
**jamiahsh**We LOVE you Charity. I never posted about our bird who thought he was a hamster.

# April Fool's!

As many of you may have found out the hard way, today is April Fool’s Day.Â  Thankfully, I was the victim of only two pranks, and one I kind of figured out…Â  But the other one came out of left field and went something like this: my 9-year-old daughter comes up to me and says, “Mom, Christopher (her 8-month-old brother) is bleeding!”Â  She said it nonchalantly, but come on, something like that would just strike an instinctual panic button in any parent!Â  So I dropped what I was doing and ran into the living room, and she let me off the hook – April Fool’s!

Obviously this type of prank is not cool, and my daughter and I had a little chat about the inappropriateness of jokes involving injuryÂ  (I did tell her it was a good one though, since she didn’t know anything about prank etiquette when she thought of it).

But for future reference, I don’t make a very good prank victim anyway.Â  I tend to be gullible in the first place, so I’m easy to get.Â  And when I’m not being gullible, I’m cynical, so I might be paranoid I’m getting “got” or at least lied to.Â  And most importantly, if you do get me, depending on the severity of the prank, I might get mad at you – I guess I don’t like to be fooled… Â  So consider this your warning, and catch me on April Fool’s Day next year – at your own risk!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**You a NO FUN at all... j/k Strange that no one really tried to "Get" me aside from the Mad Hacker.  
**mary911**My April Fool's day came and went without any hubbub. Mostly because I slept all day. Which is fine with me!

# Dog Toys, Wires, and Tablecloths, Oh My!

My son is crawling – uh, oh.Â  I don’t remember what his 3 sisters got into when they started to crawl, besides trouble, but my son’s favorite things seem to be dog toys (and the dogs’ food and water bowls, what a mess!), tablecloths (which he yanks on – I’m going to have to remove the one in the living room before he yanks it and pulls the heavy computer right down on his head!), and wires (I don’t think I need to explain why he shouldn’t be pulling and chewing on wires.Â  If I do, let’s hope you don’t have any kids of your own).Â  He smiles so sweetly when we say no-no; I think he likes the attention.Â  A more stern NO just makes him grin widely and start waving at us.Â  So how do you discipline someone so incredibly cute?Â  I can’t help but smile back when he grins – he’s so cute with his little toothies sticking out from his bottom gums.Â  Could **you** say no to this face?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/random-march-09-pics-008.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Oh how adorable.....I can't wait to hug him....see ya tomorrow.  
**mary911**I'm with ya, I don't think I could punish anyone that looked that cute! He's adorable!  
**justj**Found a back door sort of. Cute picture. If you don't discipline them when they are in the cute stage, it makes it difficult when they are really need the discipline.  
**jamiahsh**at least, if he gets in the dogs' food, you don't have to worry about feeding him. J/K.  
**jamiahsh**I think I had the same problem. I have been told that I always grinned when I was told no-no and look what happened to me.

# The Haunting In Connecticut

We saw [The Haunting in Connecticut](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0492044/) at the movie theater for date night (after refusing pizza from “Carlos Zambrano” at the mall pizza shop – seriously, the guy looks just like the famously hot-headed Chicago Cubs pitcher!) and the movie made for a pretty good ghost story.Â  I had heard it was based upon a true story, but after seeing it, here is my guess on what about the movie is true:Â  a teenage boy has cancer, his family rents a house (a former mortuary) near the hospital where he is receiving treatments, and they had strange happenings while staying there; probably due to stress or lack of sleep or even just plain exaggerations but not hauntings, is my guess.Â  This is the basic plot of the movie, but I left out many events that could not have possibly happened in real life and would also be considered spoilers, so I will not go into details.Â  I will say that the movie opens with all kinds of vintage photographs of deceased people – I know this because of my friend who attended a lecture on the subject.Â  I had wanted to go with her, but we found out about it last minute and I relunctantly had to pass.Â  But my friend went and came back with all kinds of interesting info which is how I knew what the pictures were that opened the movie.Â  For instance, many people back then (the movie takes place in the 80’s, but the pictures were from the early 1900’s) didn’t have their photograph taken often, so when a loved one passed away, they would get their family portrait taken *with the deceased* – better late than never, I guess?Â  Not only that, sometimes they would pose as if the person was still alive – kind of morbid by our standards today, but then again, things are very different and taking pictures is so much more common; it’s difficult to imagine past attitudes about this.

But The Haunting in Connecticut is a very entertaining, edge-of-your seat nailbiter with plenty of startles.Â  To its credit, it’s scary and creepy without the gore.Â  Worth checking out, if you like that sort of thing, but not one of my favorites – it did give me some ideas for a haunted house though…Â  Now if I can just remember them until 2010 when we actually have the time to DO the haunted house…

### Comments

**Morat’s Blog » The Haunting In The Redbox DVD**[...] I chose a movie which taylhis has posted about and a friend recommended the other day.Â  Megan had already seen The Haunting in [...]  
**jamiahsh**Dead people posing as if they were alive. CREEEEEEPY!  
**mary911**Remember the Nicole Kidman movie called "The Others?" It had picture of dead people posed as if they were alive in pictures, also. Sounds like an interesting movie. Definitely one to watch on video.

# Monsters VS Aliens

We took the kids to see the Pixar movie [Monsters VS Aliens](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0892782/) last Sunday after church.Â  The good news is, we didn’t end up with any nude children running around the theater (see a previous post of mine; I forget which one, but I think this happened more than once so take your pick – we haven’t been to the movies in months, and now you know why!).Â  The bad news is that I didn’t think this movie lived up to the hype.Â  But I couldn’t be sure; I didn’t get to see much of it.Â  It seemed to me like they showed all the funny parts in the previews, but then again, once you read what I was doing instead of watching the movie, you’ll see why I could be wrong…

Our family now takes up an entire row at the movie theater.Â  Our oldest starting pouting because she was stuck on the inside and complained that she couldn’t see.Â  To her credit, she got over it right away and ended up being the one kid of the four who actually stayed awake for the entire movie.Â  The movie was about to start, and I felt something pelt my back – HARD.Â  I turned to my husband and said, “I think someone just threw something at me, intentionally because it was hard and it hurt!”.Â  He said, “It probably *was* intentional – turnÂ  around and see who it is!”Â  Duh – why didn’t I think of that?Â  I’m not the type to want to draw attention, so I figured it was some poor kid who was going to get in trouble if I turned around or something…Â  so I turned around and saw some game-nighters grinning at us.Â  “Good thing you finally turned around, ” they said, “we were almost out of Junior Mints!”Â  Haha –Â  that was funny, and I learned my lesson, if you get pelted in the back at the movie theater, you should turn around to see who would actually throw candy at the movie theater – you might be surprised to find out it’s NOTÂ  kids!

The lights dimmed, the previews came on, and my son dirtied his diaper.Â  By the time I got back from changing him, I had already missed a preview – my husband and I love the previews.Â  Oh well, better than missing the movie, I thought…Â  little did I know we would be missing that too.Â  So my son, who is 8 months old and just starting to crawl, didn’t want to sit still for a movie.Â  He was happy munching on things, but he was pretty rambunctious when I was holding him.Â  So I spent most of the movie trying to calm him down and keep him busy.Â  My 2-year-old daughter, who is usually the problem (and the nudist) at the movies, actually fell asleep.Â  My husband went to put her in her seat to sleep so we could enjoy the movie, and there was a horrible gushing sound followed by gasps from the people behind us.Â  Apparently, my husband’s pop had gotten knocked over, and wouldn’t you know it, it was almost full and of course it poured directly into the lady’s purse who was sitting behind us.Â  OOPS!Â  How can you possibly apologize for something like that, especially while trying to be quiet so others can watch the movie?Â  All the commotion of course woke up my daughter, so now we had her to deal with again.Â  Not more than 20 minutes later, my son made a lightening-fast grab for my drink, and I didn’t catch him in time, so SPLOSH – another one bites the dust.Â  At least this time it was in MY diaper bag and not the woman’s behind me again – that would have been lawsuit-worthy!Â  But now we were drinkless, had 2 rambunctious kids, and were only about halfway through the movie!

Well, we made it through, my 2 youngest daughters fell asleep before the movie was over, and my son was out about 10 minutes before it ended – he waited long enough to keep me from seeing the movie, and long enough to wake up when we left and screw up his nap cycle.Â  But I guess IÂ  learned yet again that my kids are too little to go to the movies – at least all 4 at one time.Â  And the lady behind us didn’t say anything when she left, thank goodness.Â  But I wouldn’t take my word for it that Monsters VS Aliens isn’t anything special – I didn’t see most of it!

### Comments

**mary911**I think I would pay to go see any movie as long as I knew you were going. The pure entertainment in watching you would be well worth the ticket price! I hope I don't sound cruel, but that post is the funniest thing I've read in a long time! I can visualize all of what you wrote...I'm almost in tears! Please, the next time you do a family trip like that, let me know!!!! On another note, I'm sorry you didn't get to see the movie. ;)  
**derek**I guess we won't be seeing a movie when I visit! ;) That's another one on my list to see eventually. I finally saw Kung Fu Panda the other day- I checked the DVD out of the library. I thoroughly enjoyed it.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... that might have been more entertaining than some movies I have seen. 4 Kids and the Parents Go to the Movies.

# New York Trip Diary Volume 6 - The World Trade Center Chapter

**NEW YORK TRIP – MARCH 20-23, 2009 – TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2Â½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos**

*(continued from previous posts)*

**Sunday, March 22 –** I already blogged about this day, but I had skipped the part about us visiting the World Trade Center site (aka Ground Zero) because it just didn’t seem to belong in a happy family’s trip diary.Â  So consider this your warning; the following post will be emotionally heavy!

On the way there, I was just in visitor mode – on a mission to just get there.Â  I didn’t really stop to think about how emotional and how gut-wrenching the experience would be.Â  I’m very glad we went, but man, was it emotionally taxing, to say the least.Â  The site itself is a pit in the earth – not even a hole, they’re already begun building new buildings, so really it just looks like a construction site, though if you look carefully, you can see that one piece of equipment has a hook painted like an American flag (click on the pic to make it bigger – actually I don’t know that you can see the flag-painted hook in this one, sorry!):

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-062.jpg)

There are fences all around, and it’s difficult to even see past them until you go into the World Financial Center and look out a window and down into the site (click on any of my pics to make them bigger):

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-070.jpg)

On the way to the site, we passed (yet another) street vendor, and this time, they were selling commemorative books about the 9/11 terrorist attacks.Â  We flipped through the books, and they actually seemedÂ  interesting, so we bit and we bought.Â  Those ended up being a great purchase though, because they contain some pictures of the catastrophe that I haven’t even seen on the internet.Â  One of the pictures in the books is ofÂ  a cemetery located only a block or two from Ground Zero.Â  The picture was taken on September 11, 2001, and the cemetery is covered in an inches-thick layer of ash and debris.Â  We passed that same cemetery on our way to Ground Zero, and it was eerie to see what it looked like on that day.Â  Across the street from Ground Zero, there is a statue of a business man with a briefcase; I guess it’s supposed to symb0lize the “every man” quality of the victims, I don’t know, but there it was and here it is:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-067.jpg)

Also across the street from the site is a fire station, Ladder 10, which was heavily damaged by the attacks and collapsing skyscrapers – it actually served as a rest station for many wounded firefighters that fateful day, I later found out.Â  The station has a memorial on the side, but we (regretfully) didn’t stop long enough to take a picture.Â  But the garage was open, and there was a firefighter who was more than happy to let our kids climb up on the fire engine, and he graciously posed with a picture of them – what a great guy!Â  I wonder if he was with Ladder 10 during 2001 and how many of his friends were lost?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-069.jpg)

And then there was the museum.Â  I was worried the kids would be bored, but they said it would only take 30-45 minutes to get through, and I can’t be happier we went.Â  First of all, the kids were not bored inÂ  the slightest.Â  They enjoyed looking at the memorabilia: the damaged items, the kids drawings of support, and even the wall of “Missing” posters that victims’ loved ones had posted after the attacks.Â  I figured September 11, 2001 is a day my kids should learn about, so why not start now?Â  We did spare a few details, though, like the one about how people were responsible for all of it.Â  If they had asked, I wouldn’t have lied, but we just told them that planes crashed into the buildings.Â  After we were almost through the museum, our almost 5-year-old asked me a question I’ll never forget.Â  She said, “Mom, can God put people back together?”Â  I hugged her and explained that sometimes people get to go live with God, and that was good enough for her at that moment.

At least one thing I found cool about the museum is that they had a section about what Muslim-Americans went through after 9/11: the discrimination, the victimization, and the violence.Â

One thing I somehow didn’t get a picture of from the museum was some silverware from the restaurant at the top of one of the towers – the spoon had a hole burned directly through it.

Here are some pictures of other things they had in the museum:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-063.jpg)*Above is a picture of an airplane window from one of the planes that hit the twin towers.Â  Below is a picture of what was once an elevator plate labeling a floor in the Trade Center:*

*[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-065.jpg)And below is a picture of some items that they found in the debris pile,a stuffed lamb they used to sell in the Trade Center – searchers who found him said “If he could be spared, why couldn’t the people?”Â  Also pictured are someone’s car keys, IDs, and most eerie, a brochure from a meeting being held in the “Windows on the World” restaurant in the top of the building – note the dates say September 9-11, 2001.Â  The thing on the right is just a melted mass of metal, concrete, and whatever else:*

*[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-064.jpg)*

If you’re going to New York, I highly recommend visiting the Ground Zero museum.Â  I don’t know the exact name of it, but it’s on Liberty Street across from Ground Zero.Â  Bring tissues, but if you forget, they have some on the walls, and I was grateful for that.Â  It was a very emotional experience, but I was fine until I saw a letter in a child’s scrawl dated 4/2000, before the attacks.Â  The letter began, “My hero is my daddy because he is a fireman…”Â  The letter was written by a kid who lost his dad on 9/11, and that’s when I lost it.

I can’t imagine what those people went through, especially after seeing what happened to some of the objects that were once a part of the World Trade Center.Â  A very humbling experience; one I will never forget…

*God Bless the victims of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 and their families left behind…*

### Comments

**derek**Indeed. *{moment of silence}***Phyllis Beyer**Your blog helped me realize how cool the museum must be. I hope to see it some day. I will never forget that day.  
**taylhis**That he did... it was very nice of him to take the picture. I wish I had seen the towers when they stood... And it WAS one of the best parts of the trip; in a bittersweet way.  
**jamiahsh**This was one of the best parts of the trip. Having stood near the towers on past trips to the city, it was indeed very humbling to see the space where they had been. The litltle stuffed lamb on display held a great deal of symbolism at least to me. Thank you for sharing the trip. The fireman seemed very emotional and pensive.

# Some Things I Should Clear Up...

Whenever I take a road trip, I find myself wondering about random things.Â  Since I don’t have access to the internet while I’m on vacation to look up these random things, I make a list to look up when I return home.Â  Here is some of my look-up list from the trip to New York we just took:

– Are there bears in Pennsylvania?Â  YES!Â  I was wondering this as we were driving through their beautiful wooded hills, but I was still surprised to learn that there are black bears (who aren’t always black) in PA.Â  In fact, bears can be found in 50 of PA’s 67 counties!

– Where did the airplane land in the Hudson River a few months ago?Â  As I was looking at the Hudson from our hotel room, I was wondering if we were viewing the very spot (or crossing it on the ferry) where the plane landed.Â  I found that it was just north of where we were.Â  We probably would have seen it happen from our room; definitely from the boardwalk behind the hotel, and definitely if we had been on the ferry.

– What was that story about the chicken who lived for many years without his head?Â  I don’t know how this one came up in conversation, but it did, so here are the details as printed in wikipedia.com:Â Â  *On Monday, September 10, 1945 at 6:45AM PST, farmer Lloyd Olsen of Fruita, Colorado, had his mother-in-law around for supper and was sent out to the yard by his wife to bring back a chicken. Olsen failed to completely decapitate the five-and-a-half month old bird named Mike. The axe missed the jugular vein, leaving one ear and most of the brain stem intact.Â  On the first night after the decapitation Mike slept with his severed head under his wing.Â  Despite Olsen’s botched handiwork, Mike was still able to balance on a perch and walk clumsily; he even attempted to preen and crow, although he could do neither. After the bird did not die, a surprised Mr. Olsen decided to continue to care permanently for Mike, feeding him a mixture of milk and water via an eyedropper; he was also fed small grains of corn. Mike occasionally choked on his own mucus, which the Olsen family would clear using a syringe.Â  When used to his new and unusual center of mass, Mike could easily get himself to the highest perches without falling. His crowing, though, was less impressive and consisted of a gurgling sound made in his throat, leaving him unable to crow at dawn. Mike also spent his time preening and attempting to peck for food with his neck.Â  Being headless did not keep Mike from putting on weight; at the time of his partial beheading he weighed two and a half pounds, but at the time of his death this had increased to nearly eight pounds.Â  In March 1947, at a motel in Phoenix on a stopover while traveling back home from tour, Mike started choking in the middle of the night. As the Olsens had inadvertently left their feeding and cleaning syringes at the sideshow the day before, they were unable to save Mike. Lloyd Olsen claimed that he had sold the bird off, resulting in stories of Mike still touring the country as late as 1949.Â  Post mortem, it was determined that the axe blade had missed the carotid artery and a clot had prevented Mike from bleeding to death. Although most of his head was severed, most of his brain stem and one ear was left on his body. Since basic functions (breathing, heart-rate, etc) as well as most of a chicken’s reflex actions are controlled by the brain stem, Mike was able to remain quite healthy. Other sources, including the Guinness Book of World Records, say that the chicken’s severed esophagus passage could not take in enough air properly to be able to breathe; and therefore choked to death in the motel.* So Mike the headless chicken lived for about 18 months without a head.

– Kent State Massacre – We saw lots of signs for Kent Stae on the trip, and we decided there must be a few campuses.Â  We were wondering where the massacre happened, what year, how many people were killed, and what happened to the murderer.Â  Kent State happened in Kent, Ohio (a little bit outside of Cleveland and Akron – so that *was* the same Kent State University we saw signs for).Â  4 students were killed and 9 wounded, some paralyzed for life.Â  But what makes this massacre significant is that the students were shot by the Ohio National Guard – not a lone gunman gone crazy.Â  The 3 adults in the car decided that if Kent State would have happened in more recent times, it would not be nearly as historically significant because sadly, there are many more of these types of massacres nowadays.Â  However, I don’t think any of us realized that it was the National Guard doing the shooting – which I should have; I remember studying this is Sociology class, but apparently the knowledge didn’t stick…

– Murder in Small Town X – Do you remember this reality show?Â  It was basically like a reality show of a murder mystery; there were actors, witnesses and victims.Â  I thought it sounded cool, but I didn’t watch it when it aired even though I wanted to.Â  I was in the middle of moving out of the state I grew up in for the first time and busy with my first 2-year-old.Â  The show was cancelled, but what was significant about it was this:Â  The final episode aired on September 4, 2001 – exactly one week before the infamous terroist attack on the US – 9/11.Â  And the last contestant standing, the guy who won the jeep and the $250,000 prize, Angel Juarbe, was a firefighter from New York who perished in the attacks one week after the final episode of the show aired.

– What the heck does “poppy” mean?Â  In a bizarre episode IÂ  forgot to put in my trip diary, my husband pulled up to a full serve gas pump inÂ  New Jersey without realizing it.Â  The attendant came out and tried to take the nozzle away from my husband, who said, “I already swiped my card.” – he had noÂ  idea what this guy was doing since he didn’t know he was in full serve.Â  The attendant snapped, “Stop asking so many questions!” and proceeded to pump the gas and kept calling my bewildered (and very tired) husband “poppy” and “boss”.Â  As we pulled away from the gas station, we noticed we had in fact been in the full serve area, but that still didn’t clear up the mystery of all the alleged questions my husband asked and what the heck poppy means.Â  I remembered an episode of Cops I had seen where a perp kept calling the cop “poppy”, and the cop was getting extremely irritated.Â  “Stop calling me Poppy!”, he said, to which the perp replied, “I’m sorry poppy”Â  and it kept going on and on like that until the cop finally charged the guy with something and hauled him off to jail, probably because they guy really just couldn’t help himself from saying “Poppy”.Â  So what does it mean?Â  When I looked it up, all I found was stuff about flowers and something about a nickname for a grandpa (sorry Hon!).Â  But I tried changing the spelling, because it seemed like the guy was speaking spanish, so I tried to spell it in Spanish, and I came up with Papi.Â  When I looked that up, I was scared about the results – it was one of those wiki-answers places, so here is a direct quote:Â  *“To me, papi means: Daddy, Baby, My Love….you say it to the boyfriends, husbands, and sons…if you are in a committed relationship. If you are single, then to a man you have an interest in getting to know alot better.*”Â  Giggling, I read this quote to my husband, and his eyes got really wide and he insisted that I do further research on the subject.Â  I don’t have a lot of time on my hands for this kind of stuff, so I found the fact that different cultures have different meaning for Hispanic terms, and apparently it’s common for Dominicans to call other males “papi”.Â  But it seemed to be condescending when the attendant was saying it, and I’m not sure I even have the correct spelling of papi.Â  Anyone want to offer any help on this?Â  Any spanish-speakers out there?Â  Mary, you love a good mystery, I hear ðŸ˜‰

Well, anyway, that’s about everything on the list, or all I have time to put into a blog post, anyway.Â  I hope you learned something, least of all the randomness 3 adults talk about on a very long road trip when the kids are asleep!Â  Some day, I will probably have internet right there in the car with me to look up these things.Â  In fact, I will probably be *blogging* on the road trip – let’s just hope I’m not the one driving!

### Comments

**justj**I remember the Kent State Shootings. Only 7 years before I would start College. Kent State was one of the Colleges I was interested in. My Mom almost had a fit when I mentioned it.  
**taylhis**No, hey, that was specific enough - thanks! I was just worried it was something hostile - though not too worried now that we're out of the situation... but still curious... no one likes being made fun of, especially in a language they don't understand! Thanks for the research!  
**mary911**Ok, I have some good news! According to urbandictionary.com, the term Papi can be used by all Spanish people to recognize ANYONE, and not for any particular reason. It's just a name. I thought your husband may appreciate that definition. Now, if you spell it Poppy, there were several definitions. Along with the romantic interest definitions, it also meant the following: \*Latino gangs use it as a sign of respect to the older males in the gang. \*If you're a cool grandfather, they may call you Poppy. \*I found this one interesting. If you are a gamer who sucks at most video games and have a short attention span, you could be a Poppy!!! So, in general, I think it's just a name people in the Latino culture call each other, for whatever reason. What your gas station attendent meant will remain a mystery, I'm afraid. Sorry I couldn't be more specific!  
**jamiahsh**Surely you have not forgotten the drug-producing poppies. Or David Ortiz from the Boston Red Stockings... I would rather forget both. Either way, I would not be very flattered.  
**mary911**What an informative post! I'll have to do some looking up of the Poppy or Papi thing. I'll get back with you! Ok, the headless chicken....that cracked me up! I remember my dad telling us that story when I was younger. Growing up we raised chickens and did late summer butchering and I always wondered if it were true. Now I know!!!

# Knowing I Love You Man

I’m going to take a breakÂ  from my New York Trip Diary to write up a few movies.Â  All I have left is the World Trade Center site post anyway, so that’s just one thing on a trip of hundreds!Â  Besides, writing up these 2 movies should be easy, since I don’t have much to say about either one…

Last week for date night, we saw [Knowing](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0448011/), a movie we had been looking forward to.Â  Not that we’re Nicolas Cage fans (quite the opposite actually); the movie just looked intriguing.Â  It’s about a guy whose son gets a piece of paper with hundreds of numbers on it which was buried in a time capsule for fifty years.Â  After some investigation (and A LOT of liquor!), Nicholas Cage discovers that the numbers correspond to the dates, places, and the number of fatalities that would occur during certain calamities – they have all occurred already; except for the 3 left on the list.Â  And that’s about it.Â  Cage’s acting was no better than usual (why did I think this would be one of his better movies?Â  Can you tell he is Francis Ford Coppola’s nephew?), and I don’t want to spoil the ending for you, but I found it cheesy and actually kind of dumb.Â  I was entertained, but barely, and I did doze a tad during this one, although the action sequences awoke me with a start.Â  Feeling unsatisfied after this movie, we decided to make it a double feature and sneaked into [I Love You Man](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1155056/) – no, I’m kidding, we went back to the cashier and paid for the movie legitimately – besides, we needed a refill on our pop and popcorn, though the latter was quite regretful.

I Love You Man looked like kind of a dumb comedy, but we’ve been appreciating the actor Paul Rudd lately (he is SO funny in Role Models and Friends reruns), so we decided to check it out.Â  What we got *was* kind of a dumb comedy, but actually not as bad as I thought.Â  It wasn’t *entirely* predictable, and there were some funny moments that they actually hadn’t spoiled in the movie’s trailers.Â  If you like silly comedies and Paul Rudd, check it out.Â  It’s not nearly as funny as Role Models, but it **is** much less crude.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**sOUND LIKe wait for DVD movies to me. Althought the word of mouth for ILYM intrigues me.

# New York Trip Diary Volume 5

**NEW YORK TRIP – MARCH 20-23, 2009 – TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2Â½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos**

*(continued from previous posts)*

**Monday, March 23 –** We left the hotel for the Pittsburgh Zoo and promptly got lost.Â  Many cities are situated on just one river, but some bank alongside 2 or 3 rivers, and that’s where Pittsburgh lost me and we, in turn, got lost.Â  Multiple rivers and all those hills – I have lots of trouble navigating my way through hills and mountains for some reason – probably because if you miss a turn, you can’t just go a block and correct yourself because there’s hills in the way.Â  And Pittsburgh was also not lacking in what had become our nemesis (besides the ever-elusive Waterways bus) on this trip – construction zones.Â  And we already talked about how Jill the GPS doesn’t do detours.Â  Lost as we were, we again got lucky and didn’t wind up in any bad neighborhoods, but we did have to go without breakfast and almost without lunch.Â  We stopped at a random police station for directions, and they were very nice (though they have some of the funkiest accents I’ve ever heard there in Pittsburgh – what IS that?), but the directions were very complicated, probably because of the rivers and hills to drive around, and we got lost again.Â  Finally we found the zoo, and we picked up lunch at a little food stand on the river across from the zoo, and we refrained from making good on our threats to throw Jill the GPS in the river.Â  Except now we were down to only getting to spend 2 hours at the zoo before they closed.

[The Pittsburgh Zoo](http://www.pittsburghzoo.org/) is nestled within some steep hills – like all the zoos we visited on this trip – and you had to take an elevator to get up the main hill and into the zoo.Â  Once inside, we were very impressed.Â  I’m having trouble deciding which zoo I like better between Pittsburgh and Akron – Cleveland is not even on the same level as the other two.Â  Pittsburgh has a thriving elephant herd – 2 calves born just weeks apart last July!Â  Baby elephants are somewhat rare and difficult to come by in zoos – if a zoo can actually get elephants to breed (and I know the baby in Toledo was conceived via artificial insemination, so breeding might be somewhat difficult), they still have toÂ  wait through an extremely long gestation period (almost 2 years!) before seeing if they have a healthy calf.Â  So the fact that Pittsburgh has 2 elephant calves that were born in the same month last year (also the same month as our baby boy!) is nothing short of amazing.

The Pittsburgh Zoo has an awesome aquarium with 3 types of penguin and a huge seahorse tank – next to manatees, seahorses are my favorite animal, and I have never before seen such a nice habitat for them or such huge seahorses!Â  Also in the aquarium is an area where you can pet stingrays, and there’s even a tunnel that runs underneath their pool that kids can crawl through and come up in the middle of the pool.Â  Here is a picture of my daughter after she crawled through the tunnel:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-102.jpg)

And speaking of tunnels, Pittsburgh Zoo has a tunnel that goes *under* their polar bear pool!Â  How cool is that?Â  We didn’t actually see it because we were there near closing time, and the bears were pacing by the door to go in for the night – we knew they wouldn’t be swimming any more that day, so we skipped the tunnel.Â  But I must go back some day to see that, and also to spend more time in this awesome zoo – ok, I guess I just decided that I like Pittsburgh just a little bit more than Akron, but it was a tough call!Â  Too bad Pittsburgh is almost 5 hours away, or I’d return in a heartbeat!Â  And I forgot to mention how many fun things they have to kids to do, even beyond seeing the animals.Â  They had a totally awesome looking playground, but we didn’t go on that one because we weren’t sure we’d have enough time.Â  When we got to the end of the zoo, there was another playground, so we let them play on that until closing time.Â  Our 2-year-old got “stuck” at the top of the playground – she was too scared to go down the slide and refused to come back out through the tunnels.Â  I was worried that we’d get locked in the zoo like a couple of college kids I read about in Jack Hanna’s hilarious book, My Wild Life – they got locked in the dark reptile house, where they could hear things splashing around all night!Â  After we got my daughter to come down off the playground (thanks to her big sister who lured her away), the sea lions were putting on a little show right in the front of the underwater viewing window – which reminds me, we had also gotten to see an impromptu sea lion show earlier in the day – the zookeepers were training them and rewarding them with fish, it was reallyÂ  cool to watch!

On the way home, we stopped in Elyria, Ohio for dinner at a Golden Corral (always delicious) where my husband was a victim of racial discrimination by the steak griller, and we found what must be the last non-Super Walmart left in the world.Â  Trying to save room in the car, we had neglected to pack enough diapers for our two children who still wear them, and we had to break into the new packs of diapers right there in the Walmart to change a double poopie from the baby and his big sister!Â  It was interesting to be in a Walmart without groceries where the employees were actually preparing to close the store for the night – almost like time travel, but if IÂ  traveled in time, the last place I’d go is Walmart!

So anyway, now we had only 2 hours left of the drive home, and it passed uneventfully – the kids slept.Â  We got home sweet home at about midnight, and the kids were really excited to see their pets and their room – they had trouble getting back to sleep.Â  The pets were happy to see us, and my thanks goes to our great friend Carol who kept the pets healthy and happy during our absence.Â  I was really surprised to see how big the rats got in just a few days though, Carol, what did you feed them?!?Â  

So, I had an amazing adventure with wonderful people.Â  And this is the end of my diary.Â  Well, not really, I will have one more entry to go back to the World Trade Center site visit, but I’m waiting for the right time to blog about that – it was a very moving experience.Â  So thanks for reading, and I hope you had fun and maybe even learned a little something about places you may or may not want to visit some day!

### Comments

**derek**Oh the irony! Your pick for favorite zoo was the one you spent the *least* in. I'm glad you made it home okay, unscarred by the Big Apple.  
**Phyllis Beyer**The Pittsburgh Zoo sounds awesome. I'll have to ask my friends Becca and Donna if they have ever been there as they are from that area.  
**jamiahsh**I had (almost) as much fun reading as I did being on the trip as The Manny. Is there a tv show in there somewhere?

# New York Trip Diary Volume 4

**NEW YORK TRIP – MARCH 20-23, 2009 – TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2Â½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos**

*(continued from previous posts)*

**Sunday, March 22 –** Learning from our mistake the previous day, we decided to eat breakfast in the room, and it was much less expensive, we had plenty of room, and we didn’t have to worry about the kids disturbing anyone.Â  After breakfast, we headed to the city again, even though we were all kind of sick of it at that point.Â  But when I had heard that we’d be going to New York, the top site to see on my list was the World Trade Center site.Â  So even though we were sick of the commute to the city and searching for buses, we headed out to see Ground Zero.Â  We caught another bus tour, but this one was “hop on, hop off”, meaning you could get off at any of the stops, unlike the bus tour we had taken the night before.Â  But in New York city traffic, we still ended up being on the bus for about an hour, much to the kids’ dismay since they were starting to find the bus tours boring.Â  But 3/4 of the kids took a nap (and hubby too!), which left me and Jamy to listen (and giggle) at the tour guide – a very hyper Asian woman with a very thick accent.Â  She was very informative (when we could understand her, of course), but she would interject between her touring tidbits with concerns she had about the traffic – at one point she talked (nicely) to another bus, telling it we were there first and not to hit us.Â  Another time, a man boarded the bus who was selling water and popcorn, and she felt the need to tell us, “this is not a movie theater”.Â  Duh.

Anyway, we arrived at Ground Zero, but I think I’m going to do a separate post on that experience – it really was mind-blowing.

We left the Trade Center site and went into the World Financial Center – a beautiful building where people were very nice and gave us detailed directions about how to get to the ferry without using the famous New York grunt n’ gesture.Â  The best news is that we weren’t going to have to take a Waterways bus!Â  Seems the ferry came right over to the financial district – YAY!Â  On the way to the river, we found some gelato to buy in the financial center.Â  Gelato is a type of Italian ice cream handmade on the spot, and it is incredible.Â  I had trouble deciding on just 3 flavors, but I chose well: cookie dough, pistachio, and raspberry.Â  They were all delicious, but the raspberry was especially amazing.Â  For those of you who know me, you will be shocked to learn that I like gelato even more than I like Dippin’ Dots – that is how good it is!

So we made our way to the riverfront, and when we got to the ferry station, it was closed.Â  Honestly, you’d think that at least 1 of the 5 or more people who had given us directions would have known this, but I guess not.Â  And I don’t think they were playing a trick on us because unlike the grunt n’ gesture-ers, they were really nice – I think they just genuinely didn’t know.Â  So here we were again.Â  Stuck in New York with no Waterways bus to be found.Â  My husband was very smart when he read the fine print on the Waterways card we had that said Waterways buses would stop at any city bus stop on a Waterways route, so all we had to do was find one of those.Â  We asked some not-so-friendly construction workers, whoÂ  said that there were NO city bus stops on the entire street we were on.Â  So we used the map on the Waterways card, and we went a few blocks this way and a few blocks that way, and we found a city bus stop which we thought was on a Waterways route…Â  Unfortunately the only way to check if we were right was to sit and wait for a bus that might never come, but lo and behold, there was another Waterways bus, and my husband again jumped in front of it while we quickly scooped up all the kids before the driver changed his mind.Â  We were really getting the hang of this now, but that was our last Waterways bus, thank goodness!Â  Here is a picture of our 8-month-old’s ET impression – Manny Jamy was the lucky baby-wearer since my back never would have tolerated it all day and we wanted to leave my husband open for our clingy 2-year-old:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-christophers-et-impression.jpg)

We got back to the hotel which is where we had left our car, and my husband used their Wi-Fi to find us a hotel in Pittsburgh.Â  We were having such a good time that we figured we’d extend the trip a little and make one more zoo stop.Â  The only problem is, we didn’t make it to our Pittsburgh hotel until 3 in the morning due to a 2 hour stop at Houlihan’s for dinner!Â  Why diid it take so long?Â  We were kind of a large party, and the place was mobbed.Â  Add in 2 poopie diapers and a bathroom full of drunks, and well, you do the math.Â  Some guy stopped on his way to the bar to gush over the baby, and while he was doing that, his girlfriend took a nasty spill up the bar stairs, glass (already empty, of course) flying out of her hand and everything.Â  Instead of trying to get up, she just lay there, probably because she was so drunk (she wasn’t hurt; I saw her later and she was fine), and her equally drunk boyfriend didn’t even notice all of this.Â  So I said, “Is she ok?” and when he turned to look, I fled with the baby.Â  Interesting experience, but one that makes me even more thankful for home sweet homeÂ  – we never have those kinds of crowds in our restaurants!Â  Like I said, we got to our Pittsburgh hotel about 3 in the morning, and we had kids who didn’t want to go back to sleep.Â  But we finally got them down, and we got a few hours of shut-eye before it was time to get up and add a new zoo to my list!

### Comments

**derek**Hm. I'll have to try gelato sometime.  
**jamiahsh**I knew I mispelled it... gelatoooooooo  
**jamiahsh**Glatooooo... ahhhhhh!  
**jamiahsh**I a tell you. Your a posts are a much better than mine. Very funny!. And the signs that nearly caught the top of the bus.

# New York Trip Diary Volume 3

**NEW YORK TRIP – MARCH 20-23, 2009 – TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2Â½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos**

*(continued from previous posts)*

**Saturday, March 21 –** We awoke about 8:30, which seemed early since we had arrived at our hotel late the night before and the kids stayed up for a little bit even after we arrived.Â  So we went down to the hotel’s restaurant to get breakfast, which was a mistake.Â  I had thought it’d be cheaper to eat in the restaurant rather than get room service, and I had also thought we’d be cramped trying to eat in the room.Â  But down at the restaurant, our kids went nuts, and continued to do so while it took about an hour for the food to come.Â  And this was a nice restaurant – not a friendly mom n pop place where they actually like and tolerate kids like we’re used to back home.Â  They did have pretty good hollandaise sauce for their eggs benedict, but my enjoyment of it was severely compromised due to the stress of the kids.Â  Our server kept walking by and mumbling things, and I’ll admit that our 8 month old son does make a mess when he eats, but don’t they all?Â  We cleaned up the best we could, but that didn’t stop the server from “stealing” our change.Â  That’s right, when we paid the bill, the included 14% gratuity apparently wasn’t enough for him because he failed to bring the change back.Â  Rather than try to track down Mr. Rude (we are SO not in Kansas anymore!), my husband took up the issue with the front desk.

Next it was time for the business meeting (the reason we came, I guess), and so Manny Jamy took the kids down to the pool while hubby and I met with the clients.Â  Except they were late, and while we were waiting, I began to have doubts about the baby and I being disruptive to the meeting, so I took him back to our room to put on his bathing suit so he could join his sisters inÂ  the pool.Â  Just as I arrived, so did Manny Jamy with the rest of the kids, and we decided to take them for a walk outside instead.Â  Our hotel was on the New Jersey side, and offered a postcard view of the New York skyline:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-042.jpg)

Even though I had never been there before, it seemed to me that there was indeed a gaping hole where the twin towers used to stand, and Jamy who had been there before confirmed this.Â  We watched many a garbage barge sail by, and I was surprised to find that the sea gulls in New York are quite bashful – I guess I’m used to the ones at Sea World and Marineland Canada where they’ll just swoop down and swipe the fish you buy to feed the dolphins and whales.Â  But it was a nice day, and our hotel offered a nice little pocket of solstice tucked away from the frenzied traffic of the city.Â  I wanted to kill as much time down there as possible since we were short on room in the car and my packing of toys for the hotel room had to be limited.Â  But my oldest was tired – she fell asleep on a bench outside – and her little brother started losing it because he also needed a nap so badly.Â  So we went back up to the room to wait for my husband’s meeting to be over.Â  Manny Jamy was nice enough to watchÂ  the two middle girls soÂ  that I could catch a nap with my oldest and the baby, and it was MUCH needed and MUCH appreciated.Â  Our 2 year old fell asleep as well, which was a good thing, but I was disappointed I couldn’t take her to be shown off to the clients when my husband called – she is awfully cute!Â  So anyway, I went down to meet the clients, and they were extremely nice.Â Â Â  They have a baby who was born just 9 days before my son, and she was really adorable!Â  I was disappointed – if I had known they had brought the baby, I would have stayed at the meeting and let the babies play together!Â  Oh, well, at this point, I was just glad to be done with work and ecstatic to be well-rested so that we could go to the city and have SOME FUN!

Because we were on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River, every time we wanted to go into the city, we had to wait for our hotel shuttle to take us to the ferry station, then wait for the ferry to take us across the river, and then board a Waterway bus (different from a city bus, as we later learned) to take us to our destination in the city.Â  Not a big deal, but by the end of the trip, it had gotten a little tiresome to add that much traveling time to get where we wanted to go.Â  So anyway, Saturday night, we ventured into the city to take a bus tour on one of those double-decker, open-topped buses.Â  On the way to the tour bus stop, we weaved our way through the massive crowd that is the Manhattan theater district on a Saturday night.Â  We did have a few celebrity sightings; including the actor Morgan Freeman:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-046.jpg)

though Mr. Freeman did have the personality of a candle, as [Jamy](http://jamiahsh.tangents.org/2009/03/25/a-bus-a-bus-my-kingdom-for-a-bus/) pointed out.Â  We also saw multiple Statues of Liberty walking around, but a few of them were getting into trouble with the police.Â  Now that’s something you don’t see everyday – a Statue of Liberty getting arrested – too bad I didn’t get my camera ready in time to take a picture, that would have been one for the scrapbook!Â  We also saw Bugs Bunny, Elmo, 2 Cookie Monsters, a walking sandwich, a naked cowboy (don’t ask), and Batman.Â  Except I don’t think it was the real Batman unless he’s always been African American – besides, the real Batman would have been fighting crime in Gotham City, not posing for pictures on the streets of New York.Â  Here is one of the Cookie Monsters – look carefully and you can see Elmo to the right:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-049.jpg)

We got suckered by some street vendors and sampled their wares of smoked meat, hot dogs, and art.Â  My husband bought a caricature of our oldest daughter and a sign with our youngest daughter’s name in caligraphy, but walking around with those souvenirs was like writing “suckers” on our foreheads – we got hit up for everything after that, from purses to sunglasses to comedy show tickets.Â  Actually, we kind of got “had” again- when my husband bought the $5 sign for our daughter, the artist started putting a frame on it, which would have upped the price to $20.Â  My husband kept saying, “no frame, no frame!” but all of a sudden, the artist no longer spoke English, so he went ahead and framed it and charged us $20.Â  My husband did not pay him the full $20, but I know it was still more than the $5 it was supposed to have cost – oh well, you only visit New York once, at least in our case – I won’t go back, at least not with little kids!

So then we boarded our tour bus, and that was really neat, informative, and offered gorgeous views of the city at night.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-059.jpg)

Ok, the picture obviously doesn’t do it justice, but here is my 2-year-old daughter seeing her first skyscraper:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-053.jpg)

It was kind of chilly, and we tried moving down to the first floor of the bus, but the view did not compare with what we could see on the top, so we ended up moving upstairs again.Â  The city was gorgeous at night, but when we went over the Manhattan Bridge, it was so high up, it was kind of freaky!Â  Being on the top of the bus and looking down, you couldn’t even see the road, just the water below, and I couldn’t help but think how easy it would be to just leap over the side…Â  not that I would do that of course, I’m just saying.

After the bus tour, we tried to find the Waterways bus – the one that would go back to the ferry station, but we had some trouble.Â  We ended up sitting onÂ  a street corner for about two hours.Â  We stopped a passing taxi, figuring we’d just pay the expense just to get us and the kids off the streets of New York, but we couldn’t even all fit in one taxi.Â  I was strongly against the idea of splitting up in any way, shape or form, so our next idea was to stop a passing horse and carriage.Â  While asking the very friendly Irish driver directions to the ferry bus, his horse took a gi-normous leak right there on the street, but at least the girls were momentarily entertained.Â  We declined the $70 horse and buggy ride, and finally the Waterways bus arrived – my husband practically jumped in front of it to stop it since the previous one had passed us by, but it worked – the bus actually picked us up!

Overall, an interesting night in New York.Â  And it’s not like I expected people to be overly nice.Â  I certainly didn’t expect it to be like my hometown, where you can’t walk down the street without strangers saying hi and you can’t walk around with kids at night without people offering you a lift.Â  But it was still an adjustment – every time we’d ask how to get to the Waterways bus, people would just point off in a general direction and grunt, even police.Â  And it was amazing to me how a family with 4 small children could set up camp on a street corner for 2 hours without one soul taking notice – I swear, we could have moved there and no one would have known nor cared.Â  By the end of it all, I can’t believe how sick of Times Square I was…Â  Oh, and I forgot to mention, while we were searching for the Waterways bus, we came across a small deli that was actually recommendedÂ  to us by our tour bus driver – Z Deli.Â  The place had amazing falafel and gyro sandwiches!Â  And their prices were reasonable, especially for New York City – no, reasonable is not even the word for them.Â  I’m talking $.99 slices of pizza, and the huge gyro sandwich was only $3.99!Â  Its only shortcoming was the lack of places to sit, but the guys who run the place went out of their way to accommodate us (in anti-New York style, it seems), letting us dine at their “internet cafe” area.

So after the “miracle bus” picked us up, took us to the ferry station, and we rode the ferry and picked up the hotel shuttle, it was very late and we were exhausted.Â  It exhausts me just to type out the story, as it probably exhausts the reader to absorb my excruciating details, so now’s a good time to cut this volume short – more later…

### Comments

**derek**Ah, the Morgan Freeman pic Jamy mentioned! Your thing about people in costume sounded more like something in 80s LA, but I guess in their case the clothing isn't meant to be a costume :P  
**Phyllis Beyer**Awesome writing....sounds like an adventurous trip. Wish I had been along. Thank goodness you all got back to New Jersey safely.  
**How to Beat Binge Eating | Lose Weight Guide**[...] New York Trip Diary Volume 3 | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**taylhis**Oh yes... I tried to not let the children stare. I think he was a Muslim who was praying. I heard him talking to the owners afterward about Allah.  
**jamiahsh**And the panini was outrageous! :D  
**jamiahsh**I forgot about the gentleman in the deli who was chanting in a monotone. Did you hear him?

# New York Trip Diary Volume 2

**NEW YORK TRIP – MARCH 20-23, 2009 – TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2Â½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos**

*(continued from a previous post)*

**Friday March 20 (cont’d) –** We arrived at the Akron Zoo about 2pm, which was right on schedule pretty much, although it would have been nice to have more time to explore the wonderful zoo that awaited us.Â  From what I saw, Akron looked like a dumpy little city with a beautiful little zoo.Â  All of the exhibits seemed to be of newer construction, and the animals seemed really active and happy.Â  The Akron Zoo has many unique animals in their collection; including the super rare Sumatran Tiger, (most people are used to seeing Bengals, also called Siberian tigers as those are the ones frequently exhibited at zoos) and the Sumatran tiger was roaring when we saw him.Â  They also have 2 types of animals that I was looking forward to seeing – the hyacinth macaw and the capybara (largest rodent on earth) – but both species were off exhibit waiting for warmer weather.Â  No problem, we had seen capybaras at the Cleveland Zoo earlier in the day, and I have a macaw at home, not a rare hyacinth, but a macaw just the same.Â  Akron has a Malayan sun bear, the type of bear that was the inspiration to A. A. Milne for his Winnie the Pooh stories, and these are also not commonly on exhibit in zoos.Â  When we stopped for lunch, we were pleased to find that the cafe is attached to a building with a Galapagos tortoise habitat, a komodo dragon exhibit, a really cool marmoset environment (a little marmoset – it’s a small primate, if you don’t know – came running up to the glass when he saw us with our nacho container and started licking the glass!), and an awesome jellyfish exhibit.Â  Before Friday I had only seen one type of jellyfish – moon jellies – but the Akron Zoo has several different kinds on display.Â  MyÂ  favorite were the bulbous blue blubber jellies.Â  Here is the marmoset trying to taste our nachos through the glass while my daughter is in the middle of a blink:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-019.jpg)

And next is a picture of the komodo dragon; I couldn’t resist posting it.Â  These things are incredibly ferocious and huge.Â  Once they claw (and *look* at those claws!) or bite their prey (and I’m talking prey as large as water buffalo), they hang around until the animal succumbs to the 28 varieties of deadly bacteria the komodo has in its saliva and then devour it.Â  [Sharon Stone and her husband Phil Bronstein have something to say](http://www.time.com/time/sampler/article/0,8599,133163,00.html) about the danger of komodos after one bit off his toes during a behind the scenes visit.Â  You can’t really tell from the picture, but this thing was almost 10 feet long!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-022.jpg)

The Akron Zoo is a place for great family fun.Â  The girls got to be penguins:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-0141.jpg)

and measure their wing spans:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-028.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-029.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-030.jpg)

Even though their baby brother didn’t quite make it long enough to see all of the animals and activities Akron had to offer:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-0251.jpg)

Another cool experience we had at Akron was hearing the bald eagles chirping.Â  I always kind of assumed they would have big voices to match their size, but their tweeting was really cute!Â  Overall, we had a wonderful day zoo-hopping.Â  After our visit to Akron, it was time to head for our hotel in New Jersey.Â  The ride was uneventful; the kids got some sleep and so did I.Â  The traffic in New Jersey was absolutely horrible, which we totally expected, but what we didn’t expect was all the detours.Â  There were police and road construction everywhere, which amounted to a ton of traffic, especially for one in the morning.Â  It was a bit stressful, but we did it, and kudos to my wonderful husband who kept his cool and guided us through the many detours for which Jill the GPS couldn’t compensate.Â  But who needs Jill?Â  We made it without getting lost!Â  And as we were walking down the hall to room 913 to turn in for the evening, I turned to Jamy our great friend and traveling Manny (man who’s a nanny in case you missed my first diary installment) and said, “At least we’re not staying in room 911 for our trip to New York.”Â  He showed me his key, which did say 911 – oops.Â  Thankfully it was just a coincidence, not an omen:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-061.jpg)

And here is a parting shot of our family outside the Akron Zoo from earlier in the day – stayed tuned for Trip Diary Volume 3!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-035.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Your girls have turned into penguins! Quite an interesting story you linked to. I hope he's all right now.  
**jamiahsh**The zoos were definitely near the top of my list of favorite parts of the trip. Of course the company I kept was even higher.  
**jamiahsh**Yes... a very calm driver able to overlook things like barrels, police cars, annnnnd Jill. I still say we should have thrown her over the bridge.

# New York Trip Diary Volume 1

When my family travels, I like to take notes and make a diary of our activities.Â  I figure it will be fun to read later when the kids are grown up and will also bring back many memories that might otherwise be forgotten.Â  Now that I’m keeping a blog, I decided to just keep the trip diaries in my blog; that way I don’t have to write them twice and they’re automatically saved for us in cyberspace.Â  Last weekend, my husband had to go to New York on business, so we decided to make it a family trip and take the kids along.Â  Here is a log of our activities:

**NEW YORK TRIP – MARCH 20-23, 2009 – TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2Â½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos**

***Friday, March 20 –*** We left the house bright and early, only twenty minutes past our goal of 8 am.Â  Disney and Christopher had kept us up until 2:30 in the morning the night before, so we were dragging a little, but they slept in so at least we could tie up loose ends without them.Â  Sammie and Taylor were big helps in the morning!Â  The kids were very good in the car even though Christopher got a little crabby toward the end of the first leg.  
We arrived at the Cleveland Zoo 11ish – not my favorite zoo.Â  I’m not one to complain about any zoo, but Cleveland had lots of walking to see a small amount of animals.Â  I think part of the problem was that they were undergoing a lot of construction, so that made for more walking around the construction areas and also to some animals being off exhibit.Â  They have koalas, but one was sick and the other was sleeping.Â  I’m glad I got to see it anyway though since seeing koalas is a rare experience at zoos, but now I know why many zoos don’t have them – they sleep 20 hours per day!Â  Cleveland Zoo also has lots of steep hills, which was a “bear” (pun intended, wink wink) when pushing a double stroller, but luckily for me, that was my husband’s problem.Â  As we were walking past the zoo’s hospital, an employee told us to come inside because a baboon was about to have a physical.Â  This is a really cool feature of this zoo – they have glass walls in their examination rooms so that zoo visitors can watch animals’ procedures.Â  Unfortunately, the baboon was not cooperative, and they couldn’t get it sedated so we didn’t get to see it.Â  We waited for about an hour, but we really wanted to fit in Akron Zoo in the same day as well, so we decided not to wait any longer.Â  Here are my girls waiting for the baboon’s physical:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-005.jpg)

Cleveland Zoo also has a cool rainforest exhibit which normally costs extra admission, but our Toledo Zoo membership got us into ALL THREE zoos we visited on this trip for FREE!!!Â  What a bargain AND an extra special Valentine’s Day gift from my husband that keeps on giving!Â  The rainforest exhibit had a cool 2-story monkey/squirrel exhibit, and a really nice view of a swimming gharial (a crocodillian with a long slender snout).Â  But overall, the animal habitats were lacking.Â  Thank goodness they are building new ones, but I wish they were building one for the giraffes.Â  There were probably more than 10 giraffes confined to a tiny indoor room – at least it was only their winter quarters, so once it gets warm, they can go back outside and have room to roam.Â  Hmmm…Â  maybe when I’m done with this trip diary, I’ll have toÂ  develop a zoo rating system – that would be fun.Â  Then I’d have an excuse to visit even more zoos, and re-visit some of the old ones!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/ny-trip-march-20-23-2009-001.jpg)Here are the kids in front of the lion exhibit at Cleveland – then it was on to the Akron Zoo.

“Just Akron, cold beer, and poor poor thing for 2 weeks?”Â  you ask?Â  Well, not for two weeks, we were only there for about 2 hours, but I wanted to throw in that line from the stage play Harvey (and later, the movie starring James Stewart) that was running through my head for the two hours.Â  Stay tuned for Akron!

### Comments

**Mare**No, It's been YEARS since I've been the Toledo zoo. We go to the Fort Wayne Zoo more often since it's close, but it's probably been two years since I've been there!  
**taylhis**I wouldn't say I didn't enjoy the Cleveland Zoo - I enjoy EVERY zoo. It's just not one of my favorites. Maybe that will change when they finish their construction. I thought their windows into the examination room was totally awesome - what a GREAT idea! I didn't see any baby orangs... I LOVE the ones at the Toledo Zoo, have you seen that family? The male, Boomer, is such an awesome father - he plays and cares for the little ones; something that is very rare for a male adult orang!  
**Mary**Sorry you didn't enjoy Cleveland's zoo. I was there several years ago and enjoyed it IMMENSELY! Did they have any baby orangutangs in the rain forest? They are my favorites!!!  
**jamiahsh**I forgot to pack it... next time. ;)  
**taylhis**Now there's an idea Jamiahsh! So why didn't you? ;) And derek, I remember; I'm glad you reminded me. Toledo is a nice zoo; glad you got to see it.  
**jamiahsh**Yea, I would have volunteered to dress up in a baboon costume  
**derek**Toledo, I believe. When T had the dental problem.  
**taylhis**I really like going to zoos in the off season - less humans and much more animal action. What trip are you talking about derek? That baboon is smart - they were saying he runs and hides when he sees people in lab coats because he doesn't like his physicals. They've had to change their attire, but apparently he's caught on to that as well.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Thanks for the diary. It's my way of seeing zoos I will probably never see. Of course, I love the pictures of my girls.  
**derek**So the baboon was getting physical to avoid his physical, eh? :P Later in the season would undoubtedly have been a better experience, though more crowded as well. I still remember our slightly cold trip last year- nice and quiet. Of course it had to start raining at the end, but it was still a good experience.  
**jamiahsh**UH OH... I guess I should have taken notes, too. I goofed... thought the exam was in Akron. RETRACTION!

# New Jersey Is Lovely This Time Of Year, I Hear

Right now, I’m in the car with my husband, our 4 kids, and our volunteer “Manny” (a man who’s a nanny – thanks Jamiahsh!); we’re on the way to the New Jersey / New York City area!Â  How did I manage to make a blog post, you ask?Â  Well, I’ve actually typed this out days ahead of time and then used the brilliant tangents.org feature “schedule a post”, choosing the exact date and time for which my post will automatically publish itself!Â  I love technology AND tangents.org!

So I think we’re probably between zoos right now; the itinerary had us stopping at both the Cleveland and Akron Zoos in Ohio on the way to New Jersey.Â  Two zoos only 20 minutes apart?Â  How could I resist?Â  And why can’t *my* utopia of a hometown be located within a 20-minute vicinity of two zoos?!?

I hope we made it to both zoos without being too pressed for time, and I also hope the kids are being good on the long car ride.Â  I hope our business meeting goes well tomorrow and that we have a lot of fun before making it home safely.Â  Until I return…

### Comments

**derek**Seems like smileys are treated the same as links determining if a comment should be moderated, so one smiley plus one link is the same as two links to Wordpress, which is the default setting to throw a message into moderation. For this reason I upped the threshold to three for my own blog.  
**taylhis**Hey, yeah... I was going to email you about that. Hope that means you're coming! I had to approve this comment so I didn't see it until now - guess it didn't like the linkage? IM me or Admin this week so we can work out the travel details.  
**derek**I [hear you're back](http://jamiahsh.tangents.org/). Welcome back. :) Am I on for your anniversary weekend by the way? I never did get back to you on it last week, sorry.  
**If I Could Talk To The Animals | Morat's Blog**[...] as we know it...Do Klingons type?You won't know what hit youThese kids are smartI hate bureaucracyNew Jersey Is Lovely This Time Of Year, I HearThey said what?Elephants Are Not ToysGhost [...]  
**jamiahsh**A "Manny," eh?  
**jamiahsh**hmmm.... I was not aware of this feature. I could have done the same.  
**derek**I hope you're having fun, etc. too. :) JustJ's idea wouldn't work for me of course- I don't think I have ever felt the urge to write more than two at once, sometimes days between posts.  
**justj**Scheduling a post, what will they think of next. That means I could write up a bunch when I feel the urge, and schedule them to look like I'm actively posting once per day. Nah, can't see that happening.

# Elephants Are Not Toys

I saw this article in the news a few weeks ago and was reminded whyÂ  I will never take my kids to a circus:

*INDIANAPOLIS — More than a dozen children were injured Saturday morning at the Indiana State Fairgrounds when a circus elephant they were waiting to ride got startled and caused some scaffolding to give way.*

*The scaffolding stairway leading people to the elephant ride collapsed just before 10 a.m. inside the Pepsi Coliseum where the Murat Shrine Circus is being held, said Indianapolis Fire Department spokeswoman Capt. Rita Reith.*

*At least 15 children between the ages of 8 and 12 years old were taken to first aid stations at the site, but most suffered only bumps and scrapes, Reith said. One adult suffered a minor arm injury when he or she fell from the top of the stairs.*

*It’s unclear what caused the elephant to become startled.*

*The circus continued as scheduled.*

Well, first things first – thank goodness no one was seriously hurt.Â  And it’s not that I’m some crazy animal rights activist.Â  But I do believe in treating animals with respect.Â  And I don’t see how it’s possible to treat circus elephants with respect given their busy show schedule, the cruel training methods, and the high intellect noteworthy of the elephant.Â  Not only is the performance schedule strenuous, but the fact that such a huge animal is forced to travel from city to city *on a train* leaves no room for an argument that the animals are being treated with respect – in my opinion anyway.Â  In fact, given the conditions that circus elephants are continually forced to endure, I’m actually surprised that circus catastrophes don’t occur more often.

Zoos are another story;Â  zoo animals’ habitats try to mimic nature as closely as possible; they’re not exploited for the sake of making a few bucks (pony rides and things like that are different – as I said, elephants are highly intelligent and when you add in the traveling with the circus and the sharp stick used to prod them when they disobey…), but rather, zoos exist to help educate the public.Â  And if the general public is going to care enough about animals to want to help endangered species and to further conservation, zoos are a key factor in making this happen.Â  So that brings me to the following picture, which was in an email I was sent.Â  There is a zoo exhibit in Canada where you get to go in a pool adjacent to the polar bear exhibit; with only a pane of glass separating you from the polar bears (albeit a VERY thick pane of glass!).Â  It’s a great example of how zoos can capture and hold people’s attention about animals without harming the animal in the process.Â  Check it out – maybe I can see it live some day!

**

### Comments

**derek**Neat. I thought the person with the polar bear looked a bit young to be a keeper, then I read your post. :)  
**taylhis**It's about 14.5 hours from NW Ohio. And oops, I guess it's not a full zoo, but rather a Polar Bear Habitat (also the name of the place) in a town called Cochrane in Ontario - which is also the birthplace of Tim Horton. And yes, you can only swim with them in the summer. For more pics: http://www.polarbearhabitat.ca/ Canada has some cool animal attractions. Marineland is only 4 hours away: http://www.marinelandcanada.com/nfdefault.html  
**justj**Dang, I think I want to go to that zoo. Where is it. Time for a road trip!!! Ok, I guess it could wait until it get warmer.  
**jamiahsh**That WOULD be cool! I don't recall ever going to a circus, but I agree zoos are a much different venue entirely.

# A Time Capsule - Literally

And while I’m on the subject of time capsules, the following article about hidden history really caught my eye:

*(CNN) by Kelly Marshall — A long-hidden message has been discovered inside Abraham Lincoln’s pocket watch, the Smithsonian’s Museum of American History announced Tuesday.*

*Watchmaker Jonathan Dillon was repairing Lincoln’s watch in April 1861 when he heard about the attack on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and wrote a short message on the metal inside the watch, the Smithsonian said.*

*There it remained, unseen for almost 150 years, it said.*

*In a 1906 interview with The New York Times, Dillon reported that as soon as he heard the news about the first shots of the Civil War, he unscrewed the dial of the watch and wrote on the metal, “The first gun is fired. Slavery is dead. Thank God we have a President who at least will try.”*

*The actual message that the museum found differs from the watchmaker’s recollection. It says, “Jonathan Dillon, April 13-1861, Fort Sumpter [sic] was attacked by the rebels on the above date J Dillon, April 13-1861, Washington, thank God we have a government, Jonth Dillon.”*

*According to the Smithsonian, it was not unusual for professional watchmakers to record their work inside a watch.*

*“Lincoln never knew of the message he carried in his pocket,” said Brent D. Glass, director of the National Museum of American History.*

*The museum decided to open the watch after being contacted by the watchmaker’s great-great-grandson, Doug Stiles, who had heard about the message Dillon said he had inscribed and wanted to see if it was really there.*

I think it’s really cool that this window into history was only recently discovered.Â  If we had known about it all along, I don’t think the message would carry as much significance.Â  The fact that the message’s existence was the subject of a family legend only adds to the mystique, and it’s a good thing the museum decided to follow up on the great-great-grandson’s tip!

### Comments

# Buried Treasure

In our local newspaper lately, there’s been multiple stories covering the demolition of an old high school in the county.Â  The demolition uncovered a few surprises; one was a time capsule, placed in the brick walls by students and faculty in 1922 when the high school was built.Â  I found it really neat that no one knew the time capsule was there until a few weeks ago when a bulldozer found the vintage peanut butter can filled with letters from students and other 1922 memorabilia.

The high school was finally knocked down, but construction crews are still deconstructing the foundation of the old building.Â  In the newspaper the other day was an item about another buried treasure.Â  It seems the school was built with a long-forgotten swimming pool, whose existence was uncovered after many weeks of demolition.Â  Upon further investigation and interviews with surviving former students, it was discovered that the former swimming pool did actually exist but was never actually used since it was contaminated with raw sewage (eww!) shortly after it was built.Â  They filled in the swimming pool with clay and built over it, and it was forgotten about until the school’s demolition all these years later in 2009.

The story of the legendary swimming pool was of particular interest to me because at my own high school (located in suburban Chicago, far away from the rural Ohio area where we now reside), there was always a rumor of an ill-fated swimming pool.Â  Our gym’s floor sounded hollow, and there was always chatter about the existence of a secret covered-up swimming pool underneath the gym floor.Â  I never did find out if there was any truth to the rumors, and I wonder if students attending that high school today talk of the same legend?

### Comments

**justj**I don't think there were any pools beneath either of the High Schools I went to. But I do remember a few in my freshman class that fell for the $5.00 elevator pass. Upperclass students would sell them for a dollar. I mean really, it was a 1 story building.... Now they could have used an elevator in Montpelier. Moving the old reel-to-reel video machine and camera up and down the steps of that High School was a lot of fun... NOT.  
**taylhis**I didn't figure there was a swimming pool at my alma mater, but at the same time, people around here there didn't realize there was a pool until the building was torn down...  
**jamiahsh**I also have been reading about the school's demolition... imagine meets swimming in raw sewage....ewwww! But the voices from the past are cool esp. since no one seemed to know of them.  
**Phyllis Beyer**No, there is no swimming pool. I have had the subject come up when visiting with former Hubble students who now attend the high school.

# Dream Sequence...

My youngest daughter Disney has a cold, so lately, she’s been waking up every hour (at least).Â  So my sleep has been totally interrupted, which, for a person like me, is not good.Â  I’m barely functioning.Â  My body aches, my head pounds, I have no attention span, no patience with anybody, and I’ve been very grumpy – the fact that I’m admitting it says a lot :).Â  It’s been difficult for me to find joy in things lately, just because I’m so tired, and the thought of retiring to my bed at night now fills me with dread because of the ‘night terrors’ – waking to my daughter’s screams and demands.Â  Even if I don’t wake up, I can still hear them in my sleep, and it’s causing chaos in other aspects of my life.Â  I’m barely even looking forward to this business trip we’re taking this weekend to New Jersey.Â  A few weeks ago, before this all started happening, I was ecstatic about this trip because it’s right next to New York City and I’ve never been there.Â  Not only that, but we’re planning on stopping at TWO zoos on the way there, which as you might know, would normally put me over the moon with excitement.Â  But now I’m just worried about getting there in one piece.Â  My husband is the one who is actually crawling out of bed with our daughter; he is the slave to her every demand.Â  So if **I** feel this bad, is he going to feel well enough to get us through the 10-hour drive and back safely?Â  He assures me he is, but I don’t know; I just feel SO crappy all the time!

Anyway, to help try to regulate my sleep until this passes, I’ve been taking the diet supplement Melotonin.Â  It’s been providing me with some calm before I fall asleep; I used to lay there for about 30 minutes at least with a pounding heart and tense muscles before I could fall asleep, just waiting to hear my daughter’s screams.Â  But the Melotonin is helping me calm down a little bit, and hopefully it will make my bedroom feel less like a prison and more like the restful haven I was used to.Â  One side effect of the Melotonin I’ve noticed is that it’s given me VERY vivid dreams.Â  The other night, I dreamt that my mom gave us these yogurt containers all stackedÂ  in rows that spelled out some sort of life advice.Â  You know how they print stuff on product containers?Â  Well, she had collected different flavors of yogurt that said different things and stacked them all up until they made a few sentences of wisdom.Â  It was a gift for something; we got to read the advice and then keep all the yogurt.Â  I wish I could remember the life advice they spelled out, but I don’t.Â  And after she gave us the gifts of yogurt, we found out that she and my friend Megan had been awarded shared custody of one of my daughter’s friends whose parents were getting divorced and didn’t want her anymore.Â  *That* was random…Â  but aren’t dreams always that way?Â  Here’s to hoping our family’s sleep can regulate in the near future.Â  I’m taking Disney to the doctor on Thursday – I’m at the end of my rope.Â  Luckily our pediatrician is also a sleep expert, so maybe he can help.Â  I have so much going on right now that it would be SO great to be able to actually enjoy it!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**"A Blessing on Your Head... Mazel tov, Mazel tov." Sorry... couldn't resist. The title made me flash back to Tevye's Dream Sequence. But hope you and everyone else get some much needed rest.  
**derek**A trip, eh? Well I hope you and Dis can get some sleep so you can have fun. When will you return? Looks like spring break would have been a bad time for me to come over anyway!  
**Phyllis Beyer**You are welcome for all the yogart, I think. What a strange dream. I hope Disney feels better soon and you get back to normal (if there is such a thing as normal with 4 kids).

# Parker - The Eternal Optimist

### Comments

# Manners, Kid-Style

When I stopped at the gas station the other day to get the kids a snack, there was a “little person” working the counter – is that the preferred term these days for someone with dwarfism?Â  I certainly don’t want to insult anyone, so pardon my ignorance…

So anyway, I decided to give my kids a talk about why it’s not polite to stare at people; I was especially targeting my almost-5-year-old since she is very curious about people and the differences in the way people look, that sort of thing – and she’s not very discreet about her curiosity.Â  So I was explaining to her about why we shouldn’t stare at people, and she had a sincere question:Â  Is it ok to stare at broccoli?

I told my husband this story when we got home, and he was wondering if she was joking, but no, her tone was indeed sincere.Â  My eldest daughter and I laughed when she asked it, but not AT her, we only thought it was cute and silly.Â  But like I told my husband, I really don’t think she was *trying* to be silly.Â  Like us, my husband knows by now that Samantha is a very unique individual, and she just has strange questions sometimes.Â  She was more than a handful as a two-year-old, but the further away we get from that stage in her life, the more we can enjoy her very individualistic personality and free spirit!

**SAMMIE**

**[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/3-15-09-roller-skating-020.jpg)**

### Comments

**derek**I just bought some broccoli after staring at the frozen vegetables for a short time. I mean, at the grocery store- not a cold day in a special-ed room. ;) I also had a class yesterday with an 8th-grade girl with dwarfism. I didn't give her any more of a look than the others in the class- a step up from the occurrence with the albino boy a couple months ago when I had to say something to him after catching myself staring (only for a few seconds). It's a natural thing to do when we see something for the first time. I'm not sure why our culture takes offense to this, but we do.  
**justj**I'm not sure if you can stare at broccoli, I've heard it's not easy being green. ;) Interesting question for the situation. I had a couple of kids like that. They sometimes got their parents in tough/embarrassing situations.  
**jamiahsh**I dunno... IS IT polite to stare at broccoli? Love you Sammie!

# The Bus Driver Did WHAT?!?

I read a news item a few weeks ago about Shawn Brim, a bus driver in Washington who stopped his bus, got off and adjusted his side-view mirrors, and then proceeded to punch a nearby McGruff the Crime Dog in the face!Â  What was he thinking?Â  He thought it would be funny, he said.Â  Understandably, everyone failed to see the humor in punching a children’s hero in front of a crowd of horrified kids, and the bus driver was arrested.

On the other side of the coin and the world, there was another bus driver whose actions can only be described as heroic.Â  Seems Brim has something to learn from Meher Mohammad Khalil:

*LAHORE, Pakistan (CNN) — His job was to drive the bus. But Meher Mohammad Khalil is now being hailed as a lifesaver.Â  When gunmen jumped out of bushes and began spraying bullets at the bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team Tuesday, Khalil quickly sized up his options and got everyone to safety.*

*“First I thought there were some firecrackers going off. Then, when I saw the elite force cars in front of me taking fire, I immediately lost my voice,” Khalil told CNN on Wednesday.*

*“At that time, the other elite car that was with us gave me cover, and then, when I saw he was giving me cover, my courage and my patience returned.Â  I decided to take the vehicle from there, and one way or another, even if I had to drive over someone, I would take this bus and escape.”*

*Khalil returned to the scene of the attack in the Pakistani city of Lahore on Wednesday to honor those who were killed and to place flowers in their memory.*

*One of the dead was Zafar Khan, a friend and fellow bus driver who had been in a vehicle behind Khalil.*

*“My eyes filled with tears that these were people that I was eating with and who died in doing their duty.”  
Khalil had been part of a convoy heading to Gaddafi Stadium, where the Sri Lankan cricket team was to continue a match against Pakistan.*

*Six police officers were killed, in addition to Khalil’s friend Khan who was driving a bus with the match umpires.*

*The Sri Lankan cricketers praised Khalil’s quick thinking and action, saying he saved their lives.Â  Six team members were injured by broken glass and shrapnel.*

*Team captain Mahela Jayawardene wrote on his Web site of Khalil: “He probably saved our lives, showing remarkable bravery in the face of direct gunfire to keep the bus moving.”*

*Crowds mobbed Khalil as he paid his respects at the place where his life changed in an instant.*

*“He is a hero, a real hero, a real man of the people,” a man in the crowd said.*

*Private donors in Lahore have rewarded Khalil with 300,000 rupees (more than $3,000) — a small fortune for a Pakistani bus driver.*

*Today, Khalil says all he can feel is pain of the loss of life. And he called on the attackers to recognize that their victims are humans just like them, with mothers and sisters.*

*“For God’s sake, please stop this terrorism and let this nation breathe a sigh of relief,” he said.*

### Comments

**derek**Good for the driver- he deserves the reward and more. This story makes out-of-control parents at their children's games look absolutely tame.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... Heroes are INDEED "ordinary people who make bad decisions at good moments"

# The Mayor And The Macarena - Part Deux

About a year ago, I had a blog post called “The Mayor And The Macarena”.Â  It was about my family’s first roller skating outing (it was a birthday party for the Girl Scouts organization), and my post was so titled because our county’s only roller skating rink is owned and operated by the town mayor.Â  Not quite being fully assimilated to small town living, I guess, I got a big kick out of watching the mayor play DJ; especially when he spun old has-been but essential tunes for us to dance to on our roller skates like “The Macarena”, “YMCA”, “The Chicken Dance”, and “The Hokey Pokey”.Â  So it’s that time of year again – Happy Birthday Girl Scouts! – and we attended the birthday party at the roller rink again on Sunday.Â  That reminds me, did you know that the infamous chicken dance now has lyrics?

“I don’t wanna be a chick,  
I don’t wanna be a duck,  
I just wanna shake my butt”  
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

Well, that was news to me because as far as I knew, the chicken dance was just that – a dance with motions and no lyrics, but I bet you can guess which word the kids absolutely LOVED putting the emphasis upon…Â  ah, kids!

Coincidentally, our Girl Scout’s younger sister was also invited to a birthday party at the roller rink on Sunday.Â  Which meant 5 straight hours of roller skating!Â  After 5 hours, the girls had showed so much improvement!Â  We even got skates for our 2-year-old, but those skates were practically bigger than she was, and they were so heavy, she didn’t have a chance:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/3-15-09-roller-skating-002.jpg)

But like I said, after a few hours on the skating floor, the older two really got the hang of it, despite a few spills and some breaks, err, rest periods, not broken bones, thank goodness!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/3-15-09-roller-skating-010.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/3-15-09-roller-skating-026.jpg)The girls’ baby brother even had a great time singing and bopping along with the music…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/3-15-09-roller-skating-025.jpg)  
A great way to cap off an extremely busy weekend… we had so much fun, I think we’ll make a few more trips over there even *before* the Scout’s party comes around again next year!

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I remember roller skating both when I was younger and when you, Lisa, were young. I even think I remember you having a birthday party at Funway one year. I bet the kids had a ball. I don't think I would try it now.....I would probably break something.  
**derek**Sounds like you had a good time :)  
**Mary Schaufelberger**I was the chick you saw holding on to the railing for the first two hours, then I'd get a little daring and get about a foot away from the wall, and by the time it was almost time to go I could go forward in a circle, legs locked and arms out for balance. You better not touch me though, or I'd end up on my derriere!!! Sounds like a fun time though!!! I wonder if I'd be any better at it by now???  
**taylhis**The Limbo was done - twice. I forgot to mention that everything was done TWICE - once during each party.  
**taylhis**Oh yes... something about do-si-do... I don't quite remember. That isn't the part the kids were SHOUTING, haha.  
**justj**Macarena, Chicken Dance? Whatever happened to the Limbo at the skating rink? Not that I ever did any of those things. I could only skate in a circle, frontwards. I tried not to fall down.  
**jamiahsh**Are there words for the bridge... or is it just an instrumental? OOOP... I a get confused... of course I knew there were words to the Macarena. I meant the Chicken Dance.  
**jamiahsh**Words to the Macarena. Have to remember that.  
**jamiahsh**Hmmm... I for one never "got the hang" of skating.

# The Lion In Winter

I am very glad we were able to arrange our obscenely busy schedule in such a way to be able to see the play The Lion In Winter on Saturday night.Â  A great friend and fellow blogger, [Jamiahsh](http://jamiahsh.tangents.org/) was ~~a sucker~~ kind enough to babysit all four kids for us, as this was not a play for children.Â  Not that it was “adult” per se, but our younger two especially would NOT have been able to sit still throughout the entire production.

The Lion in Winter tells the story of King Henry II and his family in 1183.Â  Although the actual play is fictional, it is based upon real people and real events.Â  King Henry has 3 surviving sons who share the same goal: to inherit the kingdom, although that is where their similarities end.Â  Richard, the eldest brother, “growls out for gore”, as it is said in the play.Â  He is the warrior of the bunch, and he has the temper to match.Â  Geoffrey (played a little too convincingly, haha, by a great friend and fellow blogger, [justj](http://justj.tangents.org/) – great job!) is the scheming, conniving, if mostly forgotten middle brother.Â  Geoffrey “hums treachery” and is the epitomy of someone who suffers from middle child syndrome – and it’s that much more hilarious when his parents actually admit to not giving him the time of day!Â  John is the youngest brother, who is favored by his father for some reason despite his lack of… well, his lack of much of *anything* upstairs (I’m tapping my head).Â  Eleanor, Henry’s estranged and imprisoned wife, is a tyrant in her own right, although she is largely limited by gender roles in the twelfth century.

This particular production was co-directed by a good friend – someone whose many talents I’ve long admired – she’s a gem!Â  She is a very detail-oriented, hard worker, and the finished production illustrated those attributes.Â  Because The Lion In Winter is typically an historical drama, it wouldn’t normally be one of my favorite shows – I’m the type to much prefer good stagings of upbeat musicals like Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, The Wizard of Oz or slapstick comedies like Idol Night at the Karaoke Place, The Nerd, or even a good melodrama.Â  That being said, I can honestly say (and to my surprise) that I was never once bored during The Lion in Winter.Â  And even being an historical drama, it’s not without its (large) share of comedy as well.Â  The dialogue (and hilarious insults!) fly swiftly and smartly, and I honestly wish time would have allowed me another opportunity to see the play as I think there were many more things I could have caught, especially if I weren’t a walking zombie these days.Â  The play is complex; its dialogue and characters almost too intricate to effectively absorb in just one sitting.Â  The playwright, James Goldman, found many opportunities within the script to have the characters make clever satirical remarks, often making fun of the time period in which the play takes place.Â  Among my favorites was the following exchange between John and his mother Eleanor, the Queen:  
Towards the end of the first act of *Lion in Winter*, John is astonished and horrified when his older brother Richard pulls a knife on him. “A knife,” he says, “he’s got a knife.”Â  To which his mother, Eleanor, responds by saying: “Of course he has a knife.Â  He always has a knife.Â  We all have knives.Â  It is eleven eighty-three and we’re barbarians!”Â  Just the memory of that line makes me smile, especially because the woman who played Eleanor was simply awesome – she gave one of the best performances I’ve ever seen on a community theater’s stage.Â  I would expect it to be difficult to give life to a character as complex as Eleanor; after all, in Henry’s words, Eleanor “thinks heavy thoughts like molten lead and marble slabs.”Â  but she did it marvelously.

Actually, all of the acting was great in this production; King Henry came across as powerful yet emotionally weary and even a bit vulnerable, and King Philip of France seemed to be both a willing yet also an unwitting pawn in the treacherous game played by the royal family of England around 1183.

Also of note in this particular staging of the show was the remarkable set which exemplified an old European castle quite well.Â  Although it amounted to hard physical labor for its extensive stage crew,Â  the medieval set was easily (depends who you ask, I guess!) transformed into 6 distinct settings for the play.

Overall, a good show, and a fine job by both cast and crew.Â  I only wish I had a chance to review it earlier so I could have done my part in recommending it to and recruiting audience members.Â  Well, such is a busy life with 4 little kids, I suppose!

### Comments

**mary911**Our next show is May 22 thru 24th. I understand the no time, so whenever you get yourself rested, let me know!  
**taylhis**Sounds good... Once the weather gets nice, I try to walk my little ones around town, so I don't see why I couldn't bring some fliers with me to post. And we were going to possibly see about an ad for LS auditions in your program, seeing as how they were only $10. What is your next show and when is it? Cross promotion is a great idea, but I also have NO extra time to work on theater stuff right now... maybe in the near future, my daughter will actually start sleeping again? Then we can talk!  
**Mary Schaufelberger**If I may offer a suggestion....I'm wondering....could our two groups collaborate and do some advertising for each other? I'm sure there are plenty from our group that would be willing to put fliers up for your group in our area if you would be willing to reciprocate. Another suggestion is, depending on the type of show you are doing, to send out letters to schools, churches and organizations. With Meet Me in St. Louis the director sent out letters to every church in town and in the surrounding area, selling the show as "family friendly" and offering a dollar off the ticket price if there were ten or more in your group. I know at Christmas times we have sold an entire "block" of seats to one of our local banks and they have used the show as their holiday party. The VP's are a little new at this type of advertising, but what we have tried so far has been doing well and we intend to continue. The VP's are associated with the Ohio Arts Council and besides receiving grant money from the state to help with our shows, they have offered some advice. One thing they mentioned to us is that they thought that since our two groups are so close together, it would be good for us to work together, whether it be set piece swapping, costumes, or as we have just done, a little actor swapping!! :) Ok, I'm done for now...I could go on forever. If you'd like to know some more or have a gab session, let me know! Jamiahsh has my email! :)  
**justj**jamiahsh, Thanks for watching the little ones so taylhis and admin could make it to the show. It was great that you got a few from our neighboring theater to come to the show too. Us theater types like to share. I'm just wondering what we can do as theaters in this area to get the word out about our productions. We generally have a quality product, and there are too many people in the area missing it. Hmmm...  
**jamiahsh**I dunno, I think I contributing in promoting via blog and in rehearsals. Nice to know I succeeded in at least getting two people coming to see it and a few to cross over and audition for a future show.

# The Prehistoric Honeymooners

### Comments

# Black Sheep

About 2 years ago now, we found out a “family secret” about my husband’s aunt’s husband, Uncle Marc.Â  Marc is in his 40’s, and 2 years ago, he was arrested for having an inappropriate relationship with his teenage neighbor, which is alleged to have taken place between 2002 and 2006.Â  The story made front page news where he lives because Marc was a college campus police officer, although shortly after the charges were brought against him, he lost his job.Â  But the media has loved covering his story because of his former profession, and for any updates on the story, we have looked to the newspaper – it’s not like myÂ  husband’s aunt wants to call up all her family and friends and say, hey, guess what we’ve been up to?Â  Which brings me to the reason I’m writing about this now.Â  The other day as I was checking headlines in the newspaper (which I often do because IÂ  used to live in the area), I came across Uncle Marc on the front page – again.Â  But let me back up a little bit…

It’s not like we saw my husband’s Aunt Gerry and Uncle Marc all that often.Â  They live in Illinois and we live in Ohio.Â  But at least once a year, we would gather at my husband’s grandmother’s house, and they would be there with their two adorable children.Â  They seemed to be the perfect family; always doing things together, taking really cool family vacations and bringing their photos to the family gatherings to share.Â  As my husband and I started growing a family of our own, our daughters began to play with their cousins at the family get-togethers, and I remember Gerry admonishing us for staying in a hotel for Christmas 2006 (just months before Marc was charged!).Â  She said, next time, you don’t have to stay in a hotel when you visit Illinois, you can stay with us!Â  I thought that was so nice at the time, but looking back, I can’t be more thankful we didn’t take her up on that offer.

Let me clarify – Gerry is one of the nicest people.Â  Marc was always kind of quiet, but despite his shyness, we felt he was also nice.Â  When the news broke that he was charged with sexual assault of a minor, we were shocked – and immediately sympathetic toward Gerry.Â  But she stayed by her husband’s side, even getting herself into legal trouble in the process.Â  We all thought she was being naive, although I can’t really blame her for the ‘stand by her man’ attitude.Â  In this case though, she was wrong, and she definitely should have put her children first.Â  So anyway, Marc had somehow convinced her that the “rumors” about him and this young girl were untrue.Â  There was video evidence, however, which is how the police became involved – seems the girl’s father found the videos on their home computer.Â  As I said, I like to be a person who gives others the benefit of the doubt.Â  We met Marc and Gerry for Christmas at a restaurant in 2007 when no other family members would have any part of him.Â  I felt weird when I didn’t want him near my kids, and although we all dined together, we did maintain a safe distance.Â  But even then, I was thinking that I didn’t know the whole story.Â  If what Marc is accused of really did happen, I told myself, then he is sick, and he needs help.Â  But Gerry and the kids need some normalcy, and especially because the rest of the family is shunning them, the best thing I can do for her is to let her see my kids, and at the same time, I really wanted to see her kids.

And then, months ago, my husband and I were curious about why this was not going to trial.Â  We did a simple search on the internet, and what we found was extremely disturbing.Â  It seemed that Marc’s young neighbor had posted their wedding registry, their baby registry (all fictional), as well as an ‘I love you’ message on myspace.Â  The text was extremely crudely disturbing, and based upon what we read, we thought this girl was very sick as well as Marc, to say the least.Â  It was reminicent of the movie The Crush, if you’ve seen it.Â  Clearly the adult man is at fault, but at the same time, he is a victim because the teenage girl is a stalker who will stop at nothing to get what she wants.Â  So that’s what we thought…Â  And we thought that maybe her sickness is why the case was not going to trial…

As I said before, Marc was on the local newspaper’s front page the other day – again.Â  It’s the only update we’ve received about his case.Â  And what I read shocked me to the core – I guess that’s why I’m writing about it now.Â  As reported in the newspaper, *Marc* is the one who wrote those things on the registries and myspace.Â  Marc, who had us believing that this young girl was crazy and stalking him and everything else, is really the one who wrote these horrible, crude, and graphic remarks about their relationship on the internet.Â  He fooled his friends and family yet again, and by doing so, he found a way to abuse his victim – yet again.Â  How is this girl ever going to find a job?Â  If you read the things that are on the internet about her, supposedly written by her, you can see that she doesn’t stand a chance.Â  It’s horrible.Â  And why am I sharing all this? Â  Every family has its ‘black sheep’, I guess. Â  Writing about it is a form of therapy for me, I suppose.Â  In a way, I’m mad at myself for giving him the benefit of the doubt, even though I used to be proud of that aspect of my personality – I always try to give people a chance.Â  It kills me to think that other judgemental family members can tell me “I told you so” when they shunned Marc and his family early on when I thought they were wrong.

I hate the fact that we tried to give this man the benefit of the doubt, and he messed it up, yet again.Â  I hate what he is doing to his wife, his children, his extended family, and most of all, to his victim.Â  His actions are victimizing her over and over again.

It’s interesting for me to read the newspaper readers’ comments on the stories about Marc.Â  They all like to talk about how he’ll “get it” in prison and things like that.Â  I read these statements, but because I know the person, it’s different for me.Â  I don’t usually like to see people go to prison for non-violent offenses.Â  And I’m a big believer in innocent until proven guilty, which I think is a concept most often left behind in the United States justice system.Â  But in this case, I’m kind of wondering why it’s taken so long to go to trial.Â  I can’t help but wonder how much damage could have been prevented if they had sent Marc to prison already.Â  He is obviously a very sick individual, and I pray he gets the help he needs.Â  Most of all, I pray for the healing of his family, which I don’t see happening until he is out of their lives.

### Comments

**derek**I hear ya, though I can't share your feelings. The closest I've been to someone in this situation was someone I worked with for a very short period of time, and he didn't make his case worse by trying to frame someone either. Just remember, your own family had nothing to do with this and even tried to show support when you thought your extended family were being too hard on him.  
**justj**No words. Just my support for you and your family.  
**jamiahsh**That is a shame. I feel for the family and esp you who have attempted to be optimistic about Marc's situation. There is absolutely nothing wrong with your character but in his and I hope that he gets the help he needs. I would be strongly protective of my kids as well. But frightening thought.

# You Are Under Arrest... But It's Past My Bedtime

I found the following story amusing.Â  Lots of people have tried to impersonate the police, but this one is noteworthy because of the impersonator’s age, his lack of bad intentions, and the fact that he was so successful at it – seems this 14-year-old worked an entire shift as a cop, including a role in apprehending a suspect!

*March 3, 2009 (CHICAGO) (WLS) — A teenager impersonating a Chicago police officer played a minor role in an arrest on January 24, according to Police Superintendent Jody Weis.*

*On Tuesday, Supt. Weis called on the U.S. Secret Service for a review of the security breach, which he called “outrageous, angering, disturbing and unforgettable.”*

*“In my mind it’s almost incomprehensible it could have happened. Unfortunately it did. It’s very disturbing, and that’s why we want to send a message that this can’t happen again,” said Supt. Jody Weis, Chicago Police Dept.*

*Weis said an internal investigation shows seven Chicago police officers broke department rules during the incident. All districts will be re-trained, according to Weis.*

*The 14-year-old boy- a former police cadet and apparent aspiring police officer- entered the back door at the Grand Crossing District Station on the city’s South Side on January 24. He was dressed in regulation clothing and police say it’s not clear where he got the uniform. He had no gun or CPD star, but was issued a radio and was sent out with a traffic officer. He worked an entire 5 1/2 hour shift.*

*“During that time the subject drove the squad car for approximately two hours, interacted with the public while responding to at least five assignments, operated the portable data terminal and participated in the detention of a suspect,” said Supt. Weis.*

*The impersonator played a minor role in the arrest of a violation of order of protection, Weis said. The boy briefly held the suspect’s arm behind his back.*

*After the shift, the teenager and the relatively new female officer he was riding with returned to the station, where a supervisor, unidentified, realized the teen was not an officer and had him arrested.*

*How is it so many others missed the fact the teen was not a cop- and unable to legally drive?*

*“I don’t know. They weren’t paying attention- perhaps- maybe they were lax. That’s why we did the investigation. Those answers we have to hold tight until we go through the adjudication stage,” said Supt. Weis.*

*For that reason, Weis said, the names of the 7 officers facing discipline, and the nature of the recommended sanctions cannot now be disclosed.*

*“Based on contract agreements we can’t identify the officers and in these situation if we gave out the ranks it wouldn’t take a rocket scientist to realize who they actually were,” said Supt. Weis.*

*The boy’s name has not been released. He pleaded not guilty in juvenile court.*

*He is no longer in custody, but is wearing an electronic monitoring device.*

### Comments

**derek**I bet she could get the kid's price though for a couple extra years. ;)  
**taylhis**There was an article the other day about an actress from my hometown - Warrenville - who is now on General Hospital or one of those daytime soaps. And all of the commenters on the story said she couldn't possibly be 35, but she is and has always looked younger. She was a cousin in the Home Alone movies, and she tried to get into an R rated movie way back in the 90's when she was around 21. She was denied entry into the movie because she looked so much younger, and later returned with her ID to get in.  
**derek**I remember reading this story when it broke a few weeks ago. There are some kids who look much older than they are and I suspect he is one of them. My pastor has a son who always looked a few years older than he was- people said he was even shaving when a high school freshman. Conversely, there are those who look much younger- many actors you see playing a kid in high school are really at least 18 or older. The associate pastor's son at my church is in his early 20s and looks 17.  
**jamiahsh**Intriguing... Indeed, how did the department NOT know that the "officer" was 14 years old? He must have really looked old for his age. But... Police Academy 36: The Junior Years

# What Sets Him Off?

What sets him off?Â  Everything under the sun and even the sun itself.Â  I’m talking about our lovely scarlet macaw parrot.Â  I would not recommend these things as pets for ANYONE – it’s true when they say that wild animals cannot be tamed!Â  Why we have our bird is a long story, and it’s not important now because we’re stuck with him.Â  I’m not one to just “get rid” of pets unless the circumstances are extreme.Â  It’s a pet peeve (pun intended) of mine when people get animals and then discard them just because they’re sick of taking responsibility for them.Â  And in a way (though I can’t dwell on this right now because I’m extremely upset with Squawky – who really lives up to his name), I love our parrot and wouldn’t want to ~~curse~~ see him go to another home.

So that brings me to the point of this post – parrots scream constantly.Â  They might be beautiful to look at, but their ear-splitting screams are beyond annoying.Â  They’re unstoppable and headache-producing, and more than once, our parrot’s screams have made our kids cry.Â  We’ve adjusted our lifestyle to avoid his upsetting the kids, and for the most part that works; it seems to be me who feels the brunt of the negative parrot side effects.Â  Thank goodness we were able to move into a bigger house a few years ago where Squawky was given his own room.Â  Unfortunately, he shares the laundry room, and since somehow I was voted the family laundry-doer (gender?), it seems that Squawky’s screaming affects me the most.Â  I cannot do laundry during the day because I can’t bring my young children in the laundry roomÂ  with me.Â  IÂ  do have a basket of toys in there, and they enjoy playing in there because there’s lots of light and a nice soft carpet to lay on.Â  But we get screamed at by the parrot.Â  By nighttime, I’m too tired to do all the laundry, so much of the time, I’m left to worry about when to do it.Â  Ideally, I’d do some here and there in between kids’ lunches, naps, diaper changes and my errands, but then the parrot gets all riled up and screams me right out of the laundry room.

I looked to the Internet for advice, and one site suggested noting his “triggers”.Â  What sets him off and makes him scream?Â  Making the list of his triggers hasn’t helped, however.Â  It’s only made me see that getting screamed out of the laundry room seems unavoidable.Â  Here are his triggers (if you’re thinking about getting a pet parrot, use this list as reasons on why you should NOT):

the sunrise or light of any kind – it’s a parrot’s natural instinct to be quiet in the dark so predators won’t find them.Â  But heavy drapes and a sheet over his cage do not block out all the light during the day, and it’s really difficult to do laundry at night in the dark – believe me I’ve tried more than once!

yelling – any yelling in the house gets him going – kids fighting, kids having fun, just raising our voices to hear each other when we’re in separate parts of the house.Â  He especially likes it when I yell at him for yelling!

singing – if my husband is in a show and needs to practice, everyone has to leave.Â  And not because my husband is a bad singer – he’s actually very talented.Â  But the bird will join in, and HE is a BAD singer!

talking on the phone – any time anyone is on the phone, the bird thinks we’re calling out for him I guess, but he takes it upon himself to yell.Â  So I can forget folding laundry while talking on the phone, which was a great way to pass the time while doing this boring task.

having his door open – closing his door not only muffles his screaming, but it makes him scream less for some reason

something he likes on tv – he has a tv in his room, which was put in there for me to watch while doing laundry.Â  But I can forget about hearing anything on the tv while I’m in there, thanks to the parrot.Â  Sometimes Animal Planet or his favorite show, The Price Is Right makes him scream along with the audience.

happiness – if he’s happy, he will get rowdy and play and scream.

anger – if he’s upset about not getting enough attention, he will scream.

hunger – if he’s hungry, he will scream.

thirst – if he’s thirsty, he will scream.

dogs barking – if our 2 dogs bark, which they do at least 4 times per day, the bird will join right in and scream.

So, I guess for now I’ve decided that the laundry must be a family affair.Â  I’ve gotten upset several times about this same issue and came to this conclusion before, but it’s never worked.Â  My husband works during the day, and at night, we’re usuallyÂ  busy or the kids have their own chores or homework to do, so my getting help with the laundry has not been a consistent solution.Â  The other thing we’ve thought of is to move the parrot out of the laundry room, but if you look at my list of Squawky’s triggers, you’ll see that he must be in a room with a door, which eliminates the other spare room we have on the first floor because it’s doorless.Â  I can’t imagine that he’d do any better on the second floor closer to the bedrooms either.Â  The laundry room is right below my bedroom so once he gets going in the morning, I can usually forget about sleeping in anyway.

Well, I guess I’m done venting for now.Â  I have a good hour to catch up on laundry since we have a meeting tonight and we took the kids to the babysitters early, so I have to make it productive.Â  I guess I will have to blast my ipod and leave my husband to fend for himself on his business call…Â  Well, it is HIS bird after all!

Here’s a picture of the jerk:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/squawky-early-2002.jpg)

Don’t let his cuteness fool you.Â  This is actually a “baby” picture.Â  He’s much more obnoxious looking now!

### Comments

**taylhis**Good suggestion, except for two things: they're very little and Christopher can't walk yet - what if there's an emergency? And, their father works from home, so if Mommy doesn't answer, they'll just interrupt Daddy's work! But, I COULD get a set of 3 and put them on all of us and let the kids play in there with me...  
**derek**Let them come to you and "grab" your attention...  
**taylhis**You think you're making a joke, but honestly, those look like something I would use! The problem is that I still have to be able to hear the kids if they need me though...  
**derek**How about [something like this](http://www.websoft-solutions.net/Noise_hearing_protector_ear_muff_p/pl-h9a.htm)? :D  
**taylhis**Actually, getting laughed at made me feel better somehow, so THANKS! And I was able to do the laundry - the ipod worked! I could still hear his screaming, but honestly, he didn't know what to do with himself when I was able to ignore him and didn't yell back!  
**Phyllis Beyer**I also thought your post was hilarious. Glad it's you and not me.  
**jamiahsh**Not to make light on your peril, but your post is hilarious. "here's a picture of the jerk." HEHEHEHE.

# Push

For date night on Tuesday, we really enjoy going to the movie theater, and this time we were between the movies Frost/Nixon and Push.Â  We actually decided to see Frost/Nixon, but we messed up on the movie times and ended up arriving after the movie had already started – so [Push](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0465580/) it was.

Push is a very unique type of movie.Â  It is action-packed, and I was never bored, but the intricate plot did tend to go over my head at times.Â  Not only that, it wasn’t exactly a feelÂ  good type of movie, and it carried a constant theme of doom and gloom.

[Dakota Fanning](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0266824/) (man has she grown up!) stars as a teenage “watcher” – a type of fictional person with psychic abilities.Â  “Watchers” can see the future which they draw on paper, and there are also “movers”, “sniffs”, “shadows”, and “pushers” to name a few of the superhero-ish types of characters in this movie.Â  Dakota Fanning’s character, along with a “mover” named Nick, must find a girl who holds the key to helping their type survive.Â  And they must constantly stay one step ahead ofÂ  The Division, the secret government agency who uses these psychics like lab rats.Â  The movie is set entirely in China, so the foreign element really helps to establish the complexity of the unknown in this movie.

Like I said, Push is a very different type of movie.Â  It was both clever and entertaining to see how the different psychics would use their powers to both work together and against each other.Â  The most intriguing of the psychics to me were the “Bleeders” whose screams could burst blood vessels (creepily done), and the “pushers” who could get inside people’s minds and make them believe things that aren’t true.Â  “Shadows” could cloak people from “Sniffs” who could smell a person from miles away using just an old toothbrush.

I enjoyed Push, which is not normally my type of movie.Â  I would be careful who I recommend this one to as well.Â  If you can get past a lot of violence (though worthy of only a PG13 rating), and you like superhero-like tales and/or science fiction, check out Push – you might be pleasantly surprised!

### Comments

**Morat’s Blog » A Little Push From J.S.**[...] the latter got more publicity.Â  I will direct you to a much more in depth description of Push from taylhis.Â  I will say that I absolutely adored this little gem.Â  It is very action-packed and [...]  
**jamiahsh**Just finished watching the DVD! WOW... REALLY GOOD! A lot going on. Interesting that Chris Evans, who played Nick, also played Johnny Storm aka The Human Torch in The Fantastic Four movies. And yes, little Dakota is growing up fast.  
**jamiahsh**OOOOOH! Intriguing... I don't think it has been well publicized or maybe I'm not looking hard enough.

# Snagglepuss

Today my son is 8 months old – how time flies!Â  Gone are the days when I could cradle him like a newborn baby and sing him to sleep.Â  There is no better way to relax than that, and I really miss it.Â  Yesterday when I was in Walmart, I literally almost cried when IÂ  saw the itty bitty baby outfits.Â  Why do they grow so fast?

So anyway, today is Christopher’s 8 month birthday, and he’s been growing by leaps and bounds lately.Â  He popped his first tooth a few weeks ago, and I swear, every day that tooth gets a little bit taller.Â  He just has the one tooth so far, like a snaggletooth, so we’ve been calling him “snagglepuss”.Â  I don’t think that nickname will stick though, it’s not quite as cute as his nickname of “Beeber”, which is how our 2-year-old used to say Christopher.

Here is “Snagglepuss” – note the little tooth on the bottom:



And he is finally sitting up!Â  A little late, butÂ  it seems as if now he’s doing everything at once!Â  He can scoot onÂ  his tummy, roll from his back to his tummy and his tummy to his back, and he can also sit up by himself when he’s laying down.Â  Now that he’s sitting, he can be busier because it’s easier for him to play.Â  Here he is sitting up:



And of course, after all of this activity, he gets tired, and sometimes, he doesn’t quite make it up to bed:



HAPPY 8 MONTH BIRTHDAY CHRISTOPHER!!!

### Comments

**derek**I've heard of half-birthdays, but I think this is the first 2/3 birthday I've ever heard celebrated. :)  
**jamiahsh**Happy Birthday big guy. What a smile... looks like a heartbreaker to me :D  
**Phyllis Beyer**WOW! He will be like a different baby when I see him. He is soooooooo adorable. Happy Birthday Christopher from Grandma and Papa.

# What The Truck?

IÂ  recently received an email forward containing pictures of trucks from Europe.Â  These trucks are cleverly painted so that they can effectively advertise their contents.Â  Check them out:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/03/saferedirect9.jpg)











### Comments

**derek**It looks like some tried to crop or blur the background, or do some brightness adjustments to make them look less fake, but you can't hide the facts that JustJ caught. It reminds me of a church sign generator I saw. What looked like a belief war between two churches on a forum was just a series of signs generated by someone.  
**taylhis**Oh well - gave me another number for my post count and got us all intrigued about Hot n' Spicy Pringles anyway...  
**taylhis**I actually thought that, but decided to post them anyway. Upon closer examination, I find it strange that they were all taken on what appears to be the exact same highway, by the exact same brick post and tree. Hmmm.... Guess those Europeans don't know how to paint trucks after all. I was wondering why they would bother to paint a truck for just one product when it would be more economical to use the trucks for multiple products. I guess I would hope that no one has enough spare time on their hands to be able to sit and photoshop all of this - maybe they should be out volunteering their time to a charitable organization instead! That's email forwards for ya!  
**justj**I was just looking at the trucks again. Does it strike anyone else as odd that all the trucks are pictured from the exact angle? Or that the trucks themselves are almost or are identical? Was this just a fancy photoshop experiment?  
**taylhis**Sounds good - not for me; I'm not a big spicy food fan. But if you come out here for the anniversary celebration, maybe you could mix up a batch for Chris!  
**derek**In other hot news, I made myself a new batch of superhot salsa using a blender. I took some advice and removed the tomato seeds first, and added some sugar. No longer bitter now, but very tasty (but can burn your mouth off if yours is not conditioned for hot foods).  
**derek**Spicy, otherwise known as hot. Gotcha. I need some more sleep.  
**taylhis**I think the idea is that the chips are so spicy, it's like an inferno tore through the truck.  
**derek**I *thought* it looked like something of a mess. What this has to do with potato chi- er, crisps though is anyone's guess.  
**jamiahsh**As you said... ane effective use of advertising  
**jamiahsh**hmm... the Hot n' Spicy Pringles really MUST Be HOT AND SPICY :D  
**taylhis**Fixed - just click the Pringles truck.  
**taylhis**The Pringles truck is made to look like an inferno swept through it. Tell me again how to make the picture larger and I will take your hint. ;)  
**derek**Is there a larger picture of the Pringles one available? I can't quite tell what's special about it. I see *something* but I'm not sure what it is. I do like the others.  
**jamiahsh**Hot n' Spicy Pringles... have we had those before or are they available in the States... sound interesting.  
**justj**I wonder what it would cost to do my truck like one of those?

# One Of The Worst True Crime Stories Ever...

Those of you who know me are aware that I’m a true crime buff.Â  For all of you many (I hope!) new readers – I am a true crime buff!Â  I like to read about true crime, so I guess you could say that I have a hidden agenda when I ask my brother-in-law (the cop) how his job is going.Â  A few years ago, there was an incredibly shocking crime in my brother-in-law’s jurisdiction of which he was forced to be a part, and it was terrifying for the entire community.

In July of 2004, Anson Paape decided to have an 18th birthday party for one of his kids’ friends named Michael Murray.Â  The party was at Paape’s home in what is normally a quiet suburb of Chicago, Illinois.Â  For some reason, he decided to supply the teenage party-goers with alcohol.Â  Even worse than that, he decided to round up some of the teenagers and take them down to his basement for a poker game.Â  The reason I say that the poker game was worse than furnishing the teens with alcohol is because this was a poker game with a deadly twist – Russian Roulette.Â  Paape distributed bullets to each of the teens, and the person with the winning hand was supposed to load his bullet, put the gun to the head of the player to their right, and pull the trigger.Â  As if playing this so-called game (and with teenagers!) wasn’t crazy enough, Paape decided to mix it up, and he kept changing the rules.Â  When Michael Murray won the hand of poker, Anson Paape picked up the weapon, held it to Murray’s forehead and pulled the trigger before Murray could even react enough to push it away.Â  Michael Murray was killed instantly on his 18th birthday.Â  The other teenagers fled the house, and tracked down some police officers who were on patrol.Â  When they arrived at the crime scene, Anson Paape was no where to be found.Â  He was gone for two days before finally being apprehended, and he was tried, convicted, and will spend probably the rest of his life in prison.

It’s an insane story – it defies all reason.Â  I can’t imagine what this man was thinking.Â  And what a tragic outcome.Â  Not only did a young man lose his life, but Anson Paape’s 5 children are now without a father.Â  They were also witnesses to the horrifying event, along with other teenagers at the party that night.Â  It’s just so sad.

The reason I’m writing about this is because I remember when this happened.Â  My brother-in-law had to work overtime to help man the SWAT trailer they had to set up while Paape was on the lam.Â  I think everyone in Chicagoland was relieved when they caught him.

### Comments

**Conrad Caria**Hi Samantha, My name is Conrad, me and your dad were best friends back in Jr High, what happened has bothered me and some other friends for quite some time, I found out about it from my mother who was like a mom to your dad who saw it on the news, after this long I've felt compelled to write you, I don't want to get into a public discussion with you but I would like to talk to you, if you would like to chat you can contact me at coolwater\_115@yahoo.com, I hope to hear from you. Conrad  
**Samantha Pappe**I do know my dad and i do know what happend. @ Watcher & Moonbeam where you there July 9th of 2004 NO. Do you know my grandpa peronally No. So dont come at me like i dont know my own damn family. I knew my dad had 2 son's & as far as how as me never meeting them i didnt want to. I was asked when i was younger and i didnt want to. Now John(one of my fathers son's) is married and has kid's. His x-wife was invited to my Aunts wedding she could of came 2 of my sisters and i were there they choose not to come. So you tell me whose ducking?  
**Watcher**For the record, "Samantha Pappe," your grandfather, Anson's father, was never much of a hugger, so don't think you guys were any kind of an exception. As for the case and the people surrounding the case, I choose not to slander any one of them. Just know that there were a lot of inconsistencies in the case that you can see for yourself in public record. To Taylhis, thank you for posting and generating so much interest around this story. It's interesting to hear all the things that people think about Anson Paape, but you do have to understand that it's not the whole story. Will people who don't really know Anson or the case ever really know the truth? I fear that they won't, but it's good to at least have exposure. From what I know about the facts of the case, things that did not fit into the neat little picture that the prosecution was painting were left out, and other manipulations were made to make the case cut and dry. As with most every case, the truths of the case will have to be ironed out in the appeals process. I hope that you are following the entire process if you really do want to know what happened.  
**Samantha Pappe**@ Hue You are completley correct about all that my father does have 2 son but they live far when Anson was with my mom him and his x-wife never had connection she didnt want to. Last year she was supposed to go to my aunt wedding but never showed because us girls were there. My father loves us and his sons and i wish i could meet them.MY father have done so many good things for my family. But my dads parents always hated us my grandpa wouldnt even touch us he has never even hugged us. Yesterday i called my dads mom and ask to borrow money since they have never gave a a birthday gift or x mas gift and they said no we cant we just spent 6000 on a new lawer for your dad. We are getting evicted from our house and my grandpa and grandma dont carej what they dont understand is hes not getting out he commited 1st degree murder he done. Hes is not coming back he killed a little boy prison for the rest of his life is his punishment. Just kills me to hear "girls ill be home soon" when ever i go see him because i know i wont see him home ever again. But thats life and his parents need to notice that. He rewind my life an it will effect me for the rest of my life. Just every one needs to move on this is the last post i will ever post because theres no point anymore 78 years is final hes not coming back.  
**Moonbeam**You have heard one side of the story of Anson and his child support problems. Now hear the other side. When Anson and his wife got divorced, she wanted to be paid child support but wouldnâ€™t let Anson near the two children. She got a court order requiring Anson to stay 500 feet away from the two boys. The judge in the divorce said that if Anson did not have access to the children, then he did not have to pay child support. She then got mad and moved away so that Anson couldnâ€™t find her or the boys. Three years later, Anson learned that his ex-wife and the two children lived in Chicago, but, because of the court order, he was prevented from approaching them. Many times, he sat in his car outside their house, waiting for the boys to come home from school. He just wanted to say hello, but he couldnâ€™t do even that. Imagine the hurt, when you see people you love, and you canâ€™t come near them. If you have children, especially at the ages of two and three years old, then you will know what I am talking about. This is why, for eighteen years, Ansonâ€™s ex-wife did not even try to collect child support. But if Anson has any money in the bank, or investments, or retirement funds, that money will go to child support. At the time of his divorce from his ex-wife, Anson worked for the railroad. Her aunt, who also worked there, had gotten him this job. After the divorce, the aunt found ways to poison his workplace against Anson, and Anson was laid off. Suddenly Anson lost everything he held dear: family and job. There is no winning side in a divorce case. Both sides lose. Both sides have pain inflicted upon them. Our prayers, then and now, are for everyone involved. Anson loves his two boys and his five girls very, very much. Anson even found ways to include children who gravitated to him because their families couldnâ€™t or wouldnâ€™t provide the emotional support that they needed. He has a big heart, but his heart put him into a situation which resulted in him going to prison. He canâ€™t be near his family now, but life moves on. He always wishes that someday, he can be with them all.  
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**taylhis**I have updated some of the content of this blog post after it was brought to my attention that it might be offensive to some people. True, blogs are not subject to the same bias regulations as mainstream media, and I don't plan on going out of my way to keep from offending people since I believe that blogs are opinion forums. However, I felt the need to change some of my original language because it no longer represents my current viewpoints nor the way I want my blog to be represented on the internet. @Samantha Paape, as always, thanks for your feedback and for your unique point of view. You and your family will be in my prayers.  
**Samantha Paape**how bout yu acept my comment stop deny it.  
**Samantha Paape**"Iâ€™d blog it because the circumstances are so crazy, and so is Anson Paape." "Anson Paapeâ€™s 5 children are now without a father. They were also witnesses to the horrifying event, along with other teenagers at the party that night. Itâ€™s just so sad." First of all this story is wrong i would know i was there and my father is NOT crazy so who ever wrote this likes to stir the pot and start problems. One of the kids that were there whos name is Mike Libit loaded the gun, before Libit loaded it there were spent bullets and my father knew that and it wouldnt of killed Micky if Mike didnt load it with live ones, when all of us were busy eating pizza. Yes i do believe my dad is wrong in some ways like even starting the game in the first place but he didnt murder Mick, Mike did. Micky would of died either way he was going to do a 8 ball(coke) in my basement bathroom that night anyway.My father was a great dad no matter what me and my sister are his 2 real bilogical kids but he still took in my 3 other sisters open armed and treated them like if they were his own. i would never want this to happen to him i miss him dearly. My dad was an Anson Paapeâ€™s arbotists(treated trees) every weekend we went camping at starved rock and water fall glen. we love the out doors since hes been gone my family and i have only been there 2 times. He loves out doors and he doesnt deserve to be locked up. Before i was 8(5th Grade) i had so many friends but after july 9th 2004 i didnt have any real friends, good friends or anyfriends at all. Thats because my friends parents said sam's fathers a murder you cant be friends with her anymore. How is that right that i got all my friends my life everything tooken away from me at the age of 8. After i lost all my friends i started smokeing, drinking, failing school and fighting people to relive the stress of people like you, kids from school and life in greneral. I hated life for so long 1 year after my dad left i was in 6th grade some 8th grader asked me with a cocky attatude arnt you the murder's daughter at school i just kept walking, but all a sudden i froze turned around and found the kid getting a drink from the drinking fountain i tapped his shoulder he looke at me i grabbed his hair and smacked his head into the drinking fountain and busted his forehead and nose as i walked away i laughed and said yes i am thanks for asking. I went to the prinsibles office and told them i did that. This kids name is Brian Gleason and threw out my high school days he never said any thing about my father again. Yesterday the 15th of December was my 17th birthday and when i was 8-10 yrs old i used to get cards from my dad saying happy birthday 2 years ago i got one and it was late and had the wrong age on it. My father is forgeting about us because of Mike Libit. This is my life iv moved on but if someone says something rude about my family i black out and i beat them up and laugh. i will defend my mom my sisters till i die. Recently my moms bf got drunk and hit her in the face, me a 17 year old wheighing 97 lbs jumped between them and protects her mom. Last year she had a heart attack from high blood preasure and stress i cant affortd to loose another parent. Timothy Mc Naught(moms x bf) is now is Dupage Country Jail for 6 counts of Boodly harm against a miner and battery. This man has been with my mom for 7 years and they knew each other from high school when they were kids. threw out those 7 years my family and i have been beaten i jumped in the middle every time i love my family even my dad and i will defend them and be there for them for ever my sister whose 1 year older than me i weaker and Tim busted her eye open that night because she tried helping that say it was only me, my sister, and mom home and between me and her im strong and more prepared to fight. Tim deserves to rot in jail anyone that beats kids or women should rot. 2 days ago my mom went in and got a order of protection and i have to go to court wih my mom and sister on the 30th of December his bail is 50000.  
**Samantha Paape-Grissette**F\*\*\* Mike libit!!!!  
**Samantha Paape-Grissette**My father Anson Paape did NOTTT mean to do this he is and always will be a nice careing man im not gonna name any names but a male loaded the gun behind everyones back and after what happend with my dad he skate boarded up town elmhurst to a car show and told all his little friends this kid told elmhurst police they did nothing. I was 8 years old at the time i saw it and i will live with this memory for the rest of my life what little girl deserves this life. MY FATHER IS NOT GUILTY!!! :,(  
**jamiahsh**I agree taylhis, these follow up comments are very intriguing and give us all views that may or may not have been covered by the media (however biased it might be).  
**taylhis**@dupage inmate - thanks for your thoughts; you have some very well thought out and good points. I'm glad to hear that many inmates change for the better and find a relationship with God - that is encouraging to hear. THANKS for commenting!! @a friend - you have some good points as well, and you reiterate a point others have made on this blog post: we don't know what happened. I wasn't there; I don't know exactly what occurred, only what I read in various reports of varying degrees of truth. And some of the people who were there maybe weren't in the room, maybe weren't paying attention, maybe were inebriated or perhaps otherwise had their faculties compromised which might explain the different opinions about the story. I'm so glad to see all of these thought--provoking comments from interesting people! Thanks for stopping by my blog, thanks for reading, and THANKS for commenting!!  
**Dupage Inmate**There's absolutely nothing wrong with posting or writing your opinion on the internet or on a piece of paper. But we should always be careful of what we write or say. We all have made mistakes and we still are, maybe not as bad as the others but who are we to judge or call other people names. I'm really sorry for the victim and his family. And also I feel sorry for Anson's family. I met Anson when i was incarcerated in dupage county jail, we spent almost 7 months in the same pod before i got transfered. Of course some people do change while they're locked up, they say that's where you meet God and it's true. Anson was one of the nicest guy in that pod. Maybe he did what people say he did, but I really don't know, so i'm gonna leave it at that, i'm not gonna pass judgement especially if i'm not sure of what happened.....There's not only one victim here, and we all have to be considerate of their feelings......  
**a friend**i knew anson very well. he was a big part of my adolescent years. although he was wrong in bringing a gun out..we all know who really pulled the trigger, dont we sammy? shit happens. thats the end of it. ansons problem was that he wanted to fit in with his kids' friends. we all thought he was cool, weird and slightly off at times but overall a cool guy. iv talked to him since and i cant even explain how deeply sorry he was and devastated at what happend but hes still working on his case. nothing can bring mick back though.  
**jamiahsh**I agree. Hopefully taylhis' little post can help those involved vent and help deal with the situation no matter how little. I know that it can happen anywhere, but here in our little corner of the world it just is a bit staggering.  
**taylhis**@DJM - Thank you so much for taking the time to comment. I agree with you - hatred will not change anything about this terrible situation. Some very thought-provoking comments have been left here, and I really appreciate the input of those directly involved. I am deeply sorry for the loss of all of your loved ones, no matter what the circumstances were. I hope that being able to post your feelings has helped ease your pain, even just a little. THANK YOU all for commenting!!  
**DJM**The person Anson murdered was my nephew, Mick. Anson put the loaded gun to Mick's head and pulled the trigger. This moment changed our (and Anson's) families lives forever. I have sympathy for his children and their loss. However, Anson committed a horrific murder, fled, and then obstructed justice. He was convicted in a court of law. Samantha, remember the happy times with your father and don't let this tragic moment define your life. This is a terrible situation for both families but hatred will not change things.  
**jamiahsh**@ Samantha. I know the author of this blog personally and in no way was this post meant to be an attack on you or your family. It was more of a reaction to the story itself. Of course, she has no idea how you nor anyone in your family feel nor do we know the details about the incident. I come from a very small town and it is very difficult to imagine. T was raised in the suburbs and is a true crime buff so her fascination with the case may have led to posting something that might have been misunderstood but in no way was meant to be a put down.  
**taylhis**@Samantha Paape - I am deeply sorry that my post offended you - that was not my intention at all. I found it an extremely sad story for all involved - the victim and his family, your family, law enforcement, everyone. And you're right - I have no idea how it feels to go through something like that. I do know what my brother-in-law and his family went through that night, though, as well as how the event shook the rest of the community, and that was the focus of my blog post. I didn't really consider that someone would be hurt by reading the post, and for that I apologize. If you would be interested in sharing your side of the story, I would be happy to post it. Thank you for your comment.  
**Samantha Paape**OKAY FIRST IM HIS YOUNGEST IM 15 AND YEA HE WAS DUMB BUT HE IS WAS A GREAT FATHER AND THE WEBSITES THAT EVERYONE LOOKS AT ARE LIES NO ONE REALLY KNOWS THE REAL STORY BESIDES THE PEOPLE THAT WERE THERE LIKE ME. PLUS THE PEOLE THAT COMMENT THESE WEBSITES DONT KNOW AND NEVER WILL KNOW EVERY LITTLE THING AND DETAIL ABOUT HIM OR HIS FAMILY. EVERYONE ON THESE ARE BULL---- LIARS THAT DONT NO THE FEELING OF LOOSING SOMEONE THAT CLOSE TO YOU.  
**taylhis**Thanks for your insight, noone. I don't think it's any secret that IL politics can be corrupt at times - that's something I did not consider. And I didn't know all of the facts of the case; I'm curious, did more details come out during trial, such as who loaded the gun, etc.? Thanks again for your comment!  
**noone that matters**It is sad what happened but he is not a psycho. I know the family and I know what happened was tragic. He was a father and a very good one at that. I think that people should do there own research and find the truth about what happened like who loaded the gun. Anson was an IDIOT and pulled the trigger but he didnt load the gun. I think he was a major DUMBASS for playing with guns but not everyone went down for the crime/murder that was involved. Maybe the outcome would have been different if it wasn't a election year.  
**Melissa**A great True Crime Book to read is "Murder by Family." It's written by Ken Whitaker. It's about a fathers journey toward forgiveness and faith after the brutal murder of his wife and one of his sons. I personally loved it because it gave me a whole different perspective on criminals and victims. You can find the book here: [Ken Whitaker's book](http://www.kent-whitaker.com/book.html/)  
**jamiahsh**The ones to really feel for in this story are the kids of Mr. Paape. Not a very fun way for anyone to enter "adulthood." Being a police officer anywhere I'm sure is hectic enough but to be one in a huge metropolitan area...Scary.

# Potty Humor

I had to share this funny little story because something our almost 5-year-old daughter Sammie said the other day had my husband and I in stitches.Â  She calls out from the bathroom – “Dad!Â  I have to go poop but I can’t…Â Â Â  Oh, nevermind!”

Hmmm, now that I’m reading it, it’s not quite as funny.Â  I guess you had to hear her little 4-year-old voice call it out.Â  Kids are so adorable with their bluntness.Â  And I’m just glad that Sammie was able to solve her own problem!

### Comments

**justj**Why do I think it was a good thing she wasn't running down the hall when she said this? ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Grandma thinks it's cute.  
**jamiahsh**Kids say the darndest things!

# Meet Me In St. Louis

I’ve certainly heard of the musical Meet Me In St. Louis, especially being a fan of the late great Judy Garland, but I had never before seen it until last night.Â  A great friend played the role of Grandpa, and we were delighted to have the opportunity to watch him age some 40 years and to be able to return to the stage.

First, I’ll begin with the venue.Â  The play was performed in a historical building in Hicksville, Ohio called the Huber Opera House.Â  As I learned in the director’s introduction before the show, the Huber was originally built by a wealthy man who wanted a place to stage-test his plays between Chicago and New York; I’m thinking some time in the late 1800’s; not exactly sure on that.Â  I do know that one of their stage curtains was created right around the time Meet Me in St. Louis takes place – 1903-04, and the gorgeous curtain depicting angels in a boat was hanging last night in all it’s glory.Â  The Huber is simply gorgeous.Â  I especially enjoyed seeing the pictures of it from the 1990’s and how far it’s come since then.Â  The owner of it at that time decided to trash the place when he found out he was going to lose it, and trash it he did.Â  The place was an utter disaster; they even went so far as to rip one of the opera balconies from the wall.Â  Apparently downtown Hicksville was not a place you wanted to be after dark at that time (coming from the ‘burbs of Chicago, that’s particularly amusing to me – I mean, Hicksville Ohio dangerous?Â  Yeah right!), and the city wanted the Huber torn down.Â  Some very dedicated individuals earned a lot of money and worked their butts off to restore it and give us back the beautiful theater it is today – and I was lucky enough to be able to see a show in it.

As for the show itself, I will say that Meet Me in St. Louis will never be one of my favorite musicals.Â  The cast and crew of this particular production did a wonderful job, but I just can’t identify with a cast of characters who randomly break into song at the strangest moments and whose greatest conflicts in life include relocating and deciding who to take to the local dance.Â  That being said, I still had a great time.Â  I really enjoyed being transported back in time, and it was both interesting and refreshing to see how much respect children had for their elders back then.Â  My friend Jamy was awesome as Grandpa, and I don’t think I’m being biased.Â  He definitely stood out as one of the better singers, and I was even surprised to see that Grandpa Smith is a much better dancer than Morat Notboratnichkov – one of the other characters I’ve seen Jamy portray on stage.Â  The little girls in the play were simply adorable, and adding to the fun of the evening was bumping into a couple of friends whom we didn’t know were going to be there.Â  Overall, a fun evening out away from the kids, and I even learned a thing or two, which I’ll share below.Â  Congratulations Jamy on a job well done!

Random Meet Me in St. Louis Trivia

– Ice cream cones and cotton candy were introduced at the 1904 World’s Fair which was in St. Louis.Â  I thought it was really neat that they chose to serve these as intermission refreshments last night at the Huber.

–Â  The 1944 movie Meet Me in St. Louis starred Judy Garland, but at first she refused the role because she was tired of taking childish roles.Â  After a talk with director Vincente Minnelli, she was convinced to take the role of Esther Smith, and it became one of the favorites of her career.Â  Judy and Vincente got married and had a daughter, Liza Minnelli, who went on to become an award winning actress and singer; earning an Oscar, a lifetime acheivment Grammy, two Tonys, and an Emmy award throughout her career.

– Two single recordings from the movie Meet Me in St. Louis became hits by Judy Garland before the movie was even released: The Trolley Song and Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.

– During the shooting of the large dinner scene (where one of the older sisters receives a long distance call from her beau in New York), Margaret O’Brien caused mischief on the set.Â  She would change the cutlery around and put two napkin rings beside a plate.Â  The prop man would say, “Please, Maggie dear,” when he would liked to have shaken her.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**yes, madame director... hopefully I was only the beginning, b/c I absolutely LOVED being on the Huber stage. Everyone was just so great and made me feel right at home. Thank you all.  
**Mary Schaufelberger**Taylhis, thanks for the compliment. I'm so glad I got involved in theatre, because it's the only place where my big mouth is welcome and accepted! :)  
**mmisl director**I'm so glad everybody enjoyed the show! I think it would be great to encourage more participation between the two groups!  
**jamiahsh**And like taylhis, I cannot express enough how gorgeous the Huber is. You all should be proud of resurrecting such a fine, grand, lady.  
**jamiahsh**ProducerGal... thank YOU for making me feel so welcome. It was fun to play in your backyard. It is so cool to have so many different venues to play in and I will DEFINITELY be back.  
**taylhis**ProducerGal - I would definitely come back to the Huber, pending getting a babysitter for my 4 kids of course ;) I might want to see Greater Tuna; I know it floated around our play reading committee for awhile. Thanks so much for visiting my site and leaving a comment! And Mary, I will definitely contact you about auditions for Little Shop - right now we're having auditions in July, but we might bump them up. I will be letting you know for sure; you have a wonderful voice!  
**ProducerGal**Adding to what Mary S. said-many thanks for coming to the show! It was a pleasure to work with Jamy and the rest of the awesome cast (as a big time producer). The Opera House has been an asset to the town in many ways. Come back often!  
**jamiahsh**Hey, Katie... don't forget to comment on Morat's Blog... sign up for your own blog on tangents.org  
**Mary Schaufelberger**Yes, Travis & I are pretty excited about Little Shop. It's such a great show and so much fun to do. I really was upset about missing out on it when the VP's did it a few years ago! So anyway, your website is great! I should be able to keep busy roaming the blogs etc all night while I'm working hard at work!  
**jamiahsh**Yeah... strange that Katie had no last name and Grandpa Prophater had no first name. Hopefully, I bring a friend for the Huber/VP's next musical. And, yes taylhis they DO mean it. You should have seen them Sunday... both of them kept asking about it.  
**taylhis**No problem - you guys did a really nice job. We ARE ready for some unfamiliar faces to WCCT, so I really hope you mean that - we will certainly let you know about Little Shop auditions! Thanks for visiting my site and commenting!  
**Mary Schaufelberger**Thank you for the kind words of our show! We had a lot of fun putting on the show and being a part of it! Thanks for letting us "borrow" Jamy for a couple of months. We plan on returning the favor by coming over and auditioning for "Little Shop of Horrors" this summer. I hope you're ready for us!!!! Thanks again and I hope to work with you all soon!!! Mary Schaufelberger AKA...Katie, no last name, the Irish Maid!!!  
**jamiahsh**OH... yes. I had forgotten. I think I even posted about Marjorie Main during The Nerd. Grandpa is old and forgetful.  
**taylhis**Oh yeah, and I forgot to mention that Marjorie Main played the role of Katie in the movie. She has significance from The Nerd, if you remember...  
**jamiahsh**And Grandpa Prophater... i was Mrs. Smith's father ;) Sorry. But I was really surprised to see our other friends, too.  
**jamiahsh**Another interesting bit of trivia, much of the world's fair still exists. The makeup person traveled to St. Louis and took a trolley and visited it. "Mr. Smith" grew up in St. Louis and told us tales of trolley rides and the Irish section known as the Dog Pound. Thanks to you for coming. It was as much fun to perform on the magnificent stage as it was the see the theatre in all its newly refurbished glory. And, yes, the 80s were not the time to live in Hicksville.

# And Speaking Of This Horrible Economy...

A thought occurred to me the other night – didn’t Barrack Obama promise to bring the troops home from the dangerous Middle East if he became President?Â  Well, it’s been more than 6 weeks since he’s taken office, and I haven’t evenÂ  heard any talk whatsoever about troops coming home.Â  I realize these things take time, but like I said, it doesn’t even seem to be in the planning stages as of yet.

And then I was thinking, what happens when they DO come home, and now we have thousands of able-bodied Americans who just served our country only to come home to find out that there are NO JOBS for them?Â  What will that do to the unemployment rate?Â  And pardon my ignorance, but when do people in the military get paid?Â  Are they receiving paychecks right now while they’re serving, or do they get paid when they come home or both?Â  If they get paid from the government when they come home, that will complicate matters also since the government will suddenly be responsible for paying thousands of soldiers.

I’m not saying that the President is keeping the troops overseas to procrastinate the employment problem.Â  But the fact remains that he *promised* he’d get them home and ASAP.Â  And there is also the fact that the job opportunities are shrinking at a rapid rate.Â  I normally don’t get too political, but I haven’t heard any of the analysts on tv talk about what to do with the troops for employment should they return to the United States, so I thought I’d throw it out there.

And it needs to be said how incredibly thankful I am to not be personnally affected by the struggling economy.Â  My husband is self-employed and successful, and I haven’t even thought about going back to work myself yet since my kids are still very little.Â  My family and friends seem relatively unscathed as well; although I did see my former neighbors in the newspaper the other day for foreclosure.Â  What a shame; they were nice people.Â  Here’s to hoping the economy improves – and fast!

### Comments

**derek**Agree with the war or not, it would be a big mistake to bring them home before they have finished the job. A date *has* been set- sometime in 2010 I think- which was decided in concert with the Iraqi government. Unfortunately, the war in Afghanistan has been heating up as of late, so rather than come home many will be moved over there I'm sure.

# Springing Ahead

Tonight is the night we change our clocks for Daylight Savings Time.Â  I guess we’re ending Daylight Savings – or maybe we’re starting it.Â  I don’t know and I don’t really care.Â  All I know is that I will be losing an hour of sleep.Â  Ok, it’s not THAT bad; I do like when the sun stays out later, although there is no sun in the weather forecast for the next few days…Â  But I loathe the idea of losing a precious hour of sleep.Â  If I remember correctly, the time change throws the kids into a tizzy for a few days every year until their bodies readjust – something else to look forward to.

So anyway, this should serve as your reminder to change those clocks – no excuses about being late to church or theater meetings tomorrow!Â  And yes, you must flip the clocks forward, not backward.Â  Remember, it’s SPRING ahead, FALL back.Â  And try not to fret about losing that hour of sleep.Â  As Jay Leno said last night referring to this horrible economy that only seems toÂ  be getting worse:

“After losing your job, your 401K, and your house, losing an hour of sleep seems like nothing!”

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Same here, j  
**derek**Yes, unlike fall forgetting to change the clock for this morning can cause one to actually miss something. I do remember forgetting once in the fall. I showed up at work an hour early and was wondering where everyone was. Oops.  
**justj**I really hate time changes on the weekends I'm in a show. :(  
**jamiahsh**OR being late for a theatre performance :D Thanks, taylhis such a pal.

# Have No Fear, Polyp Man Is Here!

You ~~heard~~ read me right – I did say Polyp Man.Â  Found this amusing picture in the newspaper the other day and I couldn’t resist posting it:



It’s a little goofy, but hey, whatever works to raise awareness to help people detect and combat colon cancer.Â  If Polyp Man saves lives, more power to him.Â  I do have a little sympathy for the guy in the Polyp Man suit though; he looks like he feels ridiculous.Â  Is being Polyp Man a resumÃ© builder I wonder?

### Comments

**derek**Yes. Says the one who has not seen a doctor in the last decade. :P  
**taylhis**Well, Blood Cell Man, Bone Marrow Man, Prostate Man, or Breast Man (which means something else entirely - let's just not go there. Besides, the costume would not be appropriate for public events) just don't have the same amusing ring to them that Polyp Man has. And a general Cancer Man would just be depressing. But you do have a good point. Like I said, any way to get more people diagnosed more quickly to save lives is a good thing.  
**derek**Perhaps he wishes he had more than sunglasses to cover his face in case someone recognizes him? And why the focus on just one type of cancer? More people than we would think get it? I guess now that we're aware of leukemia, breast cancer, and prostate cancer it's time to raise awareness of another type. Hmm.  
**jamiahsh**looking and feeling ridiculous is sometimes a good thing... maybe looking to some people. But, yes he is providing a great service.

# Multi-Tasking

Because being a Stay-at-home-mom (SAHM to laypeople) is my current profession, I am required to multi-task on a daily basis in a way some people have never experienced. Â  My “pay” (bringing up healthy happy children who turn into independent, admirable adults) is by no means immediate, and it also depends upon my ability to multi-task.Â  Consider the following 2 scenarios most SAHM’s must endure on a daily basis (and these are just 2 of MANY!):Â  Can I fold and put away a load of laundry while planning and preparing a nutritious lunch for 4 kids while simultaneously managing “surprise” but necessary tasks that appear; like changing diapers, washing hands, and refereeing any arguments that break out?Â  Can I accomplish buying everything I need at Walmart while staying within our family’s budget AND concurrently fulfilling the needs of my two youngest children in a timely enough fashion to be able to pick up their older sisters at school at the time I’m expected?

Man, when I put that all on paper it sounds difficult.Â  And sometimes it is, but most of the time, I do it without thinking because I love and treasure my family.Â  But if you know a SAHM and she seems like an airhead or like she’s not-so-bright or even a little bit loopy, just remember everything that must go through her mind on a daily basis, then multiply that by how many kids she has…Â  It just might provide enough explanation for her scatter-brained behavior!

Gee, being a SAHM-of-four sure makes my working-mom-of-one days look easy.Â  Back then my multitasking consisted of paying bills and doing paperwork while I sat inÂ  traffic…Â  And although my current lifestyle is much more hard work than I’ve ever had before, it’s that much more rewarding also, and I wouldn’t trade it for the world!

### Comments

**taylhis**Aw, shucks... Thank you :)  
**jamiahsh**I second that.... you ARE a wonderful mother.  
**Phyllis Beyer**As I have told you before, Lisa....you will never regret being a stay-at-home mom. I loved my years at home with you and Kim. Now, of course, I enjoy my job and being with adults all day. You are a wonderful Mom, but I really don't know how you manage 4 kids. I barely made it with 2.  
**jamiahsh**And you do a MAH-VELOUS job of it :D

# Ahh... A Relaxing Baseball Game And A.... LOSS?!?

I had a really stressful day yesterday.Â  The kids went completely crazy at night – was it a full moon?Â  I didn’t check.Â  Even if that was the case, other little things kept going wrong also.Â  Little things – things that reallyÂ  shouldn’t matter.Â  Except that when those little things are added up, they equal *one bad day*.Â  So I thought I could beat my stress by looking forward to watching some BASEBALL on TV.Â  Yes, that’s right, I said BASEBALL on TV!Â  And it’s only early March –Â  we haven’t even changed the clocks yet!

I just happened to look on tvguide.com yesterday to see if I could look forward to a new episode of Lost, and I noticed that my favorite baseball team, the Chicago Cubs, were set to play their cross-town rivals, the Chicago White Sox and it was going to actually be on tv in our little corner of NW Ohio!Â  Even though it’s only spring training, that brightened my mood considerably since it’s been MONTHS since I’ve gotten to watch baseball.Â  With the way my day was going, I was sure something would go wrong – the tvguide had made a mistake and we didn’t get it, Vegas (where the game was played) would disappear into a sinkhole, something like that.Â  But 10:00 finally rolled around, and the game was on!Â  AND, the teams were putting in their starters rather than their scrub players, which meant real, actual baseball to watch!Â  So I felt better; I relaxed and sat down to watch the game, and of course, that’s when myÂ  two middle children (the trouble-makers of the brood these days) decided to start fighting.Â  So it wasn’t peaceful, but I did get to watch the game.Â  And it was a good game – the Cubs were down, but then they tied it up, but of course the Sox came back to win.Â  A disappointing outcome for such an otherwise great game.Â  But the good news is, it was only spring training so who caresÂ  who won!

After the game I left WGN on the tv, and I was treated to an episode of the old tv show Alf.Â  Remember Alf?Â  It was a sitcom from the 80’s about a family who discovers an Alien Life Form (ALF), and takes him in to live with them.Â  Alf is a furry wise-cracking puppet with an affinity for cats (to eat!), and the family must keep him secret so he doesn’t get taken away.Â  Alf was a huge fad inÂ  the 80’s; there were toys, lunchboxes, a cartoon spinoff, you name it.Â  After the Alf episode, on came the Steve Wilkos show (he’s the former bodyguard from the Jerry Springer show who now has his own trashy talk show – I wrote about this in a previous post, probably because of my disbelief that they would actually give this guy air time).Â  And that was my cue to hit the sack for my lovely 4Â½ hours sleep.Â  So far, today has been a little better, although our trouble-making 4-year-old is at school.Â  Tonight I’m looking forward to a brand spankin’ new Office episode – YIPPEE!Â  But first I have to get through a few boring meetings.Â  Sure hope I don’t doze; I am awfully tired!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**WGN has retro on Sunday nights (or it used to) including ALF. Can't wait to see the new Office sometime.

# Doubt

We saw the Oscar nominated film [Doubt](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0918927/) the other night.Â  Normally, I like to see as many of the major Academy Award contenders before the awards show airs as it did a few weeks ago, but it’s usually not possible to see every single one in time.Â  Even though it didn’t win any of the 5 Oscars for which it was nominated, the buzz that surrounded Doubt was so intriguing that we decided to check it out.

For a movie being based primarily on dialogue, it is very fast-paced.Â  I was never bored, which is something I can’t say about a Good Will Hunting, an Oscar winning movie we watched last week.Â  Good Will Hunting a long movie, so it took us two nights to watch it, and I fell asleep both nights during the movie.Â  Not that it was a horrible movie; I don’t know much about it – IÂ  was sleeping!

Ok, back from the Oscar tangent, back to Doubt.Â  This movie is based on a stage play, and the author of the play also wrote the screenplay and directed the film version; which I think is very important so nothing was lost in the translation between stage and screen.Â  The story is compelling; it’s about a Catholic school in 1964 where the principal, a nun brilliantly portrayed by Meryl Streep, suspects the priest is having an inappropriate relationship with the school’s only African-American student.Â  Amy Adams portrays Sister James, a naive freshman nun who is caught in the middle of the conflict.Â  Amy Adams is one of the actors from this movie who was nominated for an Oscar, and it’s understandable when you see what a far cry Sister James is from Adams’ purse-selling ex-cheerleader Katy on The Office or the character Leslie Miller from her first film, the teen beauty pageant spoof Drop Dead Gorgeous from 1999.Â  Phillip Seymour Hoffman was excellent in Doubt also; hardly recognizable from the 1990’s roles where I saw him previously in the movies Twister and Leap of Faith.Â  It’s easy to see how Viola Davis received her Oscar nomination for Doubt as well – she had lines in just one scene in the entire movie, but her performance was excellent, however short on screen time.Â  You win some and you lose some, which explains how those 3 actors walked away without their Academy Awards.Â  Inexplicable, however, is how Meryl Streep did not win an Oscar for Doubt.Â  True, I haven’t seen The Reader with Kate Winslet, the actress who won the Leading Actress Oscar instead of Meryl Streep.Â  I did see Changeling with Angelina Jolie who was also nominated, and judging by the phenomenal performances of Streep and Jolie and the fact that Winslet was the winner, I might just have to see The Reader.Â  I loved Angelina Jolie in Changeling, and I’m not usually a fan of hers, so that says something.Â  IÂ  loved Meryl Streep in The Devil Wears Prada, but honestly, I used to think Hollywood had a strange habit of sucking up to Meryl Streep.Â  How can she be THAT good, I would wonder…Â  until I saw Doubt.Â  She IS “that good”.

I can see where this movie would make an excellent stage play.Â  But after seeing 4 of the most talented actors out there portraying the lead roles on the big screen, who would even want to be compared to that byÂ  staging a live theatrical production of Doubt?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I have always felt that if a movie is going to be made from previous source be it a book or a play, the author or playwright should have at least some input. Bravo to Mr. Shanley for helming the cinematic production. I will catch it on DVD.

# Twins - Years Apart

Everyone says it.Â  Our family, friends and acquaintances are in agreement – our two middle children look just like each other.Â  They could pass for twins, except for the fact that Sammie is almost 5 and Disney is 2Â½ – so twins years apart, you might say.Â  Don’t believe me?Â  Nothing like photographic evidence…



### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yes, I agree Grandma B. They are both absolutely adorable. WOW, taylhis I am amazed I can't imagine you being a little Sammie :D  
**Phyllis Beyer**They are both absolutely adorable. And.....they look just like you did at that age. I do have to say though, you were just a little like them, temperment wise. What is the saying....what goes around, comes around.  
**taylhis**Interesting theory... But I forgot to mention that their personalities are like night and day. Well, WERE like night and day until Dis turned two. Now she reminds me more and more of Sammie the handful, sigh... Then again, people DO say that twins have opposite personalities a lot... I plead the 5th!  
**derek**You froze Sammie's twin's egg for 2Â½ years, didn't you? **DIDN'T YOU??** :P  
**jamiahsh**Swimmin in the bathtub.. la de da de dum. My siblings and I could never deny each other in terms of looks but Dis and Sammie are REALLY close.

# For Those Born Between 1930-1979

The following words of wisdom came to me in an email forward.Â  However, I have to disagree with some of it since I was born near the end of the window and I did have some of the things growing up that the email says I would not have had.Â  So, I put my personal comments about this email forward in *italics*.

THOSE BORN 1930-1979

READ TO THE BOTTOM FOR QUOTE OF THE MONTH BY JAY LENO . IF YOU DON’T READ ANYTHING ELSE—VERY WELL STATED

TO ALL THE KIDS WHO SURVIVED the 1930’s, 40’s, 50’s, 60’s and 70’s!!Â  *(I can barely get credit for surviving the 70’s.Â  After all, I only experienced the 70’s for a year and a half!)*

First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they were pregnant.Â  *(Well, ok, maybe everyone reading this survived some of that, but that doesn’t make it right, of course!)*

They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can, and didn’t get tested for diabetes .

Then after that trauma, we were put to sleep on our tummies in baby cribs covered with bright colored lead-based paints.

We had no child- proof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and whenÂ  we rode our bikes, we had no helmets.Â  Not to mention the risks we tookÂ  hitchhiking.Â  *(that is definitely before my time.Â  I’ve never hitchhiked.Â  And the only people I know who have are either deceased or over the age of 50!)*

As infants & children, we would ride in cars with no car seats, booster seats , seat belts or air bags.Â  *(Ok, I remember this – every kid I knew whose parents had a station wagon would ride in the back of it for long trips, no seatbelts.Â  I think kids should be buckled up, but I think the whole booster / car seat until they’re 8 years old is just plain ridiculous!Â  Ah, the effects those lobbyists have on Congress is purely amazing, isn’t it?)*

Riding in the back of a pick up on a warm day was always a special treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and NOT from a bottle.

We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle and NO ONE actually died from this.

We ate cupcakes, white bread and real butter and drank Kool-aid made with sugar, but we weren’t overweight because WE WERE ALWAYS OUTSIDE PLAYING!Â  *(Well, a few people I went to school with DO have heart problems, but…)*

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on.

No one was able to reach us all day. And we were OK.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We did not have Playstations, Nintendo ‘s, X-boxes, no video games at all *(umm, I beg to differ.Â  My generation had Atari, Intellivision, the Commodore, the Tandy, the original Nintendo, and even some hand-held electronic games),* no 150 channels on cable, no video movies *(again, not true.Â  I remember the day my family got our VCR.Â  I was worried my big sister would be mad because she was at a sleepover when we got it and the whole event was so exciting.Â  We rushed right out to the video store to rent a video.Â  But all the good ones seemed to be in BETA, not VHS…)* or DVD’s, no surround-sound or CD’s *(but we had records, casette tapes, and walkmans!*), no cell phones, no personal computers, no Internet or chatrooms…….

WE HAD FRIENDS and we went outside and found them!

We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents.

We ate worms and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever.Â  *(Nor did the gum we swallowed stay in our tummies for seven years – hehe)*

We were given BB guns for our 10th birthdays, made up games with sticks and tennis balls, and although we were told it would happen, we did not poke out very many eyes.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend’s house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just walked in and talked to them!

Little League had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn’t had to learn to deal with disappointment.Â  Imagine that!!Â  *(Nowadays, we’d be lucky to get enough kids to have to turn them away, not that we would, but the point is, many kids are busy playing video games or causing trouble…Â  or their parents are just too busy to let them commit to anything extracurricular)*

The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law!Â  *(Nowadays kids are charged as adults, so parents aren’t often given the option to decide what’s best for their own child!)*

These generations have produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever!

The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned HOW TO DEAL WITH IT ALL!

If YOU are one of them CONGRATULATIONS!

You might want to share this with others who have had the luck to grow up as kids, before the lawyers and the government regulated so much of our lives for our own good.

While you are at it, forward it to your kids so they will know how brave (and lucky) their parents were.

Kind of makes you want to run through the house with scissors, doesn’t it?!

The quote of the month is by Jay Leno:

‘With hurricanes, tornadoes, fires out of control, mud slides, flooding,severe thunderstorms tearing up the country from one end to another,and with the threat of bird flu and terrorist attacks, are we sure this is a good time to take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?’

For those that prefer to think that God is not watching over us…go ahead and delete this.

For the rest of us…pass this ON!

*Ok, I’m not a big fan of passing on email forwards…Â  But this one entertained me, so do with it what you will, and remember that my contributions are the ones in italics, so thanks for reading my commentary!*

### Comments

**justj**Pay for sports?? We played in the backyard, playground or any empty ball field.  
**derek**About sports, these days there aren't a lot signed up because the parents can no longer afford it. I definitely agree with most of this. I really would be out of the house for hours, walking down the creek or just playing in the park- out of the sight of my mother. I was about six, and I was probably often with my brother though (three years older). I had an Atari and later Colecovision, and a friend of mine had the Odyssey2 (like jamiahsh). Lawsuits, I'm afraid, are one aspect of losing personal responsibility in the rise of liberalism and growing rejection of God, or faith in any form for that matter. (I know I offended some with the attack on their ideology, but I truly believe that it is very dangerous, and at its roots very evil).  
**jamiahsh**Yeah, the cell phone thing. Cell phones at school get me. Ten years ago (or less) this phenomenon was totally unheard of. And we did not suffer from it. And now, kids sit in class texting back and forth. I remember sitting in class when notes were passed, confiscated, and read aloud by the teacher. Summers were active with me, too. Sunup to sundown and sometimes beyond sundown. Get back up and brush yourself off.  
**justj**Miss a TV show, well we hoped we would catch the repeat. But some shows never had repeats (sports). The VCR was a big hit. Somehow as a child I got along without the VCR, cordless phones, cell phones, color TV (we never had one growing up, it wasn't important), bike helmets or even baseball helmets in the backyard. We grew up playing wiffleball, baseball, softball, football, basketball, and other sports. We played in the snow, we road bikes everywhere. I can't remember a summer where we spent a lot of time indoors. And through all of this, I haven't had a bone set by a Doctor, or a tooth knocked out that wasn't supposed to come out. I think I survived.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I enjoyed reading your comments. I didn't realize getting a VCR was such a big deal to you.  
**jamiahsh**I remember a "back of the pick up" tale in my brother's truck that I think I have posted on. I remember riding in the back end of the station wagon on our Vacation to California (this was pre Griswold's... we could have well been the inspiration for it... Thank Goodness Wally World wasn't closed when we got there). My dad hitched a ride on the turnpike in his youth... and he is over 50, too. AH... the VCR, we must have been one of the last to get one, b/c I believe BETAMAX had gone the way of pet rocks. And we had an Atari knockoff called the Odyssey with games like Pick-Ax Pete (Donkey Kong) and K.C. Munchkin (an obvious Pac-Man wannabe). But yes, culture has changed since our youts.

# MISSING

I like to read the news stories on dailyherald.comÂ  – probably because they have much more interesting news than my local newspaper.Â  But hey, that’s not a complaint since more interesting news = more crime to write about.Â  But I grew up in the Chicago area, so when there are interesting stories on dailyherald.com, I know where the town is they’re talking about, which is another reason why I frequent the site.Â  Today’s edition had an interesting (but sad) story:

*Naperville police are desperately searching for a missing 12-year-old child who allegedly took the keys to his family car and left the home.*

*Cmdr. Dave Hoffman of the Naperville Police Department said the child is 5-feet, 8-inches tall, about 140 pounds, has wavy brown hair and brown eyes. He is believed to be wearing gray cargo pants and a white T-shirt and a green winter Army jacket.*

*Hoffman said the boy allegedly took the keys sometime after 2 a.m., left his house, backed the vehicle out of the garage.*

*Hoffman added the boy also has a history of sleep walking, but has no history of taking the family vehicle for rides when sleep walking.*

*The vehicle missing is described as a light blue, 2008 Hyundai Santa Fe with an Illinois registration number of A744198.*

*Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the Naperville Police Department through 9-1-1 of or contact your local law enforcement agency.*

Hopefully this kid is going to be alright.Â  Does a 12-year-old know how to drive, especially in his sleep?Â  At that age, it’s quite possible that he decided to run away also, but he does have a history of sleepwalking.Â  The article fails to mention how they KNOW he took the keys and left – was there a witness?Â  I know where Naperville is; in fact, I used to live there.Â  It’s a nice town, but it’s a dangerous world.Â  I am hoping they find this kid safe and sound.Â  It’s a sad story, but let’s hope there’s a happy ending.Â  I know some of you loyal readers know people who sleepwalk and have interesting tales – let’s hear them!

*\*UPDATE\* – The kid was found safe and sound at O’Hare airport.Â  Apparently he was not sleepwalking but was trying to run away.Â  How a 12-year-old was able to navigate the expressways to get to O’Hare I don’t know – but thank goodness he is safe.*

### Comments

**justj**Running away, and driving to the airport at 12! I couldn't see them doing that in Toledo, much less Chicago.. Wow!! I glad the child is safe from the drive. I am hoping the problems at home really didn't necessitate the child leaving.  
**jamiahsh**Yes.. thank goodness for the young man's safe return. Hopefully, the family will have an intervention of its own and alleviate whatever problems exist there.  
**derek**I hope the home circumstances that led him to feel like running away have changed. I'm glad to hear he's back safe and sound.  
**jamiahsh**Not sure if this qualifies, but I used to find myself thinking it was time to get up in the morning. I would even get showered and dressed and then saw what time it was: 2AM one time. Hope the article has a happy ending.

# So THAT Explains My Crazy 9-Year-Old!

Our oldest child was always “the good one”.Â  She was responsible, logical, creative, and very helpful with her 3 younger siblings.Â  A few months ago, things changed.Â  Not a day went by when she didn’t have a tantrum or when she was the worst behaved kid of the day.Â  What has happened to our sweet little girl, we wondered?Â  Are these teenage hormone changes kicking in, and will we not see any relief until she’s grown up?Â  With a high-maintenance spitfire 4-year-old,Â  a toddler deep within the throes of the “terrible twos” and a baby in the house, how would we ever make it, especially without the help of our “model” kid?

I was so frustrated with her behavior that I did a simple google search for ‘moody 9 year old’.Â  What I found wasÂ  a HUGE relief in the form of a very informative article that helped to define the behavior of a child going through this particular transition period.Â  Most people aren’t aware of any traditional behavior problems in the average 9-year-old child, but this article described my daughter to a “T” (and her name is Taylor, haha)Â  But seriously, the article was a huge load off!Â  Not only did it totally describe the alarming behavior changes, but it also gave survival tips for the rest of the family.Â  Coincidentally, ever since I read the article, her behavior has improved and she’s pretty much back to normal.Â  But if we should have a relapse or if someone else does a search for ‘moody 9 year old” and they’re led to my blog, here is a copy of the helpful article:

*From http://www.informedfamilylife.org/2005/01/parenting\_the\_nine\_year\_old.html  
This article by Rahima Baldwin Dancy on “Parenting the Nine Year Old” describes the developmental changes of the nine-year-old child and how parents and Waldorf education meet this psychological stage. It first appeared in Mothering, Summer, 1989.*

Parents of nine year olds often wonder, “What is happening to my child?” Children at this age can become very critical and argumentative, or very moody and withdrawn. Nightmares, irrational fears, headaches and stomachaches often arise. Some children feel as if no one at school likes them, or others become suddenly self-conscious about being rich, poor, or otherwise “different.” Parents may be accused of being unfair or of not understanding, as the child rushes off and slams his or her door.

Searching for an explanation for the changes in behavior, parents sometimes blame a new teacher, a recent move, changes in the family such as separation or the birth of a sibling, or simply “growing pains”. An understanding of what is actually taking place can help us avoid needless worry and provide the support and guidance that children need during this time.

What is Happening?  
The special needs of the nine year old are the result of an important change in consciousness that marks the end of early childhood and the transition to a new developmental phase. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, states, “In the ninth year the child really experiences a complete transformation of its being, which indicates an important transformation of its soul-life and its bodily-physical experiences.”

Earlier, before the age of five or so, the child has a dreamlike state of consciousness in which the outer world and inner experience end to flow together. Outer events are not “observed,” but are deeply taken in through unconscious imitation. Whereas babies learn nearly everything through imitation, kindergarten-age children continue to imitate many aspects of their world, such as the movements of the teacher or parent.

While the power of imitation is so strong, the child feels united with the world and experiences no sense of aloneness. But with the loss of this power around the age of nine, the child feels separated from the world. Something that was hidden and slumbering begins to awaken. Nine year olds suddenly have a strong experience of themselves as separate beings, with a new feeling of distance from the world and other people. This sense of self, first experienced around age two-and-a-half, recurs now in a much deeper way, as the inner emotional life of the child begins to develop.

Although children react differently to leaving the sweet, dreamlike world of early childhood, one response is nearly universal: children become more conscious of their surroundings. You will probably find that what was once passed by unnoticed is suddenly focused on and questioned. This awakening to the world may be met with quiet astonishment or sharp criticism, depending on the child’s temperament.

A critical child may notice whether the statements people make are grounded in the real world or are a veneer. He or she may begin to question parents and teachers, wondering, “How do they know everything?” and, indeed, “Do they really know everything?” Something in the child is seeking reassurance that the authority of the adult will stand the test of quality, and that it carries an inner certainty.

In contrast, another child may become more withdrawn and start to look under the bed at night, or may have frequent stomachaches in response to this new sense of being alone. Parents whose children suddenly want to be alone often feel as if they are “losing” their children, as if the children no longer want to share their developing inner worlds. This is a time when intimations of mortality and death can enter a child’s consciousness. Religious questions and concerns about good and evil may also emerge with the child’s increased self-awareness and sense of choice and responsibility.

Usually, within six months after the ninth birthday (and sometimes earlier), the children are profoundly aware of this new sense of separateness between the self and the outer world. As the “I” penetrates into awareness, children begin to experience themselves as self-contained beings. The often feel as though they are in a threshold situation, poised, as it were, on the cusp of their own destiny. A 70-year-old woman wrote of this time in her life: “In this year I had a significant I-experience. I had just come from school in the city and had to change trams. In this moment of waiting, the complete certainty came to me that now all of life lay before me and that I was the one that must travel it.

Essentially, the nine year old is experiencing his or her own identity-to become a separate individuality, able to confront the outer world. Ideally, the child comes through this difficult time with a sense of connection with his or her higher self, a kind of “knowing” that will remain even after the heightened awareness is integrated.

My son spent many difficult months in the throes of “the nine-year change.” One night, as he popped out of bed for the third time, I had to muster great self-control to say, “What now?” “I’m glad I’m me!” he announced, radiating like the sun. He went on to explain, “It’s just like the song “The Age of Not Believing.” The words of the Disney song ran through my mind: “You must face the age of not believing, doubting everything you ever knew. Until at last you start believing, there’s something wonderful in you.” We all shared in his joy and thanked God that family life could once again return to normal.

Parenting Tips  
What can parents do to help their child through this important turning point at age nine?  
– Understanding what is happening will help both your child and yourself as a parent. When both parents, or parents together with the teacher, consider a child and his real needs, it can help give the child balance. Be patient– this, too, shall pass. Ten is a wonderfully harmonious time between the crisis at age nine and adolescence, when the next intensifying of self-consciousness occurs.  
– Be willing to let your child have her own inner emotional life. You can’t “fix it.” Honor her need for privacy or her sudden impatience with a younger sister. Be willing to let go and tolerate distance. Your relationship is changing and will improve again once alterations have been completed. Be nearby with understanding and reassurance that she is still loved.  
– Share your thoughts with your child about things that go beyond the every-day affairs of life. But don’t limit your child by providing “answers” or definitions that can’t grow within the child when asked about things like God or death.  
– Have faith in self-healing, in your child’s ability to come through this phase. Support individual artistic activity that attracts your child (writing poetry, keeping a diary, drawing or painting, music).  
– Support your child’s interest in the world by providing opportunities to build things, visit a farm, plant a garden, do work in the real world. Encourage a connection with the plant and animal kingdoms and with simple human creative activities now before the child explores the world of technology, which is more appropriate for adolescence.  
– Nourish your child with stories that illustrate the interconnectedness of life and the powers of fate and destiny. The story of Joseph and his coat of many colors has this element of the dream heralding his destiny and the patience he needed to see it manifest. In the curriculum of the Waldorf schools, the Old Testament stories are .told in third grade because they mirror 2- the inner state of the nine-year-old child. The creation story, for example, describes the child’s own experience of leaving the paradisiacal realm of early childhood, acquiring new self-awareness, and with it the added dimensions of choice and increasing responsibility for one’s actions. In fourth grade the heroic tales of the Norse myths represent the exploits of the new ego in larger- than-life fashion. The Waldorf curriculum also introduces the child to the world through projects in house-building, farming, and the study of the plant and animal kingdoms, not as abstract sciences, but in relation to the human being.  
– Recognize that the child needs to establish a new respect for adult authority that goes beyond the blind acceptance of the younger child. Parents can encourage this by honoring a child’s new relationship with a teacher or other adults in his life. Steiner states, “What matters is that at this moment in life, the child can find someone–whether this be one person or possibly several persons is of less importance–whose picture it can carry through life.”(3) Parents can also help themselves be this kind of authority by presenting a united front to the child and by both sitting down with the child when questions of discipline arise (single parents may want to bring in a teacher or other adult during this time).

The magnitude of the changes that a child of this age is going through can be better understood if you contemplate the differences between the child of seven and the child of twelve. The seven year old is light-hearted and always in movement. The limbs are active for learning (through touching, doing, walking the times tables, and so forth). In contrast, the head is relatively large and still dreamy. The seven year old is just beginning to get adult teeth. His or her emotions are easily influenced by impressions from the world, with tears changing to smiles relatively easily.

The twelve year old, on the other hand, has a head that is very awake for thinking and longer limbs which seem heavy, tired, and often awkward to control. There is a rich and sometimes over-powering inner emotional life; the older child brings a great deal more to each experience. Physically, the sexual organs are beginning to mature as the child enters puberty.

The nine-year-old is in the middle between the world of early childhood and the world of adolescence. The physical and emotional changes which you may observe in your nine-year-old child are the outer manifestations of the tremendous change in consciousness which is going on within the child’s expanding inner world. By understanding the nature of these changes, we can better provide support in parenting the nine year old.

Awakening to the world and a new sense of self brings with it a new need: to understand the real world of everyday life, while at the same time long for intimations of something beyond ordinary life. As parents and teachers, our task is to become loving authorities for the growing child, sharing both a true picture of the world and a sense of our own inner striving.

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**If you think age 9 is a trying time, wait until the teenage years.  
**jamiahsh**Show me that smile again. (Show me that smile) Don't waste another minute on your cryin. We're nowhere near the end (nowhere near) The best is ready to begin. Sounds like your typical, everyday Growing Pains... sorry for the bad pun ;)

# Disney's Intervention

It’s no secret that our formally sweet daughter Disney is in the throes of the ‘terrible twos’ right now.Â  One minute she’ll be snuggling…Â  But the next minute, she’ll be spitting, pinching, hitting, pulling hair, or one of the other horrible behaviors that define the ‘terrible twos’.Â  So the other night, we had some friends over for a game night – a bunch of adults sitting around the table snacking, talking and playing games, and the kids were kind of hyper.Â  Attempting to calm them down, I suggested putting a movie on the big tv and letting them watch it downstairs, and so our two oldest laid down to watch it peacefully.Â  Their baby brother went to bed without fuss, and all was well until Disney decided to wreak havoc upon her unsuspecting sisters.Â  As they were laying down trying to watch the movie, she began sitting on them – spitting on them, pinching them, and basically just trying to do her best to make their lives miserable for the moment.Â  We separated the kids, and Disney came over to the adult’s table to finish her special treat of root beer – and that’s when it hit me – she was on a sugar high!Â  Sure enough, after she chugged down her root beer, she began going for (and at a record pace) the gumballs from her Strawberry Shortcake gumball machine she had gotten for Valentine’s Day.Â  Some game night friends noticed this, and Cathy distracted her while John passed the gumball machine to Jamy, who passed it to me.Â  I hid it under my shirt and stealthly (or so I thought)Â  left the room with Dis at my heels…

I made it to the bathroom where I was able to stash the gumball machine without her noticing, and although she did ask about it, we were able to avoid fueling the two-year-old fire any further, and within an hour, she fell asleep.Â  It only took 4 adults to stage a sugar intervention for our two-year-old, and thank goodness they did because too much sugar+terrible two’s = horror for everyone!

So thanks everyone, for staging Disney’s intervention – we all know it was for her and OUR own good!

### Comments

**justj**Phyllis, I'll need all the tips you can supply. I'll finally have a grandchild close enough to spoil in Sept. A bit hard to spoil the ones in Florida...  
**Phyllis Beyer**Hey, wait just a minute. It's my job to feed them sugar and then send them home. Ha-ha!  
**taylhis**Ah, time for grandparent revenge!  
**justj**taylhis, show me a kid who never had a sugar high.... We used to call it Grandma Detox. They were always a bit rowdy after spending time with the Grandparents.  
**taylhis**Yes Jamiahsh - Beeber is very good at going to bed right at 9. Chris got him on a schedule - I am a lucky lady :) No problem about the book - you're well worth the $.05 ;) And justj, who are you kidding? Don't tell me Elizabeth or Jenny ever needed an intervention! Must be one of the others I don't know as well...  
**justj**Wow, I didn't know I was part of an intervention. It has been so long since I had to do those for my girls, I forgot they were needed.  
**jamiahsh**Tough love... wow, sounds like the basis for a new reality series. children intervention :). Beeber must have been out before I arrived. Thanks for the book.

# I Will Survive

Here’s a cute video that was a popular email forward in the infancy age of email forwards.Â  I saw this one years ago, and it popped into my head today for some reason, so here you go…Â  oh yeah, make sure you watch the whole thing!

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

**derek**I remember this one. I think it was an email forward from you! :D  
**jamiahsh**I remember very little from the disco era (it was during my time, but barely)... blessedly, it did not last long.  
**justj**I always heard that song driving from a third shift job, back to college for my 8:00am class. I didn't remember anything from that song other than the "I will survive". Kind of felt like that disco ball hit me after a few weeks.  
**jamiahsh**OOPS... Sorry :(  
**jamiahsh**Disco is dead. Mirror ball killed it. Funny.

# And Your Favorite Muppet Is?

Recently I came across an interesting article about everyone’s favorite comedians, the Muppets!Â  I grew up watching the Muppets; whether it was on the various incarnations of their tv shows (The Muppet Show, Muppets Tonight, etc.), their feature films,Â  Sesame Street, or even in their hilarious Muppets 3D attraction at Disney’s Hollywood (formerly MGM) Studios in Florida.Â  Here are some fun facts about 20 of the Muppets that you might not know:

1. Cookie Monster: Jim Henson drew some monsters eating various snacks for a General Foods commercial in 1966. The commercial was never used, but Henson recycled one of the monsters (the “Wheel-Stealer”) for an IBM training video in 1967 and again for a Fritos commercial in 1969. By that time, he had started working on Sesame Street and decided this monster would have a home there.

2. Elmo: The way it’s described by a Sesame Street writer, apparently this extra red puppet was just lying around. People would try to do something with him, but nothing really panned out. In 1984, puppeteer Kevin Clash picked up the red puppet and started doing the voice and the personality and it clicked — thus, Elmo was born.

3. Telly Monster was originally the Television Monster when he debuted in 1979. He was obsessed with TV and his eyes would whirl around as if hypnotized whenever he was in front of a set. After a while, producers started worrying about his influence on youngsters, so they changed him to make him the chronic worrier he is now.

4. Count von Count made his first appearance in 1972 and was made out of an Anything Muppet pattern — a blank Muppet head that could have features added to it to make various characters. He used to be more sinister — he was able to hypnotize and stun people and he laughed in typical scary-villain-type fashion after completing a count of something and thunder and lightning would occur.Â  He was quickly made more appealing to little kids, though. He is apparently quite the ladies’ man — he has been linked to Countess von Backward, who loves to count backward; Countess Dahling von Dahling and Lady Two.

5. Kermit was “born” in 1955 and first showed up on “Sam and Friends,” a five-minute puppet show by Jim Henson. The first Kermit was made out of Henson’s mom’s coat and some ping pong balls. At the time, he was more lizard-like than frog-like. By the time he showed up on Sesame Street in 1969, though, he had made the transition to frog. There are rumors that he got the name Kermit from a childhood friend of Henson’s or a puppeteer from the early days of the Muppets, but Henson always refuted both of those rumors. Mental Floss: 15 reasons Mr. Rogers was the best neighbor ever

6. Real Swedish Chef Lars “Kuprik” BÃ¤ckman claims he was the inspiration for the Swedish Chef. He was on “Good Morning America,” he says, and caught Jim Henson’s eye. Henson supposedly bought the rights to the show’s recording and created the Swedish Chef (who DOES have a real name, but it’s not understandable). One of the Muppet writers, Jerry Juhl, says that in all of the years of working with Jim Henson on the Swedish Chef, he never heard that the character was based on a real person.

7. Animal: The Who’s Keith Moon may have inspired everyone’s favorite member of Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem. This is speculation, but people who support the theory will point out that Jim Henson named one of the Fraggle Rock characters “Wembley,” which is the town where Moon was born.

8. Miss Piggy is apparently from Iowa. She started as a minor character on “The Muppet Show,” but anyone who knows Miss Piggy can see that she wouldn’t settle for anything “minor.” Her first TV appearance was actually on an Herb Alpert special. It wasn’t until 1976, when “The Muppet Show” premiered, that she became the glamorous blonde with a penchant for frog that we know and love today. Frank Oz once said that Miss Piggy grew up in Iowa; her dad died when she was young and her mother was mean. She had to enter beauty contests to make money.

9. Rowlf the Dog, surprise, surprise, was first made in 1962 for a series of Purina Dog Chow commercials. He went on to claim fame as Jimmy Dean’s sidekick on The Jimmy Dean Show and was on every single episode from 1963 to 1966. Jimmy Dean said Rowlf got about 2,000 letters from fans every week. He was considered for Sesame Street but ended up becoming a regular on “The Muppet Show” in 1976. Mental Floss: Commercials from a late-80s airing of ‘A Muppet Family Christmas’

10. Oscar the Grouch is performed by the same guy who does Big Bird, Carroll Spinney. Spinney said he based Oscar’s cranky voice on a particular New York cab driver he once had the pleasure of riding with. He was originally an alarming shade of orange. In Pakistan, his name is Akhtar and he lives in an oil barrel. In Turkey, he is Kirpik and lives in a basket. And in Israel, it’s not Oscar at all — it’s his cousin, Moishe Oofnik, who lives in an old car.

11. Gonzo: What exactly is Gonzo? Nobody knows. Even Jim Henson had no particular species in mind. Over the course of “The Muppet Show,” “Muppet Babies” and various Muppet movies, Gonzo has been referred to as a “Whatever”, a “Weirdo” and an alien. Whatever he is, he first appeared on the scene in 1970’s The Great Santa Claus Switch. His name was Snarl the Cigar Box Frackle. In 1974, he showed up on a TV special for Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass. He became Gonzo the Great by the first season of The Muppet Show and developed his thing for Camilla the Chicken almost accidentally: During one episode where chickens were auditioning for the show, puppeteer Dave Goelz ad-libbed, “Don’t call us, we’ll call you… nice legs, though!” It was decided then and there that Gonzo would have a bizarre romantic interest in chickens.

12. You have to love Statler and Waldorf. I couldn’t find much on their particular inspiration, but I can tell you that they’ve been around since the 1975 “Muppet Show” pilot. They are named after popular New York City hotels (the Statler Hotel was renamed the Hotel Pennsylvania in 1992.) Guess what Waldorf’s wife name is? Yep… Astoria (she looks startlingly like Statler.) FYI, Waldorf is the one with the mustache and white hair. Statler has the grey hair. Apparently Waldorf has had a pacemaker for more than 30 years.

13. Beaker: I always thought of Beaker and his buddy Bunsen Honeydew as characters that came along later in the Muppet timeline, but they have been around since the “The Muppet Show.” Although Beaker usually says things along the lines of, “Mee-mee-mee-mee!”, he has had a few actual lines: “Sadly temporary,” “Bye-Bye” and “Make-up ready!” Despite being word-challenged, he manages to do a pretty convincing Little Richard impression and, surprisingly, had mad beatbox skills. Beaker is one of the only Muppets that was never recycled from some other purpose — he was created solely for “The Muppet Show.”

14. Fozzie Bear. Poor Fozzie. He’s the perpetual target of Statler and Waldorf because of his horrible jokes and puns. It actually created a bit of a problem during the first season of The Muppet Show, because when Fozzie got heckled, he got very upset and sometimes cried. Viewers didn’t feel sympathy; they felt embarrassed. The problem was solved by making Fozzie an optimist so that even when he got heckled he was good-natured about it. It’s often thought that he was named after Frank Oz, who was his puppeteer, but Frank said it’s just a variant of “fuzzy bear.” Yet another story says he was named for his builder, Faz Fazakas. Wocka wocka!!

15. Bert and Ernie are the Muppet version of Felix and Oscar (“The Odd Couple,” for you young’uns). Lots of people think Bert and Ernie were named for some minor characters in It’s A Wonderful Life, but according to the Henson company, that’s just a rumor. Jim Henson always maintained that it was just a coincidence — the names just went well together and seemed to fit the characters. Jerry Juhl, one of the head writers, corroborated this and said that Jim Henson had no memory for details like that and would have never remembered the name of the cop and the taxi cab driver in the old Jimmy Stewart movie.Â  Other rumors to clear up: Bert and Ernie aren’t gay and neither one of them are dead. Now that we’ve got that straightened out, here are a few more tidbits: the original Ernie used to have a gravelly voice similar to Rowlf the Dog’s. Frank Oz was Bert’s puppeteer and hated him at the beginning. He thought Bert was ridiculously boring, but then realized that he could have a lot of fun with being boring. Jim Henson once said, “I remember trying Bert and Frank tried Ernie for a while. I can’t imagine doing Bert now, because Bert has become so much of a part of Frank.”

16. Grover: Everyone’s favorite “cute, furry little monster” made his TV debut on the “Ed Sullivan Show” in 1967. At the time, he was known as “Gleep” and was a monster in Santa’s Workshop. He then appeared on the first season of Sesame Street, but sported green fur and a reddish-orange nose. He didn’t have a name then, but by the second season he transformed into the Grover we know today, more or less — electric blue fur and a pink nose. The original green Grover was reincarnated as Grover’s Mommy for a few episodes. In Latin America and Puerto Rico Grover is known as Archibaldo, in Spain he is Coco, in Portugal he is Gualter and in Norway he is Gunnar.

17. Sweetums is one of a handful of full-body Muppets. He showed up in 1971 on the TV special “The Frog Prince.” This is where he got his name — when Sir Robin the Brave is about to defeat the ogre, a witch shows up and changes him into a frog (who later becomes Robin, Kermit’s nephew). Apparently smitten with the ogre, the witch tells her darling “Sweetums” that he can have the frog for breakfast.Â  Bigger fame awaited Sweetums, though — in 1975, he appeared on Cher’s variety show to do a duet with her to “That Old Black Magic”. He officially joined “The Muppet Show” cast in 1976.

18. Rizzo the Rat might sound familiar to you, especially if you’ve seen “Midnight Cowboy” — he is named for Dustin Hoffman’s character, Ratso Rizzo. He was created after puppeteer Steve Whitmire was inspired by rat puppets made from bottles. He first showed up on “The Muppet Show” as one of a group of rats following Christopher Reeve around — he’s easy to spot because he hams it up more than any of the other rats. He occasionally performs with Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem.

19. Pepe the King Prawn’s full name is Pepino Rodrigo Serrano Gonzales. I heart Pepe. He was a chef in Madrid before going Hollywood on “Muppets Tonight” in 1996. He was paired with Seymour the Elephant (Pepe was originally going to be a mouse) on the show, but Seymour never developed quite the same following and was only in two episodes. He rarely gets names right — some of his mispronunciations include “muffins” instead of Muppets, “Kermin” instead of Kermit and “Scooper” instead of Scooter. He’s quite full of himself — in addition to thinking that he’s quite the ladies’ man, he also fully expects to win several Oscars.

20. Herry Monster from Sesame Street was the Big Bad Wolf in his original incarnation, which you can kind of tell by looking at his fur. It’s pretty wolf-like (if wolves were blue, I mean). He became a Sesame monster in 1970 to replace the Beautiful Day Monster, who looked kind of like Sam the Eagle and existed to cause destruction wherever he went, thus ruining the beautiful day people had been having before he showed up. Herry used to have a furry nose but got upgraded to his non-furry, purple nose in 1971.

*The preceding article was written by Stacy Conradt and was published on cnn.com*

***Who is your favorite Muppet? If you just can't decide, you can pick more than one!***

* *Cookie Monster*
* *Elmo*
* *Kermit the Frog*
* *Miss Piggy*
* *Fozzie Bear*
* *Gonzo*
* *Beaker*
* *Animal*
* *The Count*
* *Swedish Chef*
* *Rolf*
* *Oscar the Grouch*
* *Statler and Waldorf (the balcony critics)*
* *Bert and Ernie*
* *Grover*
* *Janice (had to include her - there are actually a lot of people walking around that look like her, especially in this age of collagen injections)*
* *I don't like the Muppets*
* *you didn't have my favorite Muppet as an answer, so I'm writing it in the comments section*

*[View Results](#ViewPollResults)*

*Loading ... Loading ...*

And for your enjoyment (and so you can get this song stuck in your head for days on end), here is the Muppets catchy performance of Mahna Mahna – it’s a really fun video to watch!

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

**derek**I really can't vote. I don't dislike the muppets, but I haven't thought about them for so long I can't really remember more than a few.  
**justj**Animal is my favorite muppet. With chants of "Beat Drum, Beat Drum!!" and "Woman, Woman", what is not to like. Never one to be verbose, Animal let his skill and rough exterior carry him through the day. We all need a little "Animal" in us... ;)  
**jamiahsh**I could not pick just one. But I adore something about the one's I picked. Statler and Waldorf's heckling MADE each episode, but I felt sorry for Fozzie (even if his jokes were bad). Swedish Chef... couldn't make heads or tails of what he said but his cooking segments rock. How could you NOT love Beaker... MEEP, MEEP and his guinea pig segments with Dr. Bunson Honeydew. I really liked Veterinary's Hospital ("the continuing story of a quack who's gone to the dogs") Christopher Reeve was in a segment when he was the guest star. And the "Star Wars" episode.

# Ryan Started The Fire

In lieu of a new Office episode tonight (another rerun, GROAN!), I’ll supply the following youtube.com Office video, “Ryan Started the Fire” for you to watch.Â  I read about it in a suburban Chicago newspaper who featured the story because the video was made by some local high school students.Â  It’s well-written, nicely sung (good Billy Joel impression), and very well edited.Â  The video was featured on Jenna Fisher’s blog (the actress who plays Pam Beesley), and I can see why even a celebrity such as herself took notice – it’s a great tribute to my favorite show!Â  Before you enjoy it, however, I should warn you that it contains events that took place in the series in the current season, so SPOILER ALERT!Â  If you don’t want to know the current happenings in The Office, I guess you’ll have to wait to see this video!Â  Otherwise, 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

**derek**It was okay. I was able to sit through the entire video which is equivalent to one thumb up. And no need to worry about spoiling me, I am all caught up now. ;)  
**jamiahsh**OOPs forgot to check box for followups. There. Done  
**jamiahsh**HOORAY!!! Hilarious! And BOOO to continuing reruns of my two must see shows of the week. But at least, I don't have to schedule viewings around my busy-ness.

# Take Me To Your Leader

… As long as it’s not my daughter’s previous Girl Scout leader.Â  This lady gives a bad name to

*On my honor,  
I will try  
To serve God  
And my country  
To help people at all times  
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.*

Many of you former girl scouts or parents of girl scouts might recognize the preceding stanza as the Girl Scout Promise.Â  This is the oath girl scouts nationwide must memorize and be able to recite at their meetings, events, and ceremonies.

So you’d think the person teaching that to little kids would be

### Comments

# It's THAT Time Of Year!

Shortly after this blog post is published, the countdown timer on my site will change – but that’s a great thing.Â  It used to count down until the [Chicago Cubs](http://chicago.cubs.mlb.com/index.jsp?c_id=chc)‘ first game of 2009 Spring Training, but since that game is TODAY (!) that countdown timer will soon be edited to count down until the first real SEASON Cubs game of 2009 – YIPPEE!Â  So here’s to hoping the Cubs win today (and every day!), even though it’s just spring training!

Now I have to go see if I can find the first game of spring training on a tv channel in the rural expanse of Northwest Ohio!Â  GO CUBBIES!!!

### Comments

**taylhis**SO tempting to delete your comment Derek - watch it! ;)  
**derek**Go Sox!!! Just kidding! :D  
**jamiahsh**GO CUBBIES!  
**taylhis**[THIS IS CHRIS] Go Cubs! This is their year -- I really want them to win it for you honey! I AM EXCITED!  
**jamiahsh**Go Cubbies! Yanks win, too!!! Questionable off-season drama notwithstanding.  
**taylhis**CUBS WIN!!!  
**justj**Good luck to the Cubbies, the Tigers won their first game of spring training.

# Too Punny!

I received an email forward full of “Creative Puns for Educated Minds”.Â  Some of them are really cute, so I decided to publish them here on the blog.Â  While reading these, you **will** groan at least once, but if you don’t smile or even laugh out loud, you might be a little bit crabby and should probably take a nap instead of reading the rest of the 22 puns below.

1. The roundest knight at King Arthur’s round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.  
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.  
3. She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.  
4. A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.  
5. The butcher backed into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.  
6. No matter how much you push the envelope, it’ll still be stationery.  
7. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.  
8. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.  
9. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.  
10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.  
11. A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.  
12. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.  
13. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other, ‘You stay here; I’ll go on a head.’  
14. IÂ  wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.  
15. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: ‘Keep off the Grass.’  
16. A small boy swallowed some coins and was taken to a hospital.Â  When his grandmother telephoned to ask how he was, a nurse said, ‘No change yet.’  
17. A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.  
18. The short fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.  
19. The man who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.  
20. A backward poet writes inverse.  
21. In democracy it’s your vote that counts. In feudalism it’s your count that votes.  
22. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.

### Comments

**justj**Well I groaned a bit, but didn't laugh out loud. I guess I'm still a bit crabby ;)  
**jamiahsh**Hyuck, Hyuck. Some good stuff... word play.. some possible double entendre. Some groaners, yes, but mostly good stuff.

# Laundry, Origami-Style

I received an interesting email forward the other day; it’s a Japanese video that shows a woman folding a shirt perfectly in a *matter of seconds* using an origami technique.Â  I haven’t tried it out yet; I’ve been too busy blogging instead of folding my laundry 

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**Well, yeah it's in Japanese, but the idea is to SEE what she's doing...  
**jamiahsh**ok... English translation?

# Another Wonderful Zoo Visit

We went to the Toledo Zoo again last weekend (it was our second weekend to visit the zoo in a row; we visited on Feb 7 and 15).Â  Almost a week has passed since our last visit, but I had other blog posts lined up and ready to go, so that’s why I’m first writing about it now.

Having a zoo membership is awesome because you get to visit the zoo whenever you have free time, and you don’t have to worry about seeing EVERYTHING on EVERY visit since you know you’ll be back soon.Â  The last few times we’ve gone, we parked in the back parking lot and stay on that side of the zoo, which cuts the amount of walking considerably – a great option for winter months since this parking lot is free in the off-season and very close to the rear zoo entrance.Â  With 4 small children, this is the way that works best for us, even though it means skipping the other side of the zoo which includes the polar bears, seals, wolves, and giraffes.Â  No matter, we still see plenty, and now we have a whole half a zoo to see sometime if we go without the kids or are feeling extra ambitious.

Every zoo visit is different, which is one of the things I love about going.Â  The animals are always doing different things, and my favorite exhibits vary with each visit.Â  Here are the highlights from last Sunday’s visit:

Lions – The Toledo Zoo has white lions.Â  White lions are rare and the result of a recessive gene similar to the gene of white tigers.Â  The Toledo Zoo has 3 white lion brothers on loan from Siegfried and Roy, the famous Las Vegas magicians.Â  Normally during our zoo visits, the lions are sleeping and up on a ledge far from the viewing glass, but last Sunday they were walking around, and one of them even walked right up against the viewing glass!Â  I’ve seen lions up close before, but not for a long time and never the gorgeous white lion until last week.

Hippos – The hippos are in their indoor enclosure for the winter, and even though their room seems somewhat cramped, the animals don’t seem unhappy, and it’s very cool to see these HUGE animals up close.Â  It’s amazing to me that their small pool must get very deep very fast in order to allow the animal to be completely submerged.Â  As we watched, the hippo was bobbing for apples, and he caught his apple and swallowed it whole.Â  This hippo was so large that the apple in his mouthÂ  looked about as big as a grape would look in the mouth of a human being.Â  And this provided an extreme close-up of his humongous teeth!

Gorillas – When we got to the gorilla exhibit, it was empty.Â  But a friendly zookeeper told us to stick around for about 10 minutes for gorilla feeding time.Â  We then got to watch as the keepers threw greens, fruit, and straw all around the enclosure; taking care to place some on the various ledges and hide some within crevices of the exhibit (seriously, am I too old to embark on this as a career?!?Â  I’m afraid so…).Â  Then they let the gorillas back in, and it was a frenzy.Â  Well, an orderly frenzy – there was no pushing nor shoving; just some excited gorillas foraging in their exhibit.Â  They quickly found all the hidden surprises, and we laughed as one of the females hoarded as much lettuce as she could carry and brought it up to a high ledge to enjoy it all by herself.

Elephants – The elephants were indoors, and the now 6-year-old baby Louie was using his trunk to eat jello off the floor.Â  I really enjoy watching elephants use their trunks; it’s fascinating to me how dexterous they are – almost like they have 2 fingers on the end.Â  But we’ve watched Louie grow up ever since we’ve been coming to this zoo when he was just a year or two old, and now he’s getting pretty big!Â  Last time we were at the zoo, he was trying to get down a step so he could get to the water, and he ended up going backwards down the step – it was so cute!

So great day, awesome fun as always!Â  Like I said, every visit is different, and I am never disappointed!Â  I am a zoo-addict!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**YES... just give me a few weeks.  
**Megan**Ah just what I was thinking Jamy...we should all go to the zoo together sometime:) It seems like FOREVER since I have been there:(  
**Taylhis**I'd be happy enough TAKING an animal sciences class!  
**derek**Yep, teaching in the animal sciences for definitely for you. ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**I really enjoyed this blog. I know I went one time to the Toledo Zoo with you but would love to go again.  
**justj**Of course, I just love the zoos in the area. I have been a member of the Toledo Zoo for 25 years now!!  
**jamiahsh**Agreed... all animals should be treated with respect or the consequences can often be disastrous.... no matter how well you are trained or how long you have trained with them.  
**taylhis**Roy Horn was mauled (by most accounts anyway... S and R maintain that the tiger was trying to rescue him and was spooked by an obnoxious fan in the front row who was wearing a large hat) by one of their tigers. Regardless of what really happened, when we saw the show, we were surprised by how close patrons were allowed to be seated. Wild animals should be respected as such, and they're completely unpredictable. Tigers are especially freaky like that. Being a former cat owner, I know how the mood can change in a split second, and that was a tiny domestic cat - I can't imagine being responsible for the damage a tiger could do. Jack Hanna had a few tiger mishaps on his watch at the Columbus Zoo - once a male tiger snapped the female's neck during mating, no apparent reason, no warning. The way the tiger was looking at my kids at the zoo the other day gave me the creeps.  
**jamiahsh**Yes... never the same twice. Which one was it Siegfried or Roy who was attacked by one of their lions? White Lions are gorgeous animals. WOW... 2 zoo visits so close to one another. No magicians this time, eh? I would love to go sometime when I am free. I am sure it would be quite an experience going to the zoo with you all... wildlife safaris aside.

# Sick Of Winter?

If you’re like me, then you are sick of winter.Â  I’m sick of getting snowed in, sick of bundling up the kids, and sick of the high heating bills.Â  So even though it’s a very dark type of humor, I did have to chuckle at this picture of a poor snowman I received via email; no doubt created by some poor soul who is a victim of the winter blues:



And since we’re on the subject of snowmen, I read an article a few weeks ago with many interesting tidbits about them, so I’ll share a few.Â  After all, it’s the least I can do after sharing such a depressing picture like the one above, right?

– Snowman art is one of the few activities modern man shares with his earliest ancestors.Â  The earliest illustration of a snowman found was made in about 1380, and snow sculpting was a popular pastime during the Middle Ages.

– In the year 1494, Michelangelo sculpted snow figures in Florence, Italy.

– In 1999, residents of Bethel, Maine constructed the largest snowman ever built with 8 million pounds of snow.Â  They beat their own record in 2008 using 13 million pounds of snow when they created Olympia (actually a snow***wo***man) who stood 122 feet and one inch tall and could be seen from 4 miles away!Â  They used snow skis for her eyelashes, car tires for her lips, trees for her arms, and kids created her 6-foot nose from chicken wire and muslin.Â  Her hand-stitched hat had a 48-foot circumference.Â  Here is a picture of Olympia:



So don’t let the winter blues get you down, especially since us here in the Midwest are having a winter relapse today with icy winds and snow flurries – yuck!Â  Get some snowman inspiration, and go out there and try your hand at building your own winter work of art!Â  Hurry – the first day of spring is only a month away – and thank goodness for that!

*The preceding blog post contains information obtained from [American Profile magazine](http://www.americanprofile.com/).*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Aren't we all? ;)  
**justj**I'm looking forward to that softball game ;)  
**jamiahsh**Let's see... when I am on stage and it is 90 degrees outside or when we are on the softball field in the same?  
**justj**I am also ready for some warmer weather. But when will we start complaining that it is too hot????  
**jamiahsh**Yeah... cabin fever. Eight million pounds of snow?!

# Happy Birthday To My Blog!

Happy Birthday to my blog!Â  Today is the one-year anniversary of the day I started my blog on tangents.org!Â  And 381 blog posts later, here we are!Â  So even though I haven’t been able to blog every day, there were a few days when I got more than one post up, and so in a 366 day year (leap year in 2008), I was able to make 381 blog posts, and that averages more than one a day, surpassing my goal I had when I started this thing!Â  So I’d like to thank everybody who trudges through my rambling garbage – those who have read all 381 My Food Chain Gang blog posts and those who pretend to have read them 

Having this blog has been a great way to vent my feelings (from pride about my kids to my frustrations with Walmart), share news stories I find interesting (from funny police happenings to interesting animal tidbits), write movie reviews, and most importantly, keep in touch with my family and friends who live far away – especially when our lives are too busy to allow us to chat on the phone when we want.Â  THANKS AGAIN FOR VISITING my site!

### Comments

**derek**Nah, I really meant ;)  
**derek**Late, but still ahead of me. :evil:  
**jamiahsh**We can all celebrate again then, justj :D  
**justj**I think I started in March, I was late to the party. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I did... Happy Birthday to all of our blogs. I was checking the archives and had yet to post about it.  
**derek**Happy birthday! And to my blog too- first post was 2/18/08 just like yours. I didn't think it had been that long. Didn't Jamiahsh start the same time as well?  
**Phyllis Beyer**I really enjoy reading your blog. As I have told you before, I think you have a knack for writing. I enjoy reading about my grandchildren and your various activities. Keep them coming! Love, Mom

# And Speaking Of Discoveries...

Unlike my Steve Wilkos show discovery, the following revelation is a great one!Â  My daughter brought home a Weekly Reader from school – you know, it’s like a newspaper for kids.Â  We used to get those when I was in school too, and I really enjoyed them.Â  So we’re sitting in the waiting area of H & R Block waiting for my husband to get our taxes done, and my 9-year-old daughter says to me, “Mom, did you know that they found an animal that they haven’t seen for, like, a really long time?Â  They thought there weren’t any more left in the world!Â  It looks like a Furby!”Â  We talked about extinction for a little bit, and then my daughter said she couldn’t remember what the animal was called or where they found it.Â  So when we got home, she showed me the Weekly Reader, and I found that she was talking about the pygmy tarsier.Â  Scientists believed this type of primate went extinct because no one had seen any specimens for about 70 years, but they recently found two males and a female tarsier alive in Indonesia.Â  The animals each weigh only about 2 oz.!

So yes, it’s safe to say this is a much better discovery for me than the Steve Wilkos show.Â  Here’s hoping the pygmy tarsier can re-populate and once again establish itself as a thriving species!Â  And thanks to the Weekly Reader which has been publishing great kid-oriented articles for decades.Â  These stories help youngsters develop many different kinds of interests in the world around them!

### Comments

**derek**The popular reader around here is Time for Kids, or TFK. There are others, but that's the big one. Finding new (or new again) life is pretty cool. I think they have found a bunch of water species near the poles recently.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I remember the Weekly Reader, too. I think we got them on Friday and read them in class about a half-hour before dismissal. thanks T for sharing

# Insomniac Discovery

Though I wouldn’t call it a great discovery, by any means…Â  Every few months, I go through a period of insomnia that lasts a few days.Â  I don’t know why this happens, but it starts when I stay up too late a few nights in a row, waiting for my kids to go to bed and then having too much fun to go to bed myself.Â  Then for some reason, I start waking up early in the morning and am unable to fall back asleep, and the more tired I get, the less easy it is for me to sleep and the cycle continues.Â  So anyway, a few weeks ago, during one of these bouts of insomnia, I was flipping channels and I came across the Steve Wilkos show.

In case you don’t know (and I hope you don’t) Steve Wilkos is best known for being the main bodyguard on the Jerry Springer show – a talk show that aired in the ’90’s that was a total raunch fest.Â  The show pushed the limits of television at the time and helped to give talk shows an even worse reputation than they already had.Â  Nearly every episode of the Jerry Springer showÂ  contained bleeped-out profanity, guests taking their clothes off (censored for tv thank goodness) and brawling.Â  It was a disgusting example of junk tv and helped give birth to the term “trailer trash”.Â  And Steve Wilkos had a big part to play.Â  As the main bodyguard, he would have to break up the fights, often climbing in between scantly-clad (if that) guests as they tried to duke it out on the stage.Â  As his popularity rose, the audience would often chant Steve’s name as he broke up the fights with his trademark smirk and chrome dome.Â  And how do I know this?Â  Well, I was a college student at the time, and I guess I’ll reluctantly admit to being present as some of my friends would get a big kick out of this show and watch it in their dorm room.

So anyway, the other night, it was really late, and I thought I must be hallucinating when I came across Steve the bodyguard from the Jerry Springer show hosting his own talk show here in 2009.Â  And it didn’t seem to be like the Jerry Springer show…Â  no fights, no swearing, no nudity…Â  Just Steve, the ex-Chicago cop complete with his thick Chicago accent, trying to work out life’s problems for his “lucky” guests…Â  He doesn’t seem very natural in front of the camera, and I don’t know whose idea it was to give this guy his own show…Â  What is this (tv) world coming to?Â  [Check it out for yourself](http://stevewilkos.com/), if you dare!Â  And, just for kicks, here is a link to [some classic Jerry Springer moments](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_334td7t5I) someone put up on youtube; I’m NOT embedding that garbage on my blog – you can just click on the link if you really want to see it.Â  Where has the former-mayor-of-Cincinnatti-who-wrote- a-check-to-a-prostitute-and-got-caught been these days anyway?

### Comments

**justj**Can't say I've ever discovered much on late night TV during my periods of Insomnia.  
**jamiahsh**That's a good question, but I think MOST "trash talk" has now been moved to the wee hours or thankfully removed (at least in this area).

# Pole Dancing In Gym Class?

We were grocery shopping the other night and my 9-year-old daughter was jumping around and telling us about some kind of dance she was learning in gym class.Â  “And then you dance with the pole…”, she said, and that got our attention – pole dancing in gym class?Â  She then went on to explain that they have 2 little poles (closer to stick-sized, it sounds like) the kids dance with…Â  but you can see where I’m coming from.Â  In this day and age, pole dancing has a much different meaning.Â  It’s something popularized in the adult entertainment industry, and because I’ve heard that it’s recently found its way into normal (?) families’ homes as a form of exercise.Â  Not that I know of anyone who actually exercises this way (and if any of my friends or family reading this have taken up pole dancing, I really **don’t** want to know about it, even if it is just for exercise!), but for a minute during my daughter’s story, I was worried that this form of “exercise” had become SO mainstream that they were teaching it in the schools!Â  I couldn’t be happier to be wrong, but the misunderstanding makes for a funny story!

### Comments

**derek**I guess I just had a "clean mind" moment. When you mentioned pole dancing, I actually thought of the traditional dance (I don't know where I remember it from) instead of the "gentleman's club" version. I just wish my mind wasn't so corrupt on other things though. My first thoughts should always be clean. :)  
**jamiahsh**HEHEHE! Not going there.

# Happy Birthday Abe!

Today is Abraham Lincoln’s birthday.Â  The 16th president of the United States would be 200 years old today if he was still alive.Â  Unfortunately, an assassin’s bullet cut his remarkable life short at the age of 56 – not that he would still be alive today, but his assassination was still very tragic of course.Â  Because this is such a milestone “birthday”, Lincoln has been in the news a lot lately.Â  I learned something really interesting about his widow, Mary Todd.Â  Ten years after Lincoln’s death, Mary was hospitalized in a mental institution for being delusional and for spending too much money.Â  I guess her delusions were caused by a sleep medication she was taking, but intriguing to me is the fact that the institution where she was hospitalized was in Batavia Illinois – a stone’s throw from where I spent most of my childhood.Â  Next time I’m in the area, I’m going to have to take a look at the place – it’s now apartment buildings, but I think it would still be cool to see the land that used to be the mental institution which housed Mary Todd Lincoln.

Another interesting Lincoln tidbit; I found this picture on the internet, and I thought it was so cool I had to share it.Â  It captures Lincoln in real life, not just posing for a portrait as many people are used to seeing him.Â  The man on his left was his bodyguard, Allan Pinkerton, and the man on the right was Major Gen. John A. McClernand.



### Comments

**taylhis**Interesting - earliest cameras date back to the 1660's. Now to find an actual photograph from that era...  
**taylhis**I agree - I think they cleaned it up a little, if it is real... But I THINK it is... the tent, etc. seems relevant to that time period. I didn't even know they had cameras back then. But Taylor has lots of photographs of Lincoln at her school - it's the name of the school - so they must have had cameras back then... time to wikipedia the camera.  
**derek**Well, it's a very good photo for 1862.  
**taylhis**Nope, I think it's a real photo. The original caption read: Lincoln's bodyguard was Dundee's Allan Pinkerton, on the left here in Antietam, Md., with Lincoln and Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand.  
**derek**Isn't this a photo of people *portraying* Pinkerton, Lincoln, and McClernand? I thought that's what a source said when I first saw it. In any event, much better to think of Lincoln's birthday than the author of a great deception, Charles Darwin. Happy belated birthday, former President Lincoln!  
**jamiahsh**Was there not a detective organization associated with the name Pinkerton? Cool tidbits... Happy Birthday, Abe wherever you are.

# Farm Frenzy

You might have noticed a decrease in the frequency of my blogging.Â  I am still super-busy with my 4 kids, but now that the horrible months-long-lasting illness has run its course through our house, I have more energy and time than I’ve had in a long time…Â  so why am I posting less?Â  Because I’ve gone and gotten myself addicted to a video game, of all things!

It’s called Farm Frenzy Pizza Party, and it’s addicting to play!Â  Basically, you get this little plot of land where you choose what animals to buy and manage.Â  Each different kind of animal drops a type of product, and you can either use these products to make other products, or you can sell them.Â  You can upgrade your warehouse to make it store more products, you can upgrade your factories to produce products more quickly, and you can upgrade your vehicles to make them faster.Â  The game is surprisingly complicated, yet easy to learn.Â  Ultimately, the more difficult levels consist of making pizzas, and each pizza is made up of five types of product.Â  Complicating the game player’s goals is the fact that some of the pizza components are made up of two different products themselves, so you have to choose which animals and factories to buy and it what order to make the products with the funds you have.Â  There are also bears that drop down from the sky that eat your animals and even trample your factories!Â  It’s really fast-paced (you get rewarded for completing the levels in a timely fashion also), and like I said, it’s very addicting.

I was looking for a hobby, but this is ridiculous.Â  I could have chosen something a little more productive than sitting on my butt and playing a video game.Â  But this isÂ  *fun*.Â  And I haven’t let myself indulge in a hobby that’s non-productive in a long time…Â  Usually in my spare time I organize our family photos or work on our kids’ school memory books or things like that…Â  What’s that you ask?Â  What about my blogging?Â  Well, ok, I see your point.Â  So I have a few hobbies now; they’ll have to compete for my time.Â  And right now, Farm Frenzy is winning!Â  Here is a screen shot:



### Comments

**taylhis**oops... didn't see it in there, sorry about that! Glad you reminded me!  
**derek**So, you're not going to approve (from moderation) my last comment then? ;)  
**derek**I just bought [Hamsterball](http://www.raptisoft.com/index.php?page=hamsterball) when I saw it for $9.99 at Target. It's a [Marble Madness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marble_Madness) clone I have been wanting to get for awhile. Now I just need a trackball to properly play it...  
**Phyllis Beyer**It is good for your health (mental and physical) to have a "fun" hobby. You don't always have to be doing something productive. Life is too short. Enjoy!  
**jamiahsh**Cards on the computer never appealed to me. I'm trying to think of any game that got to that point.  
**justj**I know how addictive some video games can be. I've known people addicted to cards on the computer, now that is a simple game.

# The Crabby Magician

Saturday was one of the funnest days I’ve had in a long time.Â  I’ve been having *major* zoo-fever lately, and my husband knew this and renewed our Toledo Zoo membership online before I even woke up Saturday morning.Â  When I finally arose, he said, how about going to the zoo today?Â  So we packed up all the kids, and took advantage of the almost 50Â° weather and headed to the zoo.Â  We first ate lunch at our new favorite eating establishment in the Toledo area; a place called Nick’s Cafe on Reynolds Road in Maumee.Â  They have excellent gyros and scrumptious Greek salads, just to name a couple of their delicious dishes…Â  pretty much everything is made from scratch.Â  Potatoes are sliced up for french fries right there in the kitchen, gyros are off the spit, the burger meat is hand-rolled… you get the idea.Â  Awesome food and great service too.Â  Highly recommended from this hard-to-please food critic!

On Saturday, everyone at Nick’s was staring at us because of our ~~four~~ five adorable kids – we let our oldest invite her friend along who had slept over the night before.Â  It made for a mini-van filled to capacity, but I’m so glad we invited her because she is a great kid, a big help (especially with our little ones because in her family, she is smack dab in the middle of 5 in birth order and knows how to help in cases of sibling rivalry!), and she had never been to a zoo before!Â  If I had known that, we would have taken her sooner…Â  **Every kid needs to get to a zoo!** This little girl is 9-years-old and for me, a highlight of my trip on Saturday was getting to witness her experience the zoo for the first time: the cuteness of a real-life cheetah, the immensity of a white rhinoceros, the playfulness of the baby orangutans…Â  I’m currently reading Jack Hanna’s new book, *My Wild Life* right now and it details many of the trials and tribulations the Director Emeritus of the Columbus Zoo has gone through to get where he is today.Â  In one chapter, he addresses his many critics (people who protest live animals being held captive in zoos, as well as protesting Jack’s taking animals on television show appearance tours), and Jack says something in defense of these practices which I completely agree with: Captive animals are ambassadors of their cousins in the wild.Â  We NEED to have zoos and reach out to the public with animal tv appearances; it’s the only way to get people to care enough to help with conservation.

So anyway on Saturday, after lunch, we made our way to the zoo.Â  When we first got in, we discovered there was going to be a magic show in the Museum of Science (one of those old Works Progress Administration buildings from the post-Great Depression era; I love their architecture!).Â  We settled in with the kids looking forward to a fun show.Â  My husband is into magic, and we staged a magic show for our local theater company a few years ago, so I know a little bit about how some tricks are performed – enough to know that this guy hired by the Toledo Zoo last Saturday was simply *awful*.Â  First, he began the show with a crabby demeanor.Â  He didn’t have much charisma or charm; he wasn’t very good with the kids, and his tricks *stank* – everything he performed could be bought in a magic store for under $100 – for the whole lot!Â  And during the show, he would literally sum up his tricks with one sentence – “and that’s the magic coloring book.”Â  Also, according to my husband, he continuously broke one of the cardinal rules of magic – telling his audience what to expect ahead of time.Â  For example, he had a ball trick where he told the audience, “Wouldn’t it be amazing if the red ball were no longer on the top?”Â  And then *magically*, it wasn’t…Â  Amazing trick, maybe; amazing magician, I think not…Â  On top of all that, he messed up some tricks (which happens, I guess…Â  a little hard to forgive when it involves tricks this simple, but…), and announced the fact that he did indeed mess them up!Â  Oh well, this “magic” show was free with zoo admission.Â  I was a little anxious after the first 7 or 8 minutes; wanting to make sure we had enough time to see actual animals, but the kids seemed to like the show, so we did not leave the magic show before its finale.Â  I will mention that we literally broke into a run when the guy announced that he was doing a puppet show next…Â  Our 4-year-old was asking to see it, but I cannot imagine what that guy (his name is [Chris Clark](http://clarkshow.com/index.html) and you can click on his name to visit his website if you’re interested in renting a ~~magician~~ ~~entertainer~~ popcorn machine) would do with puppets, so we told her we missed the puppet show…Â  Besides, we were at the zoo to see animals, and we were running out of time!Â  Here is a picture of the crabby magician (sorry Derek for the large pics – I don’t really have time to be trying to figure out how to change code):



But not a terrible experience, because look at the amazement on the face of our 4-year-old when she witnessed the “magic”:



Luckily, we did get out of the magic show in time to see lots of animals at the zoo.Â  The elephants were moved from their outdoor exhibit to indoors, and in the process, they crossed the path right in front of us zoo visitors:



Then, the silverback (dominating male and largest) gorilla was sitting right up against the glass of his exhibit, and at the Toledo Zoo, the visitors are allowed to get right up close and personal with the great apes.Â  Unfortunately, I had run out of available space on my camera after taking so many pictures of the worst magician in the world – I was worried people wouldn’t believe me about how awful he was,so I made sure to snap lots of pics!Â  But anyway, the silverback gorilla was right there, and as we did with the chimp just minutes before, we held up everything we had in our arsenal (double-stroller) that we thought might interest him, but all to no avail.Â  Maybe he likes shiny things, we thought, so we held up our car keys.Â  Maybe he will recognize babies, we decided, so we held up our 7 month old son…Â  and no reaction (held up the baby with caution since witnessing a gorilla CHARGE a little boy and pound the glass really hard in his exhibit in Omaha Nebraska years ago)…Â  This gorilla stayed cool as a cucumber and didn’t react to any of it.

My one complaint about this zoo visit (besides the magic show!) is:Â  where the heck is the octopus?Â  He is usually one of our favorite animals to see at the zoo, and this time he was missing – something else was in his tank.Â  That’s disappointing, the octopus was always fascinating for our family and fun to watch.Â  I hope nothing bad happened to him…

Dinner at Steak N Shake after the zoo was also a fun treat – yes, even Steak N Shake is a treat when you live in a rural utopia like we do since the closest decent sit-down chain restaurant is an hour away.Â  A fun treat (had to be something casual after a big day with 5 kids who had had a sleepover the night before), and Disney, our 2-year-old, went poopie on the potty for the first time EVER at Steak N Shake!Â  That reminds me, we used to live in the same town – Normal, IL (which is actually anything but normal) as the very first Steak N Shake restaurant – it is (or at least was 10 years ago when we lived there) still in its original building – too bad I wasn’t into history as much then as I am now…Â  Oh well, anyway, extremely fun time at the zoo.Â  And as I always ask the kids, what was your favorite animal that you saw today?Â  Mine was the silverback gorilla.Â  He was magnificent.Â  For awhile, the gorillas were my favorite animal to see at the zoo.Â  Then we visited frequently last summer and got to know the family of orangutans, especially dad Boomer (an extraordinary orang because he actually plays with and helps care for his offspring – orangs in the wild and even in captivity are very easily annoyed with youngsters).Â  Boomer and the fam are doing great and only fell short of being my favorite animal at the zoo this weekend because of the close proximity of the humongous silverback gorilla…Â  Maybe my preferences will reverse next spring when I visit and the orangs are back outside and pushing their button which sprays water upon unsuspecting zoo guests…Â  Looking forward to that!

### Comments

**taylhis**You're right... that does sound easy enough even for me. I'll have to give it a try... thanks!  
**derek**I don't mind the large pics. I just thought it would be neater to make them smaller, with a click to open them full size. That's all. Actually, it couldn't be easier to do it this way. Just click the add media button, choose the file to upload, then once it "crunches" and shows the options, just choose a size smaller than "full size," and above that choose "to file" by "link" and you're set. I guess I just never tried before.  
**justj**Long time member of the Toledo Zoo here. As a family we've been going for 25 years. It has been a wonderful zoo for years. Others in this area, Ft Wayne, Battle Creek and Lansing. I've always enjoyed taking first time visitors to the zoo.  
**Phyllis Beyer**What a great way to spend our first warm day in months. I can't believe Taylor's little friend had never been to a zoo. You girls were there a couple times a year all your life. Way to go Disney. Maybe I can see the Toledo Zoo sometime this summer with you guys.  
**jamiahsh**Based upon the picture and comments made on Sunday, the Crabby Magician was everything you said he was. I wish I could have gone... Morat could have REALLY upstaged him. He looks bored to tears and not very entertainiing and as if he couldn't wait to get rid of the kid with him. WAY TO GO, DIS! Steak n ' Shake...oooohhhh.

# Good Movie, Bad Title

I stopped my blog posting of reviews for every movie I’ve been watching – you’ll know why when you read a post I’m writing for next week called Farm Frenzy.Â  But I saw a movie last night that is totally worth mentioning – “The Uninvited”.

The movie has a really bad title, I’ll admit that.Â  But what a good suspense thriller it turned out to be!Â  The best one I’ve seen in a long time; maybe one of the best thrillers I’ve ever seen!Â  The movie is scary at times, creepy at others, and constantly fast-paced and riveting.Â  The movie was not at all what I expected when I came in, and I left the theater very pleasantly surprised.Â  The plot centers around a teenager named Anna who is just getting out of the psych ward after a 10 month stint as a result ofÂ  a suicide attempt.Â  10 months earlier, her mother was terminally ill and bedridden, her father was having an affair with her nurse, and there was a terrible fire that took the life of her mother.Â  When Anna gets out of the hospital, her father’s girlfriend (her mother’s nurse) has moved into her house, and it doesn’t take long for Anna to begin to suspect the new woman in her family’s life is up to no good.

I can’t begin to explain the mind-bending plot – there’s much more to it than I’ve explained, but I really don’t want to go into too much detail.Â  The point is, I highly recommend this movie.Â  Especially if you like suspense thriller movies, this one is a must-see.Â  Seriously, with respect to its genre, it’s a near-perfect movie.Â  My only problem with it is its weak and undescriptive title – good movie, bad title, but a must-see, nonetheless!

### Comments

**Drop Hangars And Other Uninvited Guests | Morat's Blog**[...] the final showing of The Uninvited.Â  A very suspenseful movie that I will not dwell upon since taylhis has already done so.Â  I, too would find it hard to post a full review as there are so many twists [...]  
**taylhis**You might like it Mom... a little on the scary side for you - I know you like action movies the best... For you, I highly recommend Changling. VERY good movie!  
**Phyllis Beyer**It sounds like my kind of movie. Maybe when it comes out on DVD.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... it does look like a good creepy movie. Now if I only had time to see it... but, OH, WELL!!

# I Know Who To Blame For This Economy

**WAL-MART!** I can find many ways to blame Wal-Mart for the way the economy is tanking.Â  Time for my latest beef about the place.Â  We went over there Friday morning because my husband didn’t have to work until after lunch, and we need an oil change.Â  So we thought we’d get the oil change done together this time, which made me really happy because normally it’s just me and my two children (ages 2 and 7 mos.) who have to kill around 2 hours there every 3 months (or sometimes even more frequently).Â  If you’re thinking that spending 2 hours at Wal-Mart with 2 little kids while trying not to spend a lot of money is both exhausting and frustrating, you aren’t very far off the mark.Â  So anyway, Friday I thought I had company for the oil change, but even so, who wants to spend hours at Wal-Mart?Â  When we pulled up, I was pleasantly surprised to see that there weren’t any cars waiting, so I thought we might actually be out of there in under an hour – WRONG!Â  The wait time they quoted us was an hour and a half!Â  But we needed the oil change and were kind of trying to kill time until the area restaurants would start serving lunch, so we decided to go for it, especially since they’ve opened an H & R Block in the Wal-Mart for tax season.Â  Taxes and an oil change – kill two birds with one stone, or so we thought…Â  We get to the other side of the store where the makeshift H & R Block is, and we find out it’s not open until 1pm.Â  So we went back to the Automotive Department to sign in our car anyway, and that’s when we discover that an oil change at Wal-Mart is now $30!Â  That is a $7.50 increase in price over the last 3 months!Â  So no taxes to get done + expensive oil change + long wait = forget it!Â  And I will add the fact that Wal-Mart sucks at oil changes.Â  Almost every time I’d come home with the car, it would act funny or something else would be wrong with it.Â  Once they forgot to put the air filter back in, several times they didn’t replace the wiper fluid when it was checked off on the to-do list, and a few times I had to go back and have them re-vacuum the interior of the car because they said they did it but clearly had not.Â  Those were the days when oil changes were still so reasonable in price that we got the full monty of services, including the vacuuming and the refilling of fluids – not anymore!

We called other places around town, and we found that Wal-Mart is now the most expensive AND takes the longest.Â  But at the other places you needed an appointment, so we’ll have to wait until next week – no problem if I don’t have to go back to Wal-Mart!Â  Plus I’d rather support the little guy anyway (ever hear the country music song “Little Man” by Alan Jackson?Â  It’s a good one and I highly recommend listening to it if you’re frustrated about Wal-Mart’s world take-over).Â  And that brings me to why I’m blaming Wal-Mart for the awful economy…

They’re putting all the little guys out of business, so there go the jobs and the competition in the retail world that was keeping product and services prices reasonable.Â  Wal-Mart sets the pricing trends, unfortunately.Â  Mark my words, as soon as the little guys in town get wind that Wal-Mart upped their oil change prices, they will follow suit and you won’t be able to touch an oil change for under $30.Â  And worse yet, I read in the newspaper just yesterday that Wal-Mart is the only retail place that posted profits for January.Â  In fact, they’re doing even better than Wall Street predicted for them, which in this economy, makes them stand alone in that respect.

The state of our economy is so bad right now that I suppose it’s not logical to blame just one entity.Â  But moaning about Walmart is a good venting tool, and they p\*ss me off!

### Comments

**derek**I generally get it done by my mechanic, but I'm not sure how much it is because the car is always there to get something else done and I just tack on the oil change.  
**jamiahsh**What is that new slogan "Save money... Live better" I guess you aren't saving much money there... and reading the post doesn't sound like you are living much better, either.  
**justj**The quick lube spots are around $50 and they get it done in 15 minutes. You don't even get out of your car. Me, I generally go to the dealer, and walk around town.

# Random Kid Stuff

The other day, my husband reminded me of a cute story about something our oldest daughter did when she was younger, probably around 4 years old.Â  He said I should write it down somewhere so we don’t forget about it, so I decided to write something about all four of our wonderful kids, starting with the oldest and going down.Â  Here’s a visual:



TAYLOR – About 5 years ago, we began finding the letters “WCPL” all over the house.Â  The letters were always written together like a word, and they were everywhere – walls, books, VHS movies, chairs, everywhere.Â  We couldn’t figure out what word our then-4-year-old was trying to spell, so we had a talk about not writing where we’re not supposed to, cleaned it all up, and moved on.Â  A few weeks later, I took my daughter to the library to check out some books and movies, and that’s when I saw the labels on the VHS cases – WCPL = Williams County Public Library!Â  She had noticed that all of her books and movies that came from the library had those letters on them, so I guess she figured things were supposed to be labeled WCPL – hehehe!

SAMANTHA – Sammie is a very unique child.Â  She can be a real spitfire, but she just has this incredible spirit about her…Â  But she’ll ask me questions that I have no idea how to answer.Â  When her older sister was her age, she would ask the normal kid questions about life and how things work, and even if she didn’t phrase her questions correctly, it was always easy for me to figure out what she wanted to know and where she was coming from.Â  Not true with Samantha!Â  Since half the time I don’t know what she’s asking about, I can’t think of any of her confusing questions to share here on the blog, but I will say that she is the type of kid who asks the embarrassing questions in public – and *loudly*.Â  We went to a nursing home to sing Christmas carols during the holidays, and there was a gentleman in a wheelchair who suffered from a muscle illness that made his tongue swell.Â  He loved the caroling and really got into it, singing quite loudly.Â  This got Sammie’s attention.Â  She asked me, “Does your tongue hang out because you get so old?”Â  She just has such a different way of looking at things…Â  This is the same kid who asked me one time (really loudly of course) why someone was wearing purple underwear in the bathroom stall next to us!

DISNEY – It’s funny because Disney and Sammie look very much alike, almost like twins years apart.Â  But their personalities are night and day.Â  The other day, Disney, our 2-year-old, looked up at the sky and said, “Airplane!Â  See it, on ceiling?”Â  Awwww…..

CHRISTOPHER – I remembered something I forgot to mention about my son’s 6-month doctor visit.Â  The nurse said he should be eating 3 meals a day – something that seems obvious, but I’m actually really glad she mentioned it!Â  When you have a baby and you’re used to popping bottles in his mouth all the time, you forget that when he’s old enough to be eating solid foods that he needs meals just like big people!Â  My son loves all kinds of food; he tries to grab as much as he can, and he shoves it into his mouth with his little fists.Â  As he gets older, I’m starting to notice the difference between girls and boys, especially when it comes to their eating habits.Â  Boys are messier and more enthusiastic eaters, while girls tend to be dainty and more picky.Â  But again, maybe these are just differences in *my* kids, rather than a difference based on gender, who knows.Â  And from what I remember, all the kids started out not being picky about their food – they were just so happy to be experiencing flavors after an entire life of only formula!

I have been blessed with 4 kids, and they have 4 very individualistic personalities.Â  It’s really neat to watch how they interact with each other.Â  Well, except when the interacting involves fighting!

### Comments

**derek**Well, as I said you should be able to add it through the "add media" button and get it to show up as a reduced link to a larger picture. That's how I did all the pictures on the "New HPX" page a while (and a couple Wordpress versions) ago. I'll look into it again and let you know.  
**justj**It isn't Greek to me, but I don't usually do that. After many years of moving stuff on dial-up, I shrink the pictures before uploading them. If somebody really want a big pic of anything on my blog, they will have to ask.  
**taylhis**It's Greek to ALL of us... except Derek and JustJ probably... I'm sorry Derek, but you'll just have to view my large pics - I don't have ANY time to be messing around with code! But thanks for the hints!  
**Phyllis Beyer**It's all Greek to me. I am a computer idiot. Actually I took the picture and put it on my desktop as wallpaper.  
**derek**:?: What happened to my last comment? It was a correction to the above comment. If you use the above code, { should become <, and } should become >. Part of the last sentence got cut.  
**derek**Blah. It still cut out the proper braces. The last sentence should read: Change { and } to < and >  
**derek**By the way, when making your posts, you can manually make your pictures small and linkable to the full-sized pics so you can have nice small pics for the blog but people can still see the full-sized one by clicking on it (I'm sure there is still a way to do this with the editor but I no longer know how since wordpress was updated by our admin a couple times- he might be able to show you how). After adding your picture, go to the html tab and find the picture code which will look something like this (from your post): {img class="alignnone size-full wp-image-880" src="http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/02/1-2-09-003.jpg" alt="1-2-09-003" width="1024" height="768" /} And change it to this: {a title="My goofy kids" href="http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/02/1-2-09-003.jpg"}{img src="http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/02/1-2-09-003.jpg" alt="My goofy kids" width="500" /}{/a} Then go back to the visual tab and make sure it worked. It should have. Note that I changed the braces so the code would show up in the comment. Change { and } to .  
**derek**The mystery... The excitement... The intrigue... The enthusiasm... All can be yours- be a parent! :D  
**justj**Ah the stories that parents have. Every one of my girls have different personalities too. Life would be dull without that.  
**taylhis**YAY! Grandma left a comment! Now you can leave me comments directly on the blog rather than sending me an email with the subject, "your blog". ;) Thanks so much for commenting; good to see you here! When you comment, check the little box about subscribing to comments if you want to receive an email any time someone comments.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I loved reading about 4 of my "angels". I miss them so much. Yes, they are each unique and I love them all.  
**jamiahsh**All very unique and lovable even Dis seems to be getting out of her boy shyness... or is it just me? What is the red streak in Sammie's head...abover her right eye... brown eyes cool color. Must be one of those interactive moments that involve fighting... KIDDING.

# My Lobotomy

I just finished reading an engrossing memoir entitled *My Lobotomy*.Â  It took me a really long time to read it because I had to put it on hold since another book I had requested from the library came in.Â  I was number 223 on the waiting list for the other book, so when it came in, I had no choice but to put down *My Lobotomy* for about a month.Â  I was reluctant to put it down though, because Howard Dully’s life story is fascinating.Â  The book details a kids’ life growing up in the 1950’s and 1960’s under the thumb of his ‘evil’ stepmother.Â  As cliche as it sounds, there really is no better way to describe Howard’s stepmom, but ‘evil’ is my adjective for her, not his.Â  I find it very surprising and admirable of Howard that his memoir never takes a direction of self-pity, blame, nor hatred toward any of the people who were responsible for the trauma he endured as a child and young man.Â  Rather, the narrative is written very matter-of-factly, and it follows Howard on his fascinating, though tortuous journey through the United States mental health system in the 1960’s.

Howard Dully was forced to undergo a lobotomy at the tender age of 12.Â  Basically, his stepmother resented him because he was a reminder to her of his real mother, his father’s widow.Â  So stepmother Lou was determined to get rid of Howard any way she could.Â  When the lobotomy didn’t turn him into a vegetable, she shipped him off to loony bins, insane asylums, or mental institutions, whichever term would best describe these places in the 1960’s.Â  This is a picture of an anesthetized 12-year-old Howard getting an ice pick lobotomy:



Lou convinced Howard’s father and a doctor named Freeman that Howard was mentally ill.Â  Well actually, Dr. Freeman did not need much convincing.Â  He was the ‘father of the lobotomy’ and was eagerly looking for patients upon whom he could practice his ‘procedure’.Â  The procedure consisted of sticking an ice pick into one’s eye sockets and swirling it around – seriously.Â  And poor Howard was forced to endure this ‘operation’ as a kid at the age of 12.Â  His memoir details every aspect of his life; it’s riveting, heartbreaking, and finally triumphant because Howard is now a full grown man who seems like a genuinely nice guy, especially given everything he’s been through and had to come to grips with in his life.

The book starts at his birth and chronicles his early life with his doting biological mother; taking the reader through all his trials and tribulations with stepmother Lou, the lobotomy, his struggles with addiction as a young adult, and finally on his search through his medical records and the touching interviews he conducted with his own father about his role in the events that shaped Howard’s life.Â  The book also includes the many notes taken by Dr. Freeman after his meetings with Howard and his family, which offer a very interesting and unique perspective…

After I finished this book, I was curious about many of the things I had read about, so I conducted a little research of my own, and I found [recordings Howard made about his story for the National Public Radio](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5014080), as well as some [more information about Dr. Freeman and his ice-pick lobotomies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Freeman_(surgeon))…Â  Fascinating stuff, and I encourage you to check out Howard’s story – the book is *My Lobotomy* by Howard Dully.Â  Like I said, it’s truly amazing to me that after all he’s been through, Howard just seems to want to know **why** it happened, rather than **who** to blame for it…Â  an extremely commendable type of attitude which is growing increasingly rare in this day and age and was very refreshing to read about.Â  Thanks, Howard, for such a compelling read!

### Comments

**taylhis**Bowling Green is a bit far for a school night, but thanks anyway! Tell your mom (and you if you go) to have a good time!  
**jamiahsh**hmm... being wednesday I will prolly have to work that night, but we'll see  
**Megan**I read the first one also. How coincidental, my mom just said that she is going to go see the author on wed. at Bowling Green, he is having a book signing. Which I just heard about, (she said she supposedly told me, but I don't remember) I'm gonna check if I'm working, it starts at 7 if you are interested and came make sitting arrangements.  
**jamiahsh**I read the first "It" book and it was very good.  
**taylhis**Haven't read those books - looked them up on wikipedia though, and they sound interesting.  
**Megan**Wow! He is such an inspiration to all of us! BTW, have you ever read the "A child called it" books?  
**jamiahsh**Sounds amazing especially to read about someone not placing blame but yet going beyond it and becoming stronger for it. That would take a great amount of strength and will.

# Birthday Miracle

A few months ago, I learned I had a second cousin in Florida who was killed in a horrific car crash.Â  She was on her way to a fun outing with her daughter when out of nowhere, a drunk driver (mid-afternoon on a weekday – not that there’s ever **any** appropriate time to drink and drive, but still) who was going the wrong way on the expressway hit her car head-on, killing her and gravely injuring her young daughter.Â  The little girl persevered, came out of her coma and re-learned to walk and talk.Â  She was recently in the news again because she just turned 5 years old and sadly, she still thinks her mother is coming back.Â  Her courage and strength is inspiring, so I’d like to share this clip of her on the Florida news.Â  Please keep Summer in your thoughts and prayers.Â  [Click here to see the news story about Summer’s 5th birthday](http://www.abcactionnews.com/mediacenter/local.aspx?videoid=12643).Â  And please, **please**, if you’re going to drink, **always** have another mode of transportation set up ahead of time!

### Comments

**derek**Thanks. I'll take a look at it.  
**taylhis**I don't know what if anything the driver has learned... if you really want to know about her or the story, here is an article with more info: http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/article879595.ece  
**derek**8O What J said. Praise God for Summer's recovery so far from this. The video didn't say anything about the drunk driver, but I really hope (s)he has learned big time from this. My condolences for your second cousin.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... what an amazing little girl. Indeed, my prayers are with her.

# Super(fun)Bowl

I am much more of a baseball fan than a football fan (see my countdown timer to the first game of Cubs spring training to the right).Â  But I will admit that I love watching football; mainly because my husband loves it, and I love to see him enjoy things that make him happy.Â  Oh, that and the fact that whenever he watches football, it’s become sort of a tradition with us that he gives me excellent backrubs!Â  So while I couldn’t care less who won yesterday’s Superbowl,( although I chose the Cardinals to root for because it’s always fun to pick a team and scream and shout and get into the game) I did have a great time watching it.

We had decided to have a get-together; a fun evening filled with friends and food (too much food!Â  We had to have pizza for dinner again Monday and will have it twice more this weekÂ  just to get rid of all the extras!).Â  Because I have 4 kids, I didn’t get to see all of my favorite part of the Superbowl – the commercials.Â  But that’s ok, I’m sure I can catch them online somewhere if I’m so inclined.Â  The ones I did see were pretty good – I especially liked the Potato Head one (think it was for tires).Â  It just cracks me up when Mrs. Potato Head changes into her ‘angry’ eyes, hehehe!Â  I also really liked the careerbuilder.com commercial with the moose head on the wall – I won’t spoil the rest of it because I recommend you go out and find it yourself if you haven’t seen it.Â  I missed the newest E-Trade.com commercials with the talking baby, so those I will have to find because I always enjoy those.Â  Oh, and I’ll have to see the latest chapter in the saga of the Budweiser Clydesdales…

As for halftime, I’m not a fan of “The Boss”, so I wasn’t paying attention to Bruce Springsteen’s performance.Â  I am glad to note, however, that he didn’t incur a wardrobe malfunction ala Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson circa Superbowl XXXVII in 2004.Â  Also during halftime, there was a special 3D event.Â  We had picked up enough pairs of 3D glasses for the party at a store ahead of time (we actually got enough to last us until Superbowl L!), but in my opinion, they should have given a few minutes warning for people to get their glasses ready.Â  We had ours ready because they did mention it in the 2nd quarter, but I didn’t get a chance to get my regular eyeglasses to wear underneath, which guaranteed an absence of 3D for me.Â  But other people seemed pretty impressed…Â  I have seen the preview for Monsters Vs. Aliens in the movie theater and it looks really funny – I’m looking forward to that movie coming out.

Well, anyway, much fun was had by all.Â  We had originally intended to make this a game night / Superbowl party, but by the time the big game ended, there wasn’t any time for board games.Â  Next time!Â  And oh yeah, I should report that the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Superbowl, in case you’re using my site for a news report 

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I also don't know how Springsteen's show compared over others, but from what little I saw, it wasn't too much to write home about. I didn't really care who won either, but decided to go with the team who had not won several previous championships.  
**jamiahsh**I second that motion. If you happen to have found a sweater vest on the table, CAC lent it to me for to see if I could use it in MMiSL. There were lots of good commercials. Watching football... any football... game at your house is always a fun experience.  
**derek**I had to scramble to get 3D glasses Sunday morning- just for the one break. Though I really picked them up for the TV show I watch that was aired in 3D Monday night. I haven't watched it yet- still have a few episodes to catch up on first.  
**justj**The Steelers won? ;) There were many Cardinal fans at your party and very few Steeler fans, so I thought it would have been better not to mention that fact. I think a good time was had by all. Good food, good friends, what more do you need?

# BLOG NOTES

size of pictures to post: After you upload it you can choose but I would say under 650wide and 400 long (650×400)  
embedding videos in the blog – 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.

inserting poll –

**If you won the lottery, what are some of the things you'd do first? Choose as many as apply:**

* build a community theater building
* build a community theater building anonymously
* consult an attorney
* change my phone number
* quit my job
* take a vacation
* hire a nanny
* hire a laundry service
* hire a housekeeper
* donate to charity
* build a zoo
* build a dream home
* I wrote a creative answer - read it in the comments section
* go to the casino

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

Â Â  where 4 is the number of the poll

### Comments

# Am I The Only One Who Didn't Know This?

I received an interesting email forward from my mom last week, and I’m sharing it on my blog because it’s a helpful household tip that most people I asked didn’t know about.Â  I had actually heard this Heloise-worthy hint before, but I had forgotten about it.Â  Here is a copy of the email forward:

*I had to go into the kitchen and check this out for myself. Who looks at the end of an aluminum foil box? You know, when you try to pull some foil out and the whole roll comes out of the box. Then you have to put the roll back in the box and start over. The darn roll always comes out at the wrong time.*

*Well, I would like to share this with you. Yesterday I went to throw out an empty Reynolds Wrap foil box and for some reason I turned it and looked at the end of the box. And written on the end it said, “Press here to lock end.”*

*Right there on the end of the box is a tab to lock the roll in place. How long has this little lockng tab been there? I then looked at a generic brand of aluminum foil and it had one too. I then looked at a box of Saran wrap and it had one too! I can’t count the number of times the Saran wrap roll has jumped out when I was trying to cover something up.*

**What do you think about the foil box hint?**

* I knew that already - where have YOU been?
* I'm glad I found out and will find it useful
* I don't care
* I didn't know about it, and I won't be using it

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**Megan**Good to know! And all those times I have waisted so much aluminum foil. I'm surprised that they don't make the sign that you can lock it, a little more noticeable.  
**derek**I voted that I knew this, but only since I read about it on another forum. I encourage you to check out [Worthy Christian Forums](http://www.worthychristianforums.com). I think the women outnumber the guys by a fairly significant margin, so you should be comfortable there. They have a chat board as well.  
**justj**Some of the cheap wraps don't have the locking tabs. So you have to be careful.  
**jamiahsh**Reynolds added the feature in 1996. Wonder how long they have been around or if they were the first.... seems highly likely that they introduced the tabs.  
**jamiahsh**Ok... so maybe I really won't find it so useful, but I did look and pushed in the tabs on both ends and by golly, it works.

# Sick Of Being Sick

The past week and a half in our house has been awful.Â  It all came to a head last Friday when our two-year-old got sick in the car.Â  Last weekend, when she wasn’t sleeping, she was throwing up or in the words of Chandler, played by Matthew Perry on the tv show Friends, “visiting a town a little south of throwing up…”.Â  Later in the weekend, her baby brother was afflicted with the same illness, and now we had huge messes x2.Â  Big sister Sammie got it later in the week, but luckily, the little ones started feeling better.Â  Add in a snow day and a couple of weather delays, and our house was chaos for what seemed like forever.Â  On top of everything, I had some sort of extreme fatigue.Â  I was so worried about it that I even made a doctor’s appointment and went in, where the doctor ran some blood tests and even gave me a neck xray since I had a strange achiness accompanying the fatigue.Â  I guess it didn’t occur to me that I could have the same virus that struck down the kids, mainly because I didn’t have the same (disgusting) symptoms they had, but I did look up some stuff on the internet in an attempt to ~~scare~~ diagnose myself.Â  The good news is, my xrays and blood tests came back normal (well, I’m actually still waiting on one of the tests, but it’s Friday and the nurses are out to lunch and won’t be back until Monday afternoon – what is that?Â  Can I have a job like that?), but the tests that did come back show that there is nothing wrong with my thyroid or my iron levels, both of which I thought were possibilities.Â  So that’s good…Â  I guess.Â  If there was something wrong with my body chemically, we’d be able to fix it, and then I’d have the energy I need to keep up with my 4 little kids.Â  Now that most things came back normal, I don’t know where to start to feel better…Â Â  Although I do feel much better today, but still no where near normal, and that makes me think it might be the illness my kids had after all.Â  But it was a bizarrely lengthy version of the stomach flu, and it will take us weeks (at least!) to catch up on all the work that didn’t get done in the week and a half of illness, sigh.

My husband had to take off from some of his work so he could watch the kids while I rested, and especially with all the laundry we’ve had to do around here, Mt.Â  Washmore is once again threatening to take over the second floor of our house.Â  All this catching up, and I’m still exhausted…Â  My husband seems to think I have sleep apnea, mostly because I snore often and loudly and I’m always needing more sleep.Â  I forgot to bring this up to the doctor, but if I ever get ahold of her and that last test comes back normal, maybe we can go from there…Â  I do seem to need an awful lot of sleep to function.Â  Well, anyway, that’s my story – sorry if I grossed anyone out (especially body-function-joke-hater Derek), but I thought people should know where I’ve been for the last two weeks.Â  At least the kids are feeling better – it was beyond sad to see them crabby, lethargic and not able to keep anything down…Â  Is it time for summer yet?!?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**See ya then.  
**jamiahsh**I will be brave and cross my fingers; but I am sure it will be wonderful and everyone will be healthier and it will be a super Super Bowl. Glad to hear you are all returning to whatever normal is.  
**derek**Just be sure to wear surgical masks. :D I'm glad to hear you and your family are getting better, L.  
**taylhis**I can't guarantee I got every contagious germ out of the house... but I sure tried because I'm really looking forward to the party since we are all finally feeling better! So it's up to you if you want to brave it, and I hope you will!  
**justj**Is this going to affect the Super Bowl gathering? I really hope everyone in your household is feeling better.  
**derek**Nah. I'm not grossed out. I mentioned a student who upchucked the other day in class. I just don't like it when they use stuff like that as so-called entertainment.

# It's The End Of The World As We Know It... And I Feel Fine

Every few years, it seems that people are worried about an Armageddon date.Â  They chose some sort of date based on something and promptly report it to the media as the date the world will end.Â  Nine years ago now, it was Y2K – do you remember how many people built shelters, stockpiled canned food and emergency supplies?Â  I was due to have my first child as the ‘millennium baby’, and I was worried something catastrophic would happen; at the very least, the lights would go out in the hospital or something.Â  My daughter arrived a few weeks early though, on December 21, 1999, so we were at home safe and sound to ring in the new year – and surprise, surprise, nothing happened.Â  So it’s not a shocker that people have pinpointed a new date for the Apocalypse; this time it’s based upon an ancient Mayan calendar – well, some scholars’ interpretation of it anyway.Â  What will you be doing in 2012?Â  According to some people, you should live 2011 to its fullest, because that’s all we’re going to get!Â  The following article is from cnn.com and was written by A. Pawlowski.

*Just as “Y2K” and its batch of predictions about the year 2000 have become a distant memory, here comes “Twenty-twelve.”  
The sun shines through the door of the Seven Dolls Temple, in the Maya ruins of Dzibilchaltun in Mexico.*

*The sun shines through the door of the Seven Dolls Temple, in the Maya ruins of Dzibilchaltun in Mexico.*

*Fueled by a crop of books, Web sites with countdown clocks, and claims about ancient timekeepers, interest is growing in what some see as the dawn of a new era, and others as an expiration date for Earth: December 21, 2012.*

*The date marks the end of a 5,126-year cycle on the Long Count calendar developed by the Maya, the ancient civilization known for its advanced understanding of astronomy and for the great cities it left behind in Mexico and Central America.*

*(Some scholars believe the cycle ends a bit later — on December 23, 2012.)*

*Speculation in some circles about whether the Maya chose this particular time because they thought something ominous would happen has sparked a number of doomsday theories.*

*The hype also has mainstream Maya scholars shaking their heads.*

*“There’s going to be a whole generation of people who, when they think of the Maya, think of 2012, and to me that’s just criminal,” said David Stuart, director of the Mesoamerica Center at the University of Texas at Austin.*

*“There is no serious scholar who puts any stock in the idea that the Maya said anything meaningful about 2012.”*

*But take the fact that December 21, 2012, coincides with the winter solstice, add claims the Maya picked the time period because it also marks an alignment of the sun with the center of the Milky Way galaxy, and you have the makings of an online sensation.*

*Long Count 101  
â€¢ The Long Count calendar was one of several created by the ancient Maya.*

*â€¢ It consists of the following units of time:*

*kin = one day  
uinal = 20 days  
tun = 360 days (18 uinal)  
katun = 7,200 days (20 tun)  
baktun = 144,000 days (20 katun)*

*â€¢ The calendar shows the number of days elapsed since the beginning date: August 13, 3114 B.C. (some scholars think the date is actually August 11, 3114 B.C.)*

*â€¢ The dates are written as numbers separated by periods in the following order:*

*(baktun).(katun).(tun).(uinal).(kin)*

*â€¢ July 20, 1969 — the date of the first moon landing — would be written as: 12.17.15.17.0*

*â€¢ December 21, 2012, would be written as 13.0.0.0.0 and the day after that as 0.0.0.0.1*

*Source: Howstuffworks.com*

*Type “2012” into an Internet search engine and you’ll find survival guides, survival schools, predictions and “official stuff” to wear, including T-shirts with slogans such as “2012 The End” and “Doomsday 2012.”*

*Theories about what might happen range from solar storms triggering volcano eruptions to a polar reversal that will make the Earth spin in the opposite direction.*

*If you think all of this would make a great sci-fi disaster movie, Hollywood is already one step ahead.*

*“2012,” a special-effects flick starring John Cusack and directed by Roland Emmerich, of “The Day After Tomorrow” fame, is scheduled to be released this fall. The trailer shows a monk running to a bell tower on a mountaintop to sound the alarm as a huge wall of water washes over what appear to be the peaks of the Himalayas.*

*‘Promoting a hoax’*

*One barometer of the interest in 2012 may be the “Ask an Astrobiologist” section of NASA’s Web site, where senior scientist David Morrison answers questions from the public. On a recent visit, more than half of the inquiries on the most popular list were related to 2012.*

*“The purveyors of doom are promoting a hoax,” Morrison wrote earlier this month in response to a question from a person who expressed fear about the date.*

*A scholar who has studied the Maya for 35 years said there is nothing ominous about 2012, despite the hype surrounding claims to the contrary.*

*“I think that the popular books… about what the Maya say is going to happen are really fabricated on the basis of very little evidence,” said Anthony Aveni, a professor of astronomy, anthropology and Native American studies at Colgate University.*

*Aveni and Stuart are both writing their own books explaining the Mayan calendar and 2012, but Stuart said he’s pessimistic that people will be interested in the real story when so many other books are making sensational claims.*

*Dozens of titles about 2012 have been published and more are scheduled to go on sale in the coming months. Current offerings include “Apocalypse 2012,” in which author Lawrence Joseph outlines “terrible possibilities,” such as the potential for natural disaster.*

*But Joseph admits he doesn’t think the world is going to end.*

*“I do, however, believe that 2012 will prove to be… a very dramatic and probably transformative year,” Joseph said.*

*The author acknowledged he’s worried his book’s title might scare people, but said he wanted to alert the public about possible dangers ahead.*

*He added that his publisher controls the book’s title, though he had no issue with the final choice.*

*“If it had been called ‘Serious Threats 2012′ or ‘Profound Considerations for 2012,’ it would have never gotten published,” Joseph said.*

*Growing interest*

*Another author said the doom and gloom approach is a great misunderstanding of 2012.*

*“The trendy doomsday people… should be treated for what they are: under-informed opportunists and alarmists who will move onto other things in 2013,” said John Major Jenkins, whose books include “Galactic Alignment” and who describes himself as a self-taught independent Maya scholar.*

*Jenkins said that cycle endings were all about transformation and renewal — not catastrophe — for the Maya. He also makes the case that the period they chose coincides with an alignment of the December solstice sun with the center of the Milky Way, as viewed from Earth.*

*“Two thousand years ago the Maya believed that the world would be going through a great transformation when this alignment happened,” Jenkins said.*

*But Aveni said there is no evidence that the Maya cared about this concept of the Milky Way, adding that the galactic center was not defined until the 1950s.*

*“What you have here is a modern age influence [and] modern concepts trying to garb the ancient Maya in modern clothing, and it just doesn’t wash for me,” Aveni said.*

*Meanwhile, he and other scholars are bracing for growing interest as the date approaches.*

*“The whole year leading up to it is going to be just crazy, I’m sorry to say,” Stuart said.*

*“I just think it’s sad, it really just frustrates me. People are really misunderstanding this really cool culture by focusing on this 2012 thing. It means more about us than it does about the Maya.”*

### Comments

**derek**People have long looked to the end of the world. Even some first century Christians thought Jesus's return would be coming in their lifetimes. Nearly 2000 years later, the world is looking more like what's described in the Bible pertaining to His return, but we still can't say for sure. I know one who prophesied the Rapture for March 2011, and Jesus's return for September that year. Some list says there is no Pope after Benedict. This Mayan thing says 2012. Lots of guesses, but only God knows the timing. We should be ready, but not putting everything aside to wait for it. To all readers of this comment: have you accepted Christ yet? If not, you are not ready. Here's a place to start: [Got Forgiveness?](http://www.gotquestions.org/got-forgiveness.html)  
**Maggie’s Blog » Blog Archive » An Agenda of Controlled Chaos Â« the Nyu College Democrats**[...] Itâ€™s The End Of The World As We Know Itâ€¦ And I Feel Fine | My Food … [...]  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like a possible Un-Happy Birthday for T. Yeah, sure. I remember Y2K, I was sick on the 1st day... and no, not because I had partied too much the night before.

# He Said WHAT?

The continuing saga of Illinois’ embattled governor just keeps getting more and more interesting.Â  As his impeachment trial opened yesterday, Rod Blagojevich took to the tv airwaves to defend (?) himself.Â  I saw clips of a few of his tv appearances, and that’s why I included the little question mark above.Â  It didn’t seem to me that he was doing a good job of defending himself.Â  In fact, the ladies on The View noticed the same thing, with them noting, “Seems like you’re doing yourself more harm than good.”Â  The View ladies then hilariously chided the governor, asking him to say “I’m not a crook” – Richard Nixon-style.Â  Blago refused.

And of course by now you’ve heard about the Oprah for Senator announcement he made on Good Morning America – Blago has admitted that he actually considered Oprah Winfrey to fill Obama’s old Senate seat.Â  I’m not even going to go there – there were too many other gems that came out of Blago’s mouth yesterday.Â  Among them:

On his Larry King Live appearance, Blagojevich launched into a bizarre analogy involving cowboys and steer to describe his situation…Â  I’m not going to go into detail; it was quite lengthy, but it’s worth looking up on youtube or somewhere if you’re so inclined.Â  WHAT was he TALKING about?!?

Back to Oprah for a minute.Â  According to Blagojevich, Oprah has more influence than all 100 United States senators combined.Â  She does have lots of dough; as well as an uncanny ability to get women to diet and save money.Â  But she doesn’t have the power to declare war or pass legislation that changes lives…Â  so no, Blago, not even close on that one.

Also on Larry King Live, Blago was shown clips of Saturday Night Live where they make fun of him, namely his thick mane of hair.Â  “He looks like one of those Fisher Price toy people with its hair on backwards!”Â  Too funny!Â  But Blago didn’t think so.Â Â  “What show was that?”Â  he asked.Â  But a few sentences later, he talked about how they can make fun of him during skits or whatever and that he didn’t care.Â  But if he had never heard of Saturday Night Live as he acted, how would he know it was a show comprised of skits?Â  He was just trying to insult Saturday Night Live by acting as though he had never heard of it!

And throughout the governor’s press junket yesterday, he kept repeating – “The fix is in” referring to the “fact” that the Illinois House is impeaching him because they’re out to get him – not because he did anything wrong.Â  I agree with Blago on one aspect – his impeachment in inevitable.Â  In the mean time, I have to admit how fun it is to watch this guy in action and marvel at the fact that he was ever elected to such a major public office.Â  I think he might be certifiably nuts!

### Comments

**taylhis**Yes... time to take down all those signs he put up on the tollways labeling them as his... what a waste of $  
**derek**Oh, how one day makes a difference. Earlier the House was unanimous on his impeachment. Tonight the Senate completed his dismissal with their own unanimous votes- one for his removal, one for barring him from any Illinois political office. At this point, I don't care whether or not he's criminally charged- I'm just glad he's finally gone. No more Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich. Even though he's still a democrat, I welcome Gov. Pat Quinn.  
**derek**I am really getting tired of this whole thing. The secession of Palatine Township from Cook County is back in the news too. They want to put it on the next ballot as a non-binding referendum.  
**jamiahsh**I watched at least half of the Larry King interview Monday night. I missed the cowboy analogy. Didn't he miss the opening of his impeachment to begin his NY tour? He should be invited to host SNL and get Sean Astin to make an appearance. He is already being tapped for the movie.

# Zoo Traveler

I really like to travel (NO FLYING THOUGH!), and we were fortunate enough to do lots of it – before we had so many little kids, of course.Â  We still try to make a yearly trip to Florida, especially while we can still fit the entire family in one car – something that soon won’t be easily accomplished as the kids grow older.Â  At each travel destination, I have to admit that my favorite tourist attraction is always the local zoo.Â  I made a list of all the zoos and/or wildlife parks I have visited, and I hope to add to it soon!Â  Here is the list by state, country, or territory, followed by the city in which it’s located.Â  An asterisk following the zoo means it no longer exists.Â  I put notes about some of the places in *italics* as sort of a guide in case you’re interested in visiting one of those particular attractions and want some info straight from a tourist’s mouth.

**California**:  
Sea World San Diego  
San Diego Zoo

**Canada**:  
Bird Kingdom Niagara Falls Aviary, Niagara Falls, Ontario  
Marineland, Niagara Falls, Ontario – *this place is very cool.Â  You can hand-feed deer, Beluga Whales or even Orcas (Killer Whales).Â  You can throw food down to bears who beg and do tricks.Â  There are also a variety of amusement park rides for the whole family.Â  Look at me petting the Orca!*

**

**Washington, DC**National Zoo

**Florida**:  
Wooten’s Wilflife Park, Florida Everglades – *a cool, family owned place where you can see animals on display; including alligators, crocodiles, and Florida panthers.Â  You can also hold and feed baby alligators!Â  I wonder if they still exist; their website hasn’t been updated since ’06!*Sea World, Orlando  
Gatorland, Orlando  
Animal Kingdom, Orlando

**Idaho**:  
Zoo Boise, Boise

**Illinois**:

Brookfield Zoo, Brookfield – *this is the zoo I grew up going to.Â  In the 80’s when I was a frequent visitor, they had many ‘celebrity’ animals, with interesting stories to match.*Shedd Aquarium, Chicago  
Peoria Wildlife Park, Peoria  
Cosley Zoo, Wheaton  
Glen Oak Zoo, Peoria  
Henson Robinson Zoo, Springfield  
Miller Park Zoo, Bloomington – *yuck, not one of my favorite places.Â  Their tiger exhibits consisted of teeny tiny cages, and they had a really scrawny, terrible looking tiger, at least in the late ’90’s when we lived in the area.Â  Hopefully they’ve cleaned the place up.*Scovill Zoo, Decatur

**Indiana**:  
Ft Wayne Children’s Zoo – *a perfectly sized zoo to visit with kids.Â  They have a wide variety of animals and some nice exhibits.Â  They just recently built a chair-lift type ride that will take you over the lion exhibit once it’s finished – cool and scary at the same time!*Potawatomi Zoo,Â  South Bend  
Fun Spot, Angola

**Michigan**:  
Binder Park, Battle Creek

**Minnesota**:  
Minneapolis Zoo, Minneapolis

**Missouri**:  
St Louis Zoo, St. Louis

**Nebraska**:  
Henry Doorly Zoo, Omaha – *I know they’ve since rebuilt it, but when I visited back in 2001-2002, they had a teeny-tiny exhibit for the gorillas, which made them none too happy.Â  I actually witnessed a huge male gorilla charge a kid and beat on the glass from his small exhibit – scary!*Henry Doorly safari park, Omaha  
Folsom Children’s Zoo, Lincoln – *a very nice little zoo located in the heart of Lincoln.Â  It’s so well-laid out that you can forget you’re in the middle of a capital city, and they have lots of animals in a variety of nice exhibits.*

**Ohio**:

African Safari Wildlife Park, Port Clinton – *I love this place!Â  You can feed deer, elands, huge buffalo and a variety of hoofed mammals from the comfort of your own vehicle.Â  In season, they have pig races, animals shows, and camel and pony rides for the little ones.*Akron Zoo, Akron – *I was really impressed with the layout, exhibits, and the happiness of the animals – a very impressive little zoo!*Cincinnati Zoo, Cincinnati  
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Cleveland  
Columbus Zoo, Columbus – *a zoo no one had heard about until my favorite celebrity, Jack Hanna got ahold of it and made it a world-reknown facility.Â  Huge zoo, and the only place to see my favorite animals, manatees in my home state of Ohio!*\*Sea World Ohio, Aurora – *we actually lived in Illinois at the time we visited here, but I’m glad we got to see it before they sold it to Six Flags, who sold it to Cedar Fair.Â  Any of the other Sea Worlds are quite a hike from IL or OH for that matter, especially for a non-flyer such as myself.*Toledo Zoo, Toledo

**Pennsylvania**:  
Pittsburgh Zoo – *very impressive zoo!Â  Lots of kid-friendly playgrounds and interactive areas.* *The polar bear habitat looked really cool – people go through a tunnel that the bears can swim over – but we didn’t see it since the bears weren’t in the pool.Â  I NEED a second look at this zoo and will definitely allow more time when I get back there!*ZOOAMERICA North American Wildlife Park, Hershey – *We did not care for this zoo at all.Â  We visited in the late ’90’s, so maybe they’ve added more to it by now.Â  But at that time, they only had animals indigenous to North America, and let’s face it, those are easy to spot in most areas of the U.S.Â  And let’s face it, the real star tourist destination in Hershey is the chocolate factory!*

**South Dakota**:  
Great Plains Zoo and Museum, Sioux Falls – *I visited here with my family when I was 15.Â  This place was amusing to us because attached to the zoo is the museum, which has many taxidermied specimans.Â  We joked that this zoo had more dead animals than live ones!*\*Marineland, Rapid City – *note the asterisk, this place doesn’t exist anymore, thank goodness.Â  When we visited in the summer of ’93, they had dolphins and sea lions held in such tiny cages and pools, it was sickening.Â  I haven’t been able to find much info on this place, but I’m sure they were shut down because of poor treatment of their animals.Â  I can only hope the animals found a better home.*Bear Country USA, Rapid City – *a cool drive-thru bear habitat experience – keep those windows rolled up!!!Â  And check out the baby bear nursery – so adorable!*

**Wisconsin**:  
Henry Vilas Zoo, Madison  
\*Serpent Safari, Wisconsin Dells

**GRAND TOTAL AS OF 2009:**

**41 animal-themed places in 2 countries, 13 states, 1 district…Â  and counting!**

### Comments

**derek**Is that a picture from Free Willy 4, starring Taylhis? :D  
**justj**The Detroit Zoo covers more ground than the Toledo Zoo by far. It was a longer walk between the animals too. I liked the zoo, but the walking threw me, and that was in my younger days when I didn't mind walking as much. In Michigan, I'm missing the zoo in Grand Rapids. I just haven't been traveling in that direction. I know I've visited close to 30 zoos/attractions, but I never counted.  
**jamiahsh**Oh, yes... How Could I forget the frog?  
**taylhis**I count the San Diego attractions separately, and I haven't been to the Wildlife Park - they are in separate locations, so I count them separately. Never been to the Cedar Point nor King's Island safaris. Which one are you missing in Michigan? I did forget the Shedd Aquarium; thanks for the reminder! But believe it or not, I never went to the Lincoln Park zoo. Maybe I can add some of the Michigan locations this summer... Toronto isn't too far, but if they passed that rule where everyone needs a passport, that will be too pricey. I LOVE the Works Projects buildings! Toledo has lots of walking too - how does Detroit compare? Jamiahsh - I remember Miller Park out there in E-town. Attended a wedding there that was crashed by a frog from the swamp, remember? :0  
**justj**Do you count the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Wild Life park as two separate attractions? What about the animal safaris that used to be in Cedar Point and Kings Island? I'm almost certain the one in Cedar Point is gone, but I haven't been to Kings Island in years. I think I've been to every major animal park/zoo in Ohio, I'm missing one in Michigan, and a couple in Indiana. I can't believe I've been to two Chicago animal attractions that aren't on your list. I didn't see the Shedd Aquarium on your list. If you haven't been there you should go. And Lincoln Park Zoo. I don't really remember much about Lincoln park, but it wasn't that bad or I'd remember that. You should also hit Potter Park in Lansing, and the Detroit Zoo if you have a good day to spend. The Detroit Zoo covers a lot of ground, so if you aren't up to walking a lot, you may want to skip it. Potter Park is a zoo very similar to the Toledo Zoo. They have a lot of 1930's works projects buildings on the grounds. Very similar to the design and look of many of the old buildings in Toledo. Outside the country you should get to Toronto. They have a fabulous zoo. I'm going to have to count up my zoo trips to see how many I've been to.  
**taylhis**It's a goal of mine to get to one in every state - and some foreign countries if they can ever get me to fly - and I had to start the list to keep track of ones I've already been to before I forgot!  
**jamiahsh**SWEEET... Miller Park Zoo.... makes me think of our town's Miller Swamp... oops, Park. Used to have a decent pond and has since turned into YUCK. But you have been to FAR more animal attractions that I. Course I only vaguely remember the trek to CA so I dunno if we had the pleasure of visiting the SD Zoo. GO LUDO, I loved the Wildlife Park, too.  
**Zoo Traveler | Hazel Woods**[...] the original post:Â  Zoo Traveler | Tags: Celebrity, cincinnati, cleveland-columbus, cleveland-metroparks, columbus, favorite, [...]

# A Living Breathing Hoax

A while ago, I decided to write a series within my blog about animals, my favorite things.Â  I just can’t find enough time to learn about animals, and I love sharing knowledge about their incredible attributes.Â  Here is chapter two in my Interesting Animals series.Â  To read chapter one about a scaly mammal called the pangolin, [click here](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2008/12/10/these-are-a-few-of-my-favorite-things/).

For chapter two, I chose to focus on the duck-billed platypus; an animal who is so strange looking that people thought it to be a hoax when it was first discovered in 1798.

The platypus is one of 3-5 species (depending on the source – animal knowledge is very differential) ofÂ  monotremes or egg-laying mammals.Â  I know, at one point we were all taught that one of the characteristics of mammals is that they give birth to live young, but that is not the case.Â  Monotremes lay eggs, and the platypus join echidnas (spiny anteaters) in this animal order.Â  The platypus is found in Australia – seems like they have all the cool animals, doesn’t it?Â  I just wish they weren’t so stingy with their animals.Â  I know they stopped loaning out the Tasmanian Devil years ago, and now that the last one died (it resided in Fort Wayne Indiana until its death – I could kick myself for not making the less than hour trip over there to see it while it was alive), the only place to see them is in Australia.Â  The same goes for the platypus.Â  I’ve visited many zoos, and I’ve never seen a live platypus.Â  A quick check on the internet reveals that they are only found in Australian zoos.

But anyway, aside from being an aquatic (with water-repellent fur), egg-laying mammal, another cool thing about the platypus is that the males are actually poisonous.Â  Both genders have a spur on their left foot, but the males’ spur produces enough venom to really hurt a human being.Â  Here is a picture of the duck-billed platypus – note the soft, leathery duck-bill which is actually used by the animal to sense the electric fields caused by its moving prey (feeds on shrimp, fish eggs, small fish, and aquatic invertebrates found in streams and lakes).



Easy to see how this duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed, egg-laying mammal was once thought to be an elaborate man-made fraud, huh?

### Comments

**derek**A genetic engineer from the year 2300 traveled back in his time machine with the platypus to play a joke on all of us. :mrgreen:  
**justj**Platypus in zoo, that was over 25 years and at least that many zoos ago. I'm thinking Cincinnati Zoo, but I'm not sure. Back in the 80's there were many outside of the US animals coming in. Cultural exchange programs. Problem with platypus is that they don't do well with travel. High mortality rate in traveling platypus.  
**jamiahsh**VERY COOL. Yes, Australia is awfully stingy with their animals. As many times as I heard that they are overrun by kangaroo from a friend who spent her senior year in high school there (she often went on 'roo hunts with her host family), you would think they would be less stingy.  
**taylhis**That's interesting. I never thought about the size. On the websites I research, they always give the size in meters, so I just never thought about it in actuality. Where did you see the platypus?  
**justj**I remember seeing a platypus years and years ago. I just remember thinking how small they were. Looking at pictures and seeing them on nature shows, I always thought they were bigger animals. I was always thinking they were the size and weight of beavers, but they are about the size and weight of a medium-small woodchuck.

# Me Want Cookie

Jamiahsh, a fellow blogger friend of mine, had a point when he noted that it’s been a long time since one of my famous anti-Walmart posts.Â  I hate the place, but as a mom of 4, I don’t have any other options that compare to the time and money I reluctantly have to admit I save shopping at Walmart.Â  It’s just their dirty tricks that drive me crazy, and I’ve ranted about those long enough – if you’re interested, flip through my blog posts and search for Walmart.Â  Right now, I need to address my most current Walmart disappointment: no more free cookies for the kids.

Those of you who have kids know that Walmart used to give out cookies at the bakery as a sort of rescue for tiresome kids whose parents are taking too long with their shopping.Â  I shop at Walmart once, sometimes twice a week.Â  It is a familiar habit for my two-year-old to get her cookie at the bakery while we shop.Â  If I’m lucky, it will keep her busy until I hit the dairy section.Â  But the other day during my weekly visit to Walmart, imagine my surprise when the lady in the bakery said they didn’t have any cookies.Â  Not only that, she thinks they won’t have them anymore, ever.Â  She wasn’t sure because the lady who usually handles the cookies (?) was on vacation.Â  Sounds like a cop-out to me…Â  I mean, is there really a lady who regularly handles the cookies?Â  I think she just didn’t want to have to tell this angel-face ‘no cookie':

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/december-kids-001.jpg)

My daughter actually took it quite well…Â  of course, I bought her a pack of donuts instead…Â  It’s not that I’m a softie, but I just don’t think it’s fair that a two-year-old should have to bear the brunt of a mega-company’s policy change.Â  They gave cookies every time before this, and she has had to sit in the shopping cart and be good and do her time, and now all of a sudden, no cookie?Â  So I HAD to buy her a replacement treat, at least for this shopping trip.Â  Maybe in the future, I’ll try to prepare her ahead of time or just bring my own treat from home.Â  But in the mean time, their little plan worked, didn’t it?Â  Lure all the housemoms over to the bakery to get free cookies for their kids…Â  over time, they will grow to expect it, and then one day, no free cookies will cause them to *pay money* for something else for their kids – $CA-CHING$!

I admit it was a nice gesture on Walmart’s part to offer the free cookies in the first place.Â  Then again, we do spend enough over there; they should be able to afford it…Â  But it was a nice little perk, and as I said, something for the kids to look forward to about shopping at Walmart…Â  But in the end, it ended up being just another disappointment from our favorite big box retailer.

Our local non-Walmart grocery store still has free cookies for the kids, AND they’re fresh baked…Â  If I find more time and money, maybe I will make it a point to do more of our shopping over there…

How about your grocery store?Â  Is it a small mom-and-pop-owned place or a big box retailer?Â  Do they give free cookies to the kids?

### Comments

**Tale Of Tartar | My Food Chain Gang**[...] the search and link to a few of the various episodes depicting the times they wronged me.Â  Like this time.Â  And this time.Â  And this time, to name a [...]  
**derek**I think you know about where I live. ;) While I have never know our WM to give free cookies, I have never before had a reason to know if they did, myself being a nonparent.  
**wal mart » Me Want Cookie | My Food Chain Gang**[...] entry is fully written in it’s author’s blog. Read all about this here. This entry was posted on Friday, January 23rd, 2009 and is filed under Uncategorized. You can [...]  
**jamiahsh**Small place; no bakery so no cookies. But I missed your WM rants... while I know you are serious about each post, they always brought a chuckle b/c I know where you are coming from ;)

# Checkup Time!

INSERT DISK HERE:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/insert-disk-here1-09-003.jpg)

My son Christopher passed his 6 month baby checkup at the pediatrician with flying colors.Â  If only adult physical tests were this easy – pass a block from hand to hand, pick up a raisin (which was promptly taken away because he’s too little – where’s the reward in that?), a turn of the head when your name is called…Â  He has mastered all of it and is right where he should be developmentally.Â  Except for one thing – sitting up.Â  No I didn’t forget the ‘p’ – he *has* mastered *s****p****itting* up…Â  haha.Â  But he can’t *sit* up unassisted yet, and he doesn’t even seem to be close to doing so.Â  The problem is that he refuses to bend at the waist.Â  If I can get him into a sitting position, (and that’s a big IF!) he arches his back immediately and tries to stand.Â  I tried to explain this to the nurse so she wouldn’t think he is physically slow, but he lost points anyway.Â  Never mind that he can use his legs to jump vigorously in his bouncer that hangs from the doorway, or that he can single-handedly pull and move a heavy dining room chair with his iron grip – he still loses points for not being able to sit unassisted.Â  Oh well, if that’s how they score it, that’s how they score it.Â  It’s not like it bothers me at all; I actually find it amusing.Â  I think he might be crawling and walking before he sits…

Other news from the doctor appointment is that he weighs 16 lbs. 13oz. which is in the 30 percentile for weight.Â  An easy explanation of the percentile comparison is this:Â  If you take 100 babies my son’s age, 30 of them would be at his weight or lower and 70 of them would weigh more than he does.Â  He is 27Â¼ inches long, which puts him in the 75th percentile for height.Â  His head circumference is 45.2 cm which is exactly average.Â  I think he is probably our most average-sized baby; our oldest was always small for her age and the two in the middle were huge – Disney was once in the 100th percentile for height!Â  Just another example of how different kids are, even ones in the same family.Â  My 4 children physically remind me of each other, yet it’s so fun to watch their differences emerge as they learn and grow!Â  Here are Disney and Christopher, my two youngest:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/1-21-09-disney-and-christopher-003.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**So cute :)  
**jamiahsh**Yes... I think he wants to skip crawling and go straight to walking. FUN TIMES!!  
**derek**Hi Christopher, Hi Dis!  
**justj**I just want to know when teething rings got so big. ;)

# You Live In Chicago If...

Even though I don’t live in Chicago anymore (thank goodness because I’m not a big fan of crowds or traffic, two things which help define the city!), I still appreciate the humor in the following forward sent to me by a relative who ironically also moved away from the Chicago area a few years ago.Â  If you’ve ever lived in or near the 3rd largest city in the country, or even if you’ve just visited Chicago a few times, you will be able to appreciate the humor in the following one-liners:

If your local Dairy Queen is closed from September through May, you live in Chicago.

If you’ve worn shorts and a winter coat at the same time, you live in Chicago.

If you’ve had a telephone conversation using more Spanish than you thought you knew with someone who dialed a wrong number, you live in Chicago.

If “vacation” means going anywhere south of I – 80 for the weekend, you live in Chicago.

If you measure distance in hours, you live in Chicago.

If you have switched from ” heat” to “A/C” in the same day and back again, you live in Chicago.

If you can drive 75 mph through 2 feet of snow during a raging blizzard without flinching, you live in Chicago.

If you carry jumpers in your car and your wife knows how to use them, you live in Chicago.

If you design your kid’s Halloween costume to fit over a snowsuit, you live in Chicago.

If the speed limit on the highway is 55 mph — you’re going 80 and everybody is passing you, you live in Chicago.

If driving is better in the winter because the potholes are filled with snow, you live in Chicago.

If you know all 4 seasons: almost winter, winter, still winter and road construction, you live in Chicago.

If you have more miles on your snow blower than your car, you live in Chicago.

If you find 10 degrees “a little chilly”, you live in Chicago.

### Comments

**derek**So true. :) I didn't know about DQ, but perhaps that's because I never go to DQ.  
**taylhis**Agreed - many of the weather-related ones are also applicable to NWOH. Hmmm, I should have added something in there about how the kids will be in school even if there's 4 inches of snow on the ground...  
**jamiahsh**That's funny :D There are even a few of these that you could say the same about NWO. Our DQ (Eric's, anyway is closed about the same time :( ). I have worn shorts and a winter coat a few times when it was wintery. Nowhere near as bad as the strange person who was in shorts, t-shirt, and sandals when the temp was -8.

# Presidential In-Laws

In-laws have a bad stigma in our country, to say the least.Â  From sayings like, “You can choose your friends, but you can’t choose your relatives” or “When you marry your spouse, you’re marrying her whole family” to classic TV shows which depict the dreaded mother-in-law as a horrible threat or consequence for a character’s bad behavior (The Honeymooner’s, Bewitched, The Flintstones, to name just a few), in-laws definitely have a bad rap.Â  Scenes from these shows flooded my brain recently when I read the following article on cnn.com – seems even the leaders of the free world have had problematic situations with their mothers-in-law.Â  The reason the article was published is because apparently Barrack Obama’s mother-in-law, wife Michelle’s mother Marian Robinson, might move with the new first family to Washington.Â  So will Mr. Obama’s situation be comparative to poor Harry Truman, whose mother-in-law refused to call him anything but Mr. Truman?Â  Or will it be more like Dwight Eisenhower, who got along famously with his mother-in law – in a good way?Â  In recognition of Inauguration Day, read the following article for some interesting historical lessons about the complex familial relationships formed as a result of the union of two people:

*From cnn.com, by David Holzel  
(Mental Floss) — President-Elect Obama’s mother-in-law will be moving to Washington with the first family, at least temporarily, his transition team has confirmed. Marian Robinson will be the latest in a line of presidential in-laws who, for good or ill, lived under the same roof as the president.  
President Dwight Eisenhower and his mother-in-law, Elivera Doud, pose for pictures with some of the grandchildren.*

*President Dwight Eisenhower and his mother-in-law, Elivera Doud, pose for pictures with some of the grandchildren.*

*Here are four stories that confirm the old truism: While America can choose its president, the president can’t choose his in-laws.*

*1. Ulysses S. Grant and ‘The Colonel’*

*You would think that the Civil War was settled at Appomattox, and no question of its outcome would have been raised in the White House of Ulysses S. Grant, who, after all, was the general who won the war.*

*But you would be wrong, because living with Ulysses and Julia Grant was the president’s father-in-law. Colonel Frederick Dent (his rank seems to have been self-selected) was an unreconstructed Confederate, a St. Louis businessman and slaveholder who, when his daughter Julia went to the Executive Mansion early in 1869, decided to relocate there as well.*

*The Colonel didn’t hesitate to make himself at home. When his daughter received guests, he sat in a chair just behind her, offering anyone within earshot unsolicited advice. Political and business figures alike got a dose of the Colonel’s mind as they waited to meet with President Grant.*

*When the president’s father, Jesse Grant, came from Kentucky on one of his regular visits to Washington, the White House turned into a Civil War reenactment. According to “First Families: The Impact of the White House on Their Lives”, by Bonnie Angelo, Jesse Grant preferred to stay in a hotel rather than sleep under the same roof as the Colonel.*

*And when the two old partisans found themselves unavoidably sitting around the same table in the White House, they avoided direct negotiations by using Julia and her young son, named for the president’s father, as intermediaries, Betty Boyd Caroli writes in “First Ladies”: “In the presence of the elder Grant, Frederick Dent would instruct Julia to ‘take better care of that old gentleman [Jesse Grant]. He is feeble and deaf as a post and yet you permit him to wander all over Washington alone.’ And Grant replied [to his grandson and namesake], ‘Did you hear him? I hope I shall not live to become as old and infirm as your Grandfather Dent.'”*

*The Colonel remained in the White House — irascible and unrepentant — until his death, at age 88, in 1873.*

*2. Harry S Truman and the Mother-in-Law from Heck*

*Harry Truman and Bess Wallace met as children. He was a farm boy; she was the well-heeled granddaughter of Independence, Missouri’s Flour King. When they married in 1919, Truman was a struggling haberdasher, and Bess’s mother, Madge Wallace, thought Bess had made a colossal social faux pas. Until she died in 1952, Madge Wallace never changed her mind about Harry Truman. Her Bess had married way below her station.*

*Madge had plenty of opportunities to let her son-in-law know it. The newlyweds moved into the Wallace mansion in Independence, and the three lived together under the same roof until the end of Madge’s life.*

*When Harry Truman was elected senator, “Mother Wallace,” as Truman judiciously called her, moved with her daughter and son-in-law to Washington. In the family’s apartment, she shared a bedroom with the Trumans’ daughter, Margaret. And when Truman became president, she moved with them into the White House, where she cast her cold eye on the new commander-in-chief.*

*“Why would Harry run against that nice Mr. Dewey?” she wondered aloud, as Truman was fighting for his political life in the 1948 presidential race, according to “First Mothers” by Bonnie Angelo. And when Truman fired Gen. Douglas MacArthur for insubordination, Mother Wallace was scandalized. “Imagine a captain from the National Guard [Truman] telling off a West Point general!”*

*In December 1952, shortly before Truman’s term ended, Madge Wallace died, at age 90. For the 33 years they lived together, she never called her son-in-law anything but “Mr. Truman” to his face.*

*3. Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Mother-in-Law of the Year*

*If Truman’s story sounds like the set-up for a film noir, his successor’s relationship with his mother-in-law might have been a Technicolor musical.*

*Elivera Mathilda Carlson Doud, Mamie Eisenhower’s mother, was “a witty woman with a tart tongue,” Time magazine wrote, and Dwight Eisenhower thought she was a hoot. “She refuted every mother-in-law joke ever made,” Time wrote. There was no question that she would join her daughter and son-in-law in the White House.*

*Ike called her “Min,” the name of a character in the Andy Gump comic strip. Ike and Min “constituted a mutual admiration society, and each took the other’s part whenever a family disagreement would arise,” said Eisenhower’s son, John. The New York Times observed, “The president frequently looks around him sharply, and inquires, ‘Where’s Min?'”*

*Widowed shortly before Eisenhower became president, Min spent the winters in the White House and summers at her home in Denver. It was while visiting his mother-in-law’s home that Eisenhower suffered a heart attack in 1955. Two years later, in failing health, Min returned permanently to Denver. She died in 1960, at age 82.*

*4. Benjamin Harrison and the Reverend Doctor*

*Benjamin Harrison’s father-in-law, John Witherspoon Scott, bore a double title: “reverend doctor.”*

*Scott was born in Pennsylvania in 1800, did post-graduate work at Yale and took a professorship in mathematics and science at Miami University, in Ohio. He was also a Presbyterian minister and an outspoken abolitionist. The reverend doctor was rumored to have shielded runaway slaves in his home as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Whatever the truth, Miami University dismissed him for his anti-slavery beliefs.*

*He accepted a post at Farmer’s College, a prep school in Cincinnati, where he became a mentor of a student named Benjamin Harrison. During his visits to the Scott home, Harrison became friendly with the reverend doctor’s daughter, Caroline.*

*Young Harrison spent so many evenings at the Scotts’ home that he got the nickname “the pious moonlight dude,” according to “The Complete Book of the Presidents” by William A. DeGregorio. He and Caroline were married in 1853 at the bride’s house. The reverend doctor officiated.*

*John Witherspoon Scott later became a clerk in the pension office of the interior department. He gave up the position when Harrison was elected president in 1888. A widower since 1876, Scott moved into the White House with his daughter and their family.*

*It was the president’s custom to lead the family in a half-hour of Bible reading and prayer after breakfast, Anne Chieko Moore and Hester Anne Hale wrote in “Benjamin Harrison: Centennial President.” When the president was absent, his father-in-law took his place.*

*Caroline Harrison died in October 1892, two weeks before her husband lost the presidential election. Her father died the next month, at age 92. An obituary described John Witherspoon Scott as “a man of wonderful physical vigor, tall, broad chested and well preserved mentally.”*

### Comments

# This Town's Got Talent AND Faith

I already wrote about our 3D movie-going experience in my previous post, so I will skip that part of the weekend here, but I neglected to mention the cool restaurant we found because I didn’t want to enlarge an already lengthy post…

Friday night after seeing My Bloody Valentine 3D in Maumee Ohio, a suburb of Toledo, we noticed a restaurant across the street called Nick’s Cafe who advertises breakfast all day.Â  My husband and I are both Eggs Benedict connoisseurs – we really appreciate a great-tasting serving of Eggs Benedict, which is a breakfast dish consisting of English Muffin halves topped with Canadian bacon, poached eggs, and a layer of Hollandaise sauce.Â  In our pre-parenthood days, we explored the country and sampled various versions of the dish along the way to our traveler’s goals; whether they were destinations of business or pleasure.Â  A requirement of great Eggs Benedict is homemade Hollandaise sauce, and by ‘homemade’, we (unlike many of the restaurants we tried) don’t mean mixed up in the kitchen from a package.Â  You need a double boiler to make it, and good Hollandaise sauce has nothing to do with a powder or a package.Â  In all of our travels, we never found anything that even compares to the Hollandaise sauce at Uptown Cafe in downtown Arlington Heights, Illinois.Â  We’ve visited numerous restaurants in our quest, and we’ve called some of them ahead of time, but even if you ask if their Hollandaise sauce is homemade, many will say yes, even if we don’t agree on the definition of homemade.Â  Such was the case Friday night at Nick’s Cafe in Maumee, Ohio.Â  They said their hollandaise sauce was homemade on the phone, but oddly, when we arrived, they wouldn’t let us taste a sample.Â  That was a first!Â  Of the dozens of restaurants we’ve visited in search of the perfect Eggs Benedict, no restaurant had ever denied us a sample!Â  On Friday night, my husband bravely ordered the Eggs Benedict at Nick’s Cafe without trying the Hollandaise sauce ahead of time, and disappointingly, it was of the non-homemade, out-of-the-package variety.Â  He did say that the Canadian bacon on the Eggs Benedict was great, but it unfortunately cannot rescue the dish if it uses packaged Hollandaise.Â  So negative Eggs Benedict experience aside, the reason I would highly recommend this place is for their Mediterranean cuisine.Â  And regular readers of my blog (and of those email forward all-about-you quizzes) know that this is my favorite type of food, therefore I am a huge critic.Â  But Nick’s Place in Maumee has excellent gyros, Tzatziki sauce, and Greek salads.Â  Gyros are only good when they’re off the spit and even then, it’s easy for them to taste too salty.Â  Not the case at Nick’s Place; if you like Mediterranean food, I **highly** recommend their gyros and Greek salads – incredible.

But I must move on to Saturday afternoon, when we took our kids to see the movie, [Hotel for Dogs](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0785006/).Â  I’ve been waiting for this movie for months, which is probably why we didn’t want to cancel our planned outing there on Saturday even though Kid #1 went off her rocker.Â  Seriously, the kid went berserk and I was really tempted to give her “the talk”, especially after I noticed a pimple on her cheek… (well, one of ‘the talks’ anyway – the one about womanly bodily changes – she’s 9 years old and I would rather we talk about puberty stuff *before* it happens to her).Â  But anyway, she’d probably be *mortified* if she knew I was posting this on the internet (what are mothers for?), so I better get off this tangent…Â  After the episode Saturday morning, our oldest really didn’t deserve to go to the movie, but it’s difficult in a large family to not ‘let the bad apple spoil the bunch’.Â  Our younger girls had been very good all morning, so why keep them (or me!) from going to the movie?Â  Our oldest was punished for the tantrum by having to go without a Kid’s Pack (popcorn, pop, and candy) at the movies, and to her credit, she was mature about the consequences of her actions.Â  However, soon after our arrival at the movie theater, the tide changed and our 2-year-old became the problem.Â  I don’t know why we keep trying to take a 2-year-old to the movie theater, but every time, it’s regrettable.Â  Actually, it’s been this way since even *months* before she turned two…Â  I guess we keep hoping that one of these times, she’ll actually settle down enough to enjoy an entire movie without driving anyone crazy.Â  So anyway, I’m trying to keep our 6-month-old busy and quiet while attempting to watch Hotel For Dogs and not disturb our neighbors, and my husband is busy with our handful of a 4-year-old, so next thing we know, our two-year-old is drinking my Mountain Dew.Â  Of course she loves it, but even *before* the Mountain Dew she’s had a sugar-infused Kid’s Pack, and now she’s practically bouncing off the walls.Â  She smiles and announces in a loud voice, “**I take clothes off!**“, so now I’m trying to put my son back in his car seat so I can stop his sister from stripping off her clothes right there in the movie theater…Â  Too late.Â  She is down to her diaper by the time I get both hands free, so my husband covers her with a coat.Â  For some reason, she’s willing to wear nothing but a coat and a diaper in the movie theater, and somehow we make it through the rest of the movie without having to leave.Â  So as for Hotel For Dogs, I liked it (I think – I actually didn’t see much of it)…Â  it’s a cute, predictable fun movie, and if you’re a dog lover, there’s plenty of canine eye candy.

Following the movie, I went to a local talent show based upon the popular “American Idol” TV show.Â  Some great friends graciously stayed with the kids, and my husband also stayed home to catch up on the work he missed last week during the 2-hour-school delay and the school closing we have on Friday and Monday.Â  He works from home, and it’s all I can do to keep the two little ones out of his hair every day – add the older two to the mix and all Hell breaks loose – any chance of getting anything productive done flies out the window.Â  So, a strange occurrence at the talent show – me, myself, and I for a change.Â  I did attend with friends, but it’s not like I would bother Carol next to me with my philosophies on music or the tone of one’s voice; that would be something to make my husband endure.Â  And it was bizarre to simply sit back and listen and watch the show…Â  For those hours, I had absolutely **not one thing** else to do besides enjoy the show…Â  such a change of pace for me and much appreciated.Â  Not that I would want to experience that all the time, but it was very nice for one night…

Adding to the relaxation for me was the spiritual tone of the evening.Â  I had known the event would be sponsered by a local church, but I didn’t realize that we, the audience,Â  would be praying to both open and to close the show; as well as the fact that the majority of the acts were religion-themed.Â  As I said, for me, it was refreshing and relaxing, but I think they should properly advertise such a theme if they do this again next year.Â  Less open-minded people may have been displeased.Â  My dear friend and the entire reason I was a part of this concert experience in the first place, performed wonderfully and I was pleasantly surprised to be able to pick out her voice from the rest of the delightful group with whom she performed.Â  Despite my best efforts to vote for them, however, they didn’t win the competition, and the top prizes went to a drama group from the church who sponsered the event (!), a very talented violinist, and a well-known local talent who is only a Junior in high school but who has already been a vocalist with the Toledo Opera going on her 3rd year.Â  Besides seeing and hearing my friend perform, my favorite part of the evening was when a boy who was part of the drama group that won burst into tears.Â  Their skit was acted out to music, and it portrayed a young girl being bullyed by ‘temptations’ but ultimately triumphing over sins and choosing Jesus.Â  The group got a standing ovation after they performed and because they were from the church that sponsored the event, it was no surprise when they won first prize in the competition, but the kid asked the crowd, “I just want to know that everyone was moved – was everyone moved?”Â  There was applause and verbal affirmations, and the next thing I knew, the kid had burst into tears and it slightly reminded me ofÂ  the movie [Leap of Faith](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104695/)…Â  But it was sweet and real, and I was glad to be a part of it.Â  Even though the talent show did a poor job of advertising the theme of the show; thereby the religion kind of snuck up on its patrons, it was a welcome and calming change of pace – at least for this member of the audience.Â  And even though I wasn’t aware that I needed it, the evening restored my faith while proving to me yet again what a great place it is in Northwest Ohio to raise kids – we have so much talent and so many opportunites here for our youth!

### Comments

**Denver**"Less open-minded people"? Funny I never considered my self 'close-minded, and the very idea of it all made my skin crawl. Then again, I'm a curmudgeon. And shouldn't it be "Bryan Has Talent"? We have faith, but lack grammar. The best eggs Benedict I have ever devoured was served in the dining room of the Hay-Adam Hotel in Washington DC. Superb!!! I didn't think people ate eggs Benedict anymore---thought it went the way of sweetbreads and quail eggs. Good to know someone else appreciates this wonderful dish.  
**derek**Ah, so they did think of America's Got Talent before Idol. :) Why does Hollywood think every dog movie needs bodily function jokes? Sigh. I just read about a new blog by the way from some people who work in Hollywood that highlights how Hollywood is becoming increasingly anti-American, not that this has anything to do with their dog movies of course.  
**taylhis**Hmm, after a quick check I see that Hotel for Dogs doesn't have a parental advisory and Marley's parental advisory doesn't have body function jokes in it. And I forgot to mention my favorite part of Hotel For Dogs - no stray gets turned away! I am a huge believer in finding homes for strays before patronizing pet stores and breeders! Can't believe I forgot to mention how cool it was that these kids were taking care of all the strays... oh well, I'd say my post (and comments!) are long enough!  
**taylhis**It's probably a good idea to wait until children are old enough to sit through a video at home. But going to the movies is one of our favorite things to do, and Saturday is family day, so I'd rather find something else to do as a family rather than take the little ones to a babysitter. If we had family nearby, I would call Grandma over for a few hours to watch Dis, but we don't have that option, so it's all for one and one for all! But seriously, we're going to probably have to find something else to do for a few years... Christopher will probably be old enough to go to the movies right as Taylor decides she doesn't want to be seen at the movies with us... :) There were some poop and vomit jokes in Hotel for Dogs of course... I think it would be hard to avoid in a PG movie about dogs. The kid designs an entire machine that takes care of dog waste, and there are a few jokes centered on that... and some pee jokes, I think... Marley had some as well; I don't remember if it was excessive. Check out the parental advisories on imdb.com - they might detail the quantity of bodily function jokes on there. The name of the show was Bryan's Got Talent.  
**derek**Three posts in one. :) I can't really comment on the first, so I will move to the second. I suppose you took Dis to see it because if she couldn't, one of you two couldn't, correct? :D Next time, just bring some rope and duct tape- an idea from the bad parenting institute of wherever. :P Seriously, it sounded like some drama there. This movie sounded kind of interesting. How was it (that you noticed) for poop and vomit jokes? Come to think of it, how was Marley on it? Overt? Three people blogging about the talent show- must have been something! If they were going to base it on a TV show, wouldn't it have more in common with America's Got Talent than American Idol? Easy to come up with a name, too: Rural Ohio Has Talent, (I don't know the name) Church Has Talent, Bryan County Has Talent, or something like that.  
**justj**Interesting, I never enjoyed Eggs Benedict, mainly because of the sauce, now you're saying that it was bad sauce.... I guess I'll have to find some good sauce. Another place for Gyros, wonderful. I find it entertaining that you take all four children to the movies. I remember waiting until my girls could sit through a video at home before taking them to a movie. The exception was our oldest. Video players were quite expensive at that time and we didn't have one.

# My Bloody Valentine 3D

It’s almost embarrassing to admit that I saw a movie called, “[My Bloody Valentine 3D](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1179891/)“.Â  But the reason I’m writing a blog about it is because I actually *liked* it.Â  A true slasher film; the grisly violence was excessive.Â  But I actually didn’t find myself rolling my eyes at the constant gore fest, which is what I did during the last few movies in the Saw franchise.Â  In the poorer quality Saw movies, some of the violence doesn’t really even make sense.Â  It’s almost like they’re trying to see how far they can go, how shocking they can be, and what they can get away with, even if it’s not integral to the plot.Â  My Bloody Valentine 3D actually has a well-developed, interesting plot.Â  If you don’t pay attention to the newspaper headlines that *come out of the screen* in the beginning of the movie (very cool 3D effect – definitely more on those later), the plot might actually be hard to follow.Â  I know, a good plot is unheard of for a slasher flick, but I was even left to piece together some plot details after the movie was over.Â  Not that it was *too* hard to follow, just a lot of continuous action that makes it difficult for one to think about character relationships and how they relate to the plot while also watching the movie.Â  So for my best attempt at a plot synopsis, here we go…

Harmony is a small mining town where everyone knows everyone else, and the mine is the lifeblood of the town.Â  The filmakers very successfully give the audience a good feel for the sleepy little mining town.Â  Decades ago, there was an accident in the mine which was initially blamed on the owner of the mine, Hanniger.Â  When it was found that the victims of the mining accident were actually brutally murdered, it was blamed upon the sole survivor of the accident, Harry Warden, who is left in a coma.Â  A few decades later, he wakes up and slaughters 22 people, including a group of teenagers having a party at the mine.Â  Four of the revelers make it out alive, and flash forward 10 years to now.Â  Hanniger’s son (he was one of the 4 survivors) returns to the town as a new rash of murders unfold, and he finds himself accused of the brutal crimes.Â  There’s actually more to it than that, but this kind of gives you an idea about the movie.Â  The plot and direction of the movie allow the audience to never be sure who to suspect of the murders, and there are various twists and turns.Â  Very well done for a horror movie, especially one belonging to the slasher genre.Â  Now on to the 3D effects…

3D does not often work for me because my eyesight is very uneven – I have near perfect vision in my left eye, and terrible vision in my right eye.Â  But I was sure to bring my eyeglasses, which kind of levels the playing field for my eyes, and so when I wore the 3D glasses on top of my regular eyeglasses, the 3D worked very well.Â  I’ve been to various 3D shows at Disney World and Universal Studios, and I would say those are the best of the best – but even they don’t always work for me; sometimes I have to squint to be able to see the 3D.Â  But now it seems there have been some advancements in the technology, and it’s clear the movie industry wants to showcase these advancements given the rash of 3D movie previews I’ve seen in the theaters recently.Â  Among the 3D features that will be out in 2009 are: Monsters and Aliens, Up, Disney’s a Christmas Carol 3D, Ice Age 3, and Toy Story in 3D.Â  But anyway, My Bloody Valentine 3D was very cool – the entire movie was actually in 3D for me, and all I had to do was sit there – no fiddling with glasses, no squinting…Â  and that was a first for me.Â  The murderer’s weapon of choice is a miner’s ax, and there were many times it would actually appear to come out of the screen (along with disgusting bits of gore, of course)!Â  Besides that effect, other things about the movie were cool because of the 3D as well; even scenes that consisted exclusively of dialogue.

As one reviewer on imdb.com mentioned, My Bloody Valentine 3D does not take itself too seriously – and that’s a good thing.Â  In fact, a few months ago when we first saw the movie’s preview and tagline “Nothing says ‘date movie’ like a 3D ride to Hell!”, we thought it was a joke…Â  you know, one of those “previews” that actually ends up being a commercial.Â  But it was for a real movie, and so we couldn’t resist venturing to the big city to utilize aÂ  free voucher we had gotten on a previous visit to see the otherwise expensive 3D ride to Hell.Â  If you are a fan of horror movies, My Bloody Valentine 3D is a must-see.Â  I’m not sure how this movie would translate to a regular screen.Â  It might still be a good horror movie, but given the 3D effects, it was nothing short of awesome!Â  I would almost classify it as a sort of haunted house experience, except you’re sitting in a seat and not walking around.Â  If you look at it that way, the $13.50 price tag ($11 matinee) would be a bargain for the over 90 minute experience compared to admission at most haunted houses.Â  Of course, haunted houses don’t have the extra-long, very gratuitous nude scene, which I could have definitely done without, but since that’s my only complaint about the movie, overall I would definitely consider it an afternoon well-spent with hubby (no we did not take the kids to this feature!)Â  After all, nothing says ‘date movie’ like a 3D ride to Hell!Â  Apparently so!

### Comments

**taylhis**No flat backrounds. Excellent use of 3D - great job on stuff coming out of the screen as well as the depth going into the screen.  
**derek**I don't want to comment on the movie itself, but the 3D. I'm just curious if the movie suffered from any flat backgrounds? I saw Journey to the Center of the Earth in 3D last year and there were some times where the flat background kind of stood out against the 3D scene in front of it.  
**jamiahsh**It sounds like a lot of fun. I don't know too many movies of the genre that take themselves TOO seriously.  
**justj**Thanks for the wonderful description of the show. It is one I don't have to rush to the theater to see. ;)  
**Twilight Saga**Hi! Thank you for this post. Actually, I'm not very familiar with this topic but after reading your post, it's clear now! Keep up the good posts like this. Take care!

# The Unborn Gran Torino

Luckily for us, Tuesday’s date night was not hindered by the recent barrage of snow in any way.Â  We ventured to the larger town nearby to see what all the Golden Globe fuss was about Clint Eastwood’s latest movie, [Gran Torino](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1205489/) (they didn’t have [Slumdog Millionaire](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1010048/)).Â  But after the previews and especially when the movie started, it became painfully obvious that there was something wrong with the theater’s sound – you couldn’t hear the dialogue.Â  My husband went to report it, and all that did was cause several loud popping noises and lengthy annoying electronic burps while they tried to fix it.Â  There were 3 other people in the theater with us, and we all left – seemed like a movie where you really need to hear what the characters are saying.Â  They offered our money back, but that wasn’t really enough because we had spent $7 on pop and popcorn that we wouldn’t have bought if we weren’t going to a movie.Â  The incredibly flustered but sensible kid working the counter saw our point, and apparently his manager agreed, so they let us go into another movie AND get a refund – COOL!Â  Earlier in the day, we had been up in the air trying to decide between seeing Gran Torino and The Unborn anyway, so I guess the choice was made for us – We only had 20 minutes to kill before a showing of [The Unborn](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1139668/).

The Unborn was just as I expected – a PG13-rated supernatural horror movie, not quite as good as others in the genre like The Ring, Shutter, or One Missed Call.Â  There were some jump-out-of-your-seat moments in The Unborn, but it was obvious when they were coming, at least to me.Â  I don’t want to give away too much like an article did that I read in the newspaper, so I’ll just say that if you like the supernatural horror genre, check out The Unborn because it’s entertaining.Â  Back to the newspaper article I read…Â  seems the little boy who plays a scary kid in the movie is from the area where I grew up, so they featured him in the suburban Chicago newspaper I sometimes like to read online – but they spilled a major spoiler about the movie at the end of the article!Â  But anyway, that’s another thing I enjoyed about The Unborn – it is set in Chicagoland, so I enjoyed the sweeping overhead views of the city and some of the familiar sites in suburbia.Â  Apparently the screenwriter of The Unborn, David Goyer, has a fancy for Chicago since he also wrote The Dark Knight which was filmed in Chicago, although set in Gotham City.Â  But anyway, enjoyable movie for what it was – I might have liked Gran Torino better, but I guess I’ll have to see that one another time.

And that brings me to the Applebee’s saga.Â  We don’t really like Applebee’s.Â  They try to tell us we belong there, but I don’t buy it.Â  Their food seems pricey for what it is, and we stopped going there when the kids are with us because their food takes *forever* to come out (that and the small fortune it would cost our family of 6 to eat there).Â  My husband was given an Applebee’s gift card for serving on the board of a local non-profit agency (no, I am not talking about the community theater – did you really have to ask?), which is really nice of the agency of course.Â  We got the same gift card last year, and so back then we decided to give Applebee’s another chance.Â  Last year, we got some sort of bland pasta dish and an appetizer sampler and shared everything, but we left there hungry AND having to add money to our gift card in order to cover the check.Â  Flash forward to now, and we find ourselves with another gift card.Â  Time to give Applebee’s another try, we decided; after all, how bad can it be?Â  They have lots of corporate suits overseeing those kinds of places, so maybe they’ve implemented lots of changes in the past year to make it a better establishment.Â  Not the case.Â  First, our food took forever to come out.Â  I had gotten a soup-and-sandwich combo, and the waitress came to tell me they burnt the soup and it would be a few minutes while they made a new one.Â  My husband wondered if that meant his food was sitting under a warmer while mine was re-prepared, and his concerns were legit because when he got his food, the shrimp was cold.Â  Not only that, but they had given him the wrong kind of buffalo wings.Â  So they apologized, and that’s another thing about places like Applebee’s that really bug me – the pesty fake gushy niceness.Â  I do appreciate a friendly server, but the people who work at these places are *way* over the top…Â  I will cite an example in the hilarious movie [Office Space](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0151804/) – there’s a character in the movie who is Jennifer Aniston’s coworker at a TGIFriday’s type of place who acts just like these people…Â  annoyingly and unrealistically enthusiastic about his job – funny stuff, but only in the movies.

So anyway, we’re waiting for my husband’s new wings when the manager comes out to say that they have now put the wrong sauce on them, and they’d have to make him yet *another* order.Â  Honestly, what is the cook *doing* back there?Â  Again, for the second time this day (see my Dawn’s Great Idea post), my fears of starring in a hidden camera show run rampant…Â  And what has happened to all the food that they’ve messed up?Â  From just our party of 2, they must have had 2 orders of wings and a bowl of soup all go to waste.Â  I’ve often thought that restaurants should have a deal with local homeless shelters, giving them their leftovers and food mistakes, but I guess that wouldn’t be considered sanitary.Â  I wish they’d change this; something tells me that food is food and many people would be very grateful for restaurant “leftovers”…

We calculated our bill correctly this time, and we were about to rid ourselves of the entire giftcard, when the waitress showed up to tell us that because of all the errors, they were going to give us the employee discount on the bill.Â  That was really really nice of them, but that means we STILL HAVE $ LEFT ON THE GIFTCARD for another trip to Applebee’s!Â  I told my husband, maybe we’ll just stop in for a couple drinks sometime, but of course, you can’t use a giftcard on drinks, at least on alcoholic ones, and after trying their flavored tea yesterday, I won’t be stopping in for any more of that – yuck!Â  And in case you’re wondering, both my sandwich and my soup were virtually tasteless, save for the cheese on top of the soup – that was really good!

**What is your favorite party-style restaurant chain?**

* Applebee's
* TGIFridays
* Ruby Tuesday's
* Chili's
* Hooter's
* Buffalo Wild Wings
* You forgot one - see my answer below!

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

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### Comments

**jamiahsh**Hehe... old post, I know but I do remember your making mention of Gran Torino somewhere. Did you ever get to see it? Just finished watching it. I liked it... very untypical Eastwood. Definitely not what I expected and you definitely needed to be able to hear it. Ol' Clint's voice is really starting to show its age ;)  
**justj**I was just talking with my youngest today. While I have complained multiple times on the time it takes for Applebee's to get the food to the table, I don't think I've ever complained about the food. Not that I can say I ever had their French Onion Soup. But then again, I do order the spicy foods and I never expect them to be as spicy as I like. There aren't too many restaurants that make food as spicy as I like.  
**taylhis**French Onion with the cheese on top. Cheese = good, soup=bland They were slow for you too, huh? And Derek, I do like the parmesan garlic sauce at Wild Wings - when I was pregnant Chris treated me to a few bottles, even though it's quite pricey. What bugs me about them is their lack of sides. Their popcorn shrimp is good, but again, they have no sides!  
**jamiahsh**Burned your soup? What kind? Applebee's... EECH :( They are slow and pricey.  
**derek**I voted TGI Friday's from memory. I haven't actually been there in awhile. Buffalo Wild Wings has good wings, but they didn't really impress me the two times I've been there though they're not bad. Chili's I understand has gone downhill, and I agree with you about the value of Applebee's. The other two I have never been to if I recall correctly though they do exist over here.  
**justj**I guess I like Chili's food the best, but I've never really had a bad experience at any of these restaurants. Sometimes it does take some time to get the food at some places, but it has always been as advertised.  
**whatever**Mine has to be "Home Hooters". When my wife dresses in a revealing top and serves me dinner. Ok -- so that doesn't happen... But oooh would it be awesome!

# Dawn's Great Idea

My husband and I were in charge of our local community theater’s version of the Oscars ceremony (ours is called The Williesâ„¢), so it was our responsibility to organize the skits, songs, and entertainment for the fun evening in December.Â  In doing so, we needed to borrow a specific camera which played a prop in a very funny show that was staged in our community theater last year.Â  My friend had borrowed the camera from her workplace, so I asked her if we could use it for a skit in the awards show and she obliged.Â  She couldn’t make it to the awards show, and I still haven’t gotten the camera back to her.Â  Through a series of email exchanges about how to get her the camera back, she came up with an idea:Â  why not just drop it off at her husband’s workplace – which is only 2 blocks away from my house – rather than drive the camera all the way out to her house in the country.Â  Great idea, I told her, and I meant it… until I found myself walking into the county *courthouse* carrying an ominous large silver metal case.

Turns out, my friend’s husband works in the county’s adult probation department, and so now I’m walking around the courthouse with something that looks, well, *extremely* fishy to say the least.Â  My husband was with me, thank goodness, and I was glad to have the moral support because of the many strange stares we received…Â  We found her husband’s office, and when you enter the adult probation department, there is a counter with a bulletproof glass above it.Â  So evidently, they tend to be skeptical of their visitors to begin with, and now here we are with our peculiarly large metal case.Â  We asked to see my friend’s husband (he knows us at least), but as luck would have it, he was out to lunch.Â  “Can we just leave it here?” we were forced to ask, prompting a very skeptical probation officer to ask, “Is it ticking?”Â  I started thinking about those signs they have at the airport that explain how joking about bombs or explosives is a felony offense, so I bit my lip, worried I might accidentally utter some sort of lame quip that would get us into deep trouble.Â  My husband opened up the case and showed them what was inside…Â  just a camera, we swear!

Not really a big deal, but a funny experience nonetheless.Â  Had we been in a bigger city, we might have been thrown to the floor and cuffed – it really was a shady looking case, and I can’t blame people for being a little cautious and apprehensive about it, especially in this day and age.

So thanks for saving me the trip out to the country, Dawn, but honestly, I don’t think either of us thought this idea through…Â  unless you were setting me up to get some sort of hidden camera prank footage, maybe to be shown at next year’s Willie Awardsâ„¢?Â  

### Comments

**derek**Glad you made it out alive and unscathed, and no court date. :P  
**jamiahsh**That would be a funny skit. Willie worthy.  
**justj**I think we could use this for next year's Willies. Things we do for theater?

# How Sweet It Is

Two different family members sent me an email forward with the following video because they knew I’d love it.Â  They were right!Â  The following is a touching story about the unlikely but very true friendship between a dog and an elephant – you have to see it to believe it!

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

**derek**Smile moment. :)  
**justj**Wow, and I thought our dog and rabbit friendship was special.  
**jamiahsh**That is cool.  
**Megan**Sooooo CUTE! Thanks so much for sending this to me:)

# Superbowl Poll

The big game is only weeks away.Â  Will you be doing anything to celebrate the occasion?Â  Do you know which big game I’m referring to?Â  If not, then disregard the following poll…

**Are you going to watch the 2009 Superbowl?**

* Yes - I always do because I love football
* Yes - I have a favorite team playing in it
* Yes - I will watch it with a spouse or someone I live with who will be taking over the tv
* Yes - for the commercials
* Yes - I'm going to / having a Superbowl party
* No - I don't like football and couldn't care less
* Other - please explain below in the comments section

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**derek**I think you can guess which vote is mine. ;)  
**jamiahsh**I will be watching regardless if I get invited to a party or not. But oh, what fun it would be if I were.  
**justj**I guess my answer will depend on if I get invited to a Superbowl party.... I usually only watch at someone's party. Otherwise I just kind of flip in and out.

# Cute And Cuddly? I Think Not.

Did you hear the one about the Chinese man who found himself in a dilemma?Â  His son’s toy fell into the panda enclosure at the zoo, so he jumped in after it.Â  The panda attacked him, and because the creatures are so coveted in China, he didn’t fend off the animal because he feared he would injure him.Â  He survived the attack, as did the other 2 victims of this particular panda.Â  But as the below article notes, in China, there is no “3 strikes, you’re out” policy for pandas because they are so highly regarded.Â  Particularly amusing is the tale of the drunken tourist who was also a victim of this malicious panda.Â  Read about Gu Gu the not-so-nice panda here:

*(CNN) — Gu Gu is not your typical soft and cuddly giant panda.  
Zhang Jiao was attacked by Gu Gu the panda when he fell into the pen at the Beijing Zoo on Wednesday.*

*Zhang Jiao was attacked by Gu Gu the panda when he fell into the pen at the Beijing Zoo on Wednesday.*

*For the third time, he’s tasted the flesh of an unwitting intruder in his pen at the Beijing Zoo.*

*His most recent victim was 28-year-old Zhang Jiao, who told CNN he fell into the panda pen Wednesday while trying to catch a small toy thrown by his young son.*

*“My son and I were playing with a panda doll, throwing it to each other, when I dropped with the toy” into the pen, Zhang said.*

*The barrier around the pen is about 5 feet tall, but on the other side is a drop of 9 to 10 feet, and Zhang says he could not climb out.*

*That’s when Gu Gu went on the attack.*

*The 240-pound giant panda sunk his teeth into Zhang’s left leg before moving on to the right leg.*

*“The panda is a national treasure, and I love and respect [him], so I didn’t fight back,” Zhang said. “The panda didn’t let go until it chewed up my leg and its mouth was dripping with my blood.”*

*Zookeepers needed to use tools to pry open Gu Gu’s jaws.*

*Zhang said he never imagined a panda could be so vicious.*

*“I always thought they were cute and just ate bamboo,” Zhang said.*

*According to Dr. Wang Tianbing, who treated Zhang, his wounds were severe, especially the damage done to the muscle and ligaments in his left leg.*

*“Normally, we think the panda is very tender animal, but actually it’s a bear, not a cat. If the animal thinks it will be hurt by human beings, it is very dangerous.”*

*Wang should know. In 2007, he treated another one of Gu Gu’s victims, a 15-year-old boy who climbed into the pen to get a closer look. A year earlier, state media reported that a drunken tourist tried to hug the panda, who bit him. In an odd twist, the tourist reportedly bit back.*

*But being an endangered species and much-loved national icon means there’s no “three strikes and you’re out” for Gu Gu.*

*In fact, there’s a possibility Zhang may face charges for entering the panda pen.*

*Zoo officials did not respond to CNN’s request for an interview but are reportedly considering new measures to keep tourists out of Gu Gu’s pen.*

A panda’s mouth dripping with blood?Â  That sounds like a horror movie!

### Comments

**taylhis**I really like Leno. Too busy to watch the show anymore, but I'm sorry he's leaving. One of the people who went in was drunk, probably thought the panda was too cute to resist. Bet he regretted that the next day because the panda bit him - and he bit back.  
**derek**Guaranteed the cost for medical treatment exceeded the cost for a new panda toy. Slightly.  
**justj**I wish I could find Jay Leno's response to this. It was something along the line of how long it would take to train people from jumping into pens with large animals. The whole joke was very funny, but it did make me wonder why 3 people went into this panda's area.  
**jamiahsh**I guess the have "Don't feed the animal signs poster for good reason.

# Three Blind Mice... Err, Rats

Our new pet rats are great, and Oreo is becoming a real friend.Â  Bobby Jack, however, seems very nervous all the time.Â  He squeaks and sneezes a lot, and he uses his nose to try to burrow into my hand when I hold him.Â  We are thinking he might be blind.Â  I don’t know that much about rat behavior; these are my first pet rats.Â  But it just seems like Bobby Jack can’t see.Â  Are there vision tests for rats?Â  I guess I have some research to do about rat blindness, squeaking, and sneezing…

### Comments

# Diving For Victory

For those habitual readers of my blog who couldn’t make it to our regular game night last night due to the blizzard, you missed an ‘event’ – one of the funniest things I’ve ever seen.Â  I’ve been chuckling about it all day!Â  But before I get to that, I will start at the beginning of the evening.

One of our guests showed up with a dog.Â  Not just any dog; *our* dog Beesly.Â  If you’ve read my blog post called Pet Roll Call, then you know that Beesly is an escape artist.Â  But imagine our friend’s surprise when he came across Beesly a few blocks away from our house as he was walking over for game night.Â  He was glad he remembered her name, and he brought her back to her grateful family who didn’t even realize she was missing.Â  Maybe we should have named her Houdini…

So then we played some games, including a new one a friend brought called Left, Right, Center.Â  I really liked it; especially because it was very simple and easy to learn.Â  And then we brought out Pit.Â  We don’t play Pit very often because it’s not really appreciated by some members of the game night crew.Â  It’s a very loud game that is played at a frenzied pace.Â  I really like to play it, but I don’t think I’ve ever won a hand of Pit.Â  My friend had the same issue, but last night while we were playing, she finally got a winning hand.Â  In Pit, when you have a winning hand, you are supposed to ring a little bell, much like a bell you’d ring for service at a front desk of a hotel or at a store.Â  My friend (who shall remain nameless; I don’t want to embarrass her, but I’ll give you a hint – her name rhymes with “feral”) was ***extremely*** excited to have a winning hand, but there was one problem – she couldn’t reach the bell from her seat.Â  So what does she do?Â  This sweet, very quiet, normally passive person lunges…Â  no wait, let’s be honest.Â  She *dives* across the table for the bell.Â  I mean, it was a feet-off-the-ground, laying-on-the-table, horizontal, head-first dive across our dining room table, and *she landed on my arm* in the process.Â  She was immediately embarrassed and apologized profusely, maybe because I was crying.Â  But mine were tears of laughter because her behavior was so shocking – my arm was fine.Â  I guess Pit is such a crazy game that it can bring out the insanity in anyone.Â  And by the way, she did win the round Â  So congrats, \_\_\_\_\_, on winning your first round of Pit.Â  Please forgive me for publishing this story on the internet, but I thank you for giving us such a fun memory.

I’m sorry it snowed, but I’m glad our absent friends stayed safe.Â  We missed you a lot, and we really hope to see you next time!

### Comments

**justj**That must have been some game. It would have been interesting to see. I haven't been out to see if our road was plowed yet. I just stayed in since Friday afternoon.

# Free Rice!

A great friend told me about a website where you answer trivia questions for fun, and every correct response you give earns free rice for starving people!

So close that pointless solitaire game you were playing and go to [http://www.freerice.com](http://freerice.com/).Â  You start donating the rice by taking the vocabulary quiz in the middle of the page.Â  If you want to change the category of your questions, click ‘subjects’ at the top of the page.Â  You can do math, language, chemistry, geography, all kinds of subjects.  
If you’re the type of person who enjoys this kind of thing, why not learn something while helping to feed starving people?Â  Win-win!

### Comments

# Hannah's Wish

Our 4-year-old daughter Samantha is having her first sleepover tonight.Â  She’s been here when her older sister had friends sleep over, but tonight it’s her friend, just for Sammie.Â  Four years old is a little bit young to have a sleepover.Â  And tonight is the second sleepover in a row since older sister Taylor had a friend sleep over last night.Â  I don’t usually condone two sleepovers in a row because that would make for a very crabby Sunday.Â  But this is a special sleepover.

Sammie’s friend, Hannah, is an extraordinary little girl.Â  She was born with a condition that made her spine grow into her brain.Â  My daughter knows her from preschool, and then she was invited to Hannah’s 4th birthday party – that’s where we learned of her condition.Â  In the weeks after the party, Sammie called Hannah to see if she could come over and play, but Hannah could not – she was scheduled to have brain surgery in early December, but it was postponed because she suffered a seizure and was also diagnosed with asthma.Â  Then she underwent the brain surgery just before Christmas, and Sammie called her to see how she was doing.Â  For an entire week after the surgery, Hannah was bedridden and in constant pain.Â  She couldn’t come to the phone, much less go anywhere to play.Â  Now she’s feeling better, although her symptoms are starting to reappear.Â  So crabby Sunday, shmabby shmunday – my kids are having 2 sleepovers in a row.

Hannah’s recovery wish was to sleep over at Sammie’s house.Â  And even if it involved a 4-year-old with a double sleepover, what parent would be able to refuse Hannah’s wish?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Your entire family has a great gift for welcoming in people of all ages and backgrounds that is just so fantastic. I also hope Hannah continues her recovery.  
**justj**I hope that Hannah and Sammie have a wonderful time. That is a touching story. I hope her recovery continues. Third browser

# Flavor Poll

Since I’m on the subject of Girl Scout cookies (per my previous post), I’m going to conduct a flavor poll.Â  Girl Scout cookies are very popular.Â  So many people enjoy them that I would consider them a slice of Americana.Â  So what’s your favorite flavor?

**What is your favorite kind of Girl Scout cookie? Feel free to check more than one if you can't decide!**

* Thin Mints
* Do-si-dos - Peanut Butter Sandwich
* Trefoils - Shortbread
* Tagalongs - Peanut Butter Patties
* Samoas - Carmel DeLites
* Daisy Go Rounds
* Thanks-A-Lot
* Lemon Chalet Cremes
* Sugar Free Chocolate Chips
* Dulce de Leche
* Lemonades
* I don't like Girl Scout cookies
* I've never tried Girl Scout cookies

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

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And thanks to Jamiahsh for giving me the idea for the poll!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**You're welcome.  
**justj**All of them!  
**taylhis**Strange... Which browser doesn't it like? Even though I'm not a big cookie person, I LOVE the Carmel DeLites, formerly Samoas! I was pregnant and craving sweets during Girl Scout cookie season once, and those Carmel DeLites tasted unbelievably good... how I guarded those things!  
**justj**Me, I like all of them, but the Thin Mints and Shortbreads are my favorites Posting from another browser again...

# It's Cookie Time!

It’s that time of year again – my daughter will be one of thousands of girls selling the yummily famous Girl Scout cookies.Â  I’m not selling them online, but rather using my blog to post info you may need to help you decide how many boxes of what kinds you’d like to order.Â  [Click here to meet the cookies](http://www.girlscoutcookies.org/meet_cookies.asp).Â  If you’d like to support the wonderful cause of Girl Scouts and get some delicious snacks at the same time, just let me know how many boxes of which flavor you’d like – they’re $3 per box.Â  Thanks for your support!

### Comments

**Rantings and Ramblings From All Around.. » Blog Archive » Itâ€™S Cookie Time! | My Food Chain Gang**[...] It’s that time of year again - my daughter will be one of thousands of girls selling the yummily famous Girl Scout cookies . I’m not selling them online, but.[Continue Reading] [...]  
**Sharon Pristas**Lisa, Please order us 2 boxes: 1 Thin mint and 1 Samoas Thanks! Sharon Pristas  
**Kim**Hi Lisa, Put me down for two boxes, please: one lemon chalet cremes and one thin mints. My neighbor is selling them,too, but they are $4.00 per box here! Strange! Love you, and hope everyone is doing well! Love, Kim  
**justj**Taylhis That is just sad about the leader. Even sadder that the Girl Scouts did nothing to correct the situation. Yes, that sounds like a blog post.  
**Taylhis**No and no. She lied about things, never apologized. Told the kids they were going to Build-a-Bear (and other places) with their cookie money and never took them. I wrote to the Girl Scouts, but they never responded... I feel a blog post coming on!  
**derek**That wasn't cool. Was she prosecuted? And did she apologize?  
**Taylhis**Yes she enjoys it very much, thanks for asking! They have a great leader this year, unlike 2 years ago when the troop leader STOLE their money and didn't take them on outings.  
**derek**Something to think about. I'll let you know. Is Taylor enjoying being a Brownie?  
**justj**Cookie time!!! I will have to think about my decisions on this. Trying again on another browser, the spam blocking doesn't seem to like me.  
**jamiahsh**I sensed a poll with this, but all those flavors.  
**jamiahsh**Ok... one THIN MINT (YUMMMMY), one Do-Si-Dos, and one Tagalongs. Total $9.00. And yes, I had to cheat on the last two :)

# Boy, Was His Face Red...

I received an interesting email forward today about a letter someone wrote to the editor of The Arizona Republic newspaper.Â  I checked it out on snopes.com to make sure the story was true and not just someone with too much time on their hands making stuff up.Â  The story was true, although the letters that were reprinted in the email had been embellished somewhere during the course of the email forward.Â  Here are the reprints of the letters written to the editor:

*A letter to the Editor;  
Question of the day for Luke Air Force Base: Whom do we thank for the morning air show?  
Last Wednesday, at precisely 9:11 a.m., a tight formation of four F-16 jets made a low pass over Arrowhead Mall, continuing west over Bell Road at approximately 500 feet. Imagine our good fortune!  
Do the Tom Cruise-wannabes feel we need this wake-up call, or were they trying to impress the cashiers at Mervyns’ early-bird special?  
Any response would be appreciated.  
Tom MacRae, Peoria*

The correspondent received a response from Col. Robin Rand, commander of Luke AFB’s 56th Fighter Wing, in the pages of that same newspaper the following day:

*Luke Air Force Base was asked to respond to a letter writer’s question about a “morning air show” he observed recently (“A wake-up call from Luke’s jets,” Letters, Thursday):  
The “wake-up call” witnessed the morning of June 15 was a formation of F-16 jets from Luke Air Force Base lining up for a memorial service in Sun City at the gravesite for Air Force Capt. Jeremy Fresques, an officer assigned to Air Force Special Operations. Fresques gave his life in defense of our country while serving in Iraq.  
It is unfortunate that at a time when our nation is at war someone would believe we have less than honorable and professional reasons for such a mission.  
The commander of the fighter squadron was given the difficult duty of informing the family of Capt. Fresques on Memorial Day that the officer, a husband, son and Arizonan, had died in Iraq.  
On behalf of the men and women at Luke Air Force Base, we continue to keep Jeremy and his family in our thoughts and prayers.  
Col. Robin Rand  
Luke Air Force Base*

Four days later, the newspaper also published a response from Lt. Col. Pleus himself:

*Regarding “A wake-up call from Luke’s jets”:  
On June 15, at precisely 9:12 a.m., a perfectly timed four-ship of F-16s from the 63rd Fighter Squadron at Luke Air Force Base flew over the grave of Capt Jeremy Fresques.  
Capt. Fresques was an Air Force officer who was previously stationed at Luke Air Force Base and was killed in Iraq on May 30, Memorial Day.  
At 9 a.m. on June 15, his family and friends gathered at Sunland Memorial Park in Sun City to mourn the loss of a husband, son and friend.  
Based on the letter writer’s recount of the flyby, and because of the jet noise, I’m sure you didn’t hear the 21-gun salute, the playing of taps, or my words to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques as I gave them their son’s flag on behalf of the president of the United States and all those veterans and servicemen and women who understand the sacrifices they have endured.  
A four-ship flyby is a display of respect the Air Force pays to those who give their lives in defense of freedom. We are professional aviators and take our jobs seriously, and on June 15 what the letter writer witnessed was four officers lining up to pay their ultimate respects.  
The letter writer asks, “Whom do we thank for the morning air show?”  
The 56th Fighter Wing will call for you, and forward your thanks to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques, and thank them for you, for it was in their honor that my pilots flew the most honorable formation of their lives.  
Lt. Col. Scott Pleus  
Luke Air Force Base*

To his credit, the complainant, Mr. MacRae, tendered a written apology which was published in The Republic on 9 July:

*Regarding “Flyby honoring fallen comrade” (Letters, June 28):  
I read with increasing embarrassment and humility the response to my unfortunate letter to The Republic concerning an Air Force flyby (“A wake-up call from Luke’s jets,” Letters, June 23).  
I had no idea of the significance of the flyby, and would never have insulted such a fine and respectful display had I known.  
I have received many calls from the fine airmen who are serving or have served at Luke, and I have attempted to explain my side and apologized for any discomfort my letter has caused.  
This was simply an uninformed citizen complaining about noise.  
I have been made aware in both written and verbal communications of the four-ship flyby, and my heart goes out to each and every lost serviceman and woman in this war in which we are engaged.  
I have been called un-American by an unknown caller and I feel that I must address that. I served in the U.S. Navy and am a Vietnam veteran. I love my country and respect the jobs that the service organizations are doing.  
Please accept my heartfelt apologies.  
Tom MacRae, Peoria*

Well, anyway, I just thought it was an interesting email forward.Â  And it was thought-provoking and even contained some valuable life lessons: don’t jump to conclusions and appreciate everything in life.Â  God Bless our troops!

### Comments

**derek**Whoops! Probably had to change his number after that gaffe.

# Pet Roll Call

Once again, we have a bit of a food chain residing as pets in our home.Â  When my cat passed away a year ago now, it left a hole in our household food chain.Â  Although it’s not quite as balanced as it was when the cat was here, today we find ourselves with a small zoo nonetheless.Â  Here is the roll call of pets in our house:

Charity – almost 11-year-old female Jack (Jerk) Russell Terrier / Australian Shepard mix with one blue eye and one brown eye.Â  An extremely feisty but lovable loudmouth who doesn’t hesitate to let you know what she wants, when she wants it.Â  Will even growl for petting!Â  World’s worst puppy = World’s best family dog.

Beesly – nearly 7-year-old cocker spaniel mix with extremely thick fur.Â  We once shaved her and to our astonishment, she became a much smaller dog because her fur is so thick!Â  She really likes it outdoors, and we call her nordic (of or pertaining to the north, where it’s cold) because she doesn’t seem to mind the cold at all – probably can’t feel it through that blanket of fur!Â  We adopted her from the humane society in March 2008, and we’re SO glad!Â  GREAT with kids and an extreme snuggler.Â  The only problem we have with her is her nasty dog breath!Â  Oh, and her uncanny ability to escape.Â  She can open doors and can somehow (repeatedly, not just a fluke!) unhook her way off of 2 dog chains at the same time!Â  Luckily for us, she always comes back.

Squawky – an 8-year-old Scarlet Macaw parrot.Â  After living with him for 7 years, I do not recommend parrots as pets!Â  He screams (and I mean ear-splitting) constantly – a repairman once asked us if we had a pterodactyl behind the door after hearing him scream.Â  But he is beautiful and drops gorgeous feathers all the time.Â  And having him has been an awesome learning experience for us and the kids.Â  He can talk and is very curious about everything.Â  His vocabulary includes: hi, here kitty kitty, hi bird, and sometimes he just mumbles nonsense that sounds like human words.Â  In his spare time, Squawky likes to watch The Price is Right and Animal Planet.

Oreo – one of our new rat additions.Â  He is gray and white and smaller than Bobby Jack.Â  He seems a little more curious and less picky about food than Bobby Jack.Â  Had a close call with Charity this morning.

Bobby Jack – off-white colored rat who doesn’t like his rat food.Â  He enjoys many of the treats we’ve given him, especially junk food.Â  Just after we got them, he was the snugglier of the two, but I think he was just tired from his journey home from the pet store because now he’s as hyper and curious as his brother Oreo.Â  They are 5 weeks old, and so far, we would agree that rats make great pets!Â  They don’t bite like gerbils and hamsters, and they don’t scurry like mice.Â  They are fairly clean animals who groom a lot, are very intelligent and easily trainable.Â  I think one of the reasons they’re not popular pets to have is because of their super-short lifespans, about 1.5-3 years only.Â  

Francis – the ladybug I found that became my new pet before I had the rats.Â  I put him in a bug catcher, and then he went MIA.Â  Good news – today I found him.Â  Turns out, there was a little pocket in the bug catcher where he was hiding.Â  I would check the bug catcher every now and then, and today I saw that he had re-emerged from hiding!

No Name – another ladybug I found in the house.Â  I won’t kill any bugs I find unless they’re mosquitos – and how I enjoy killing those things!Â  But any other bug I try to set free, and I just can’t send ladybugs out into the Ohio wilderness to freeze to death.Â  No Name is in a little container in the kitchen…Â  I wonder what would happen if I put him in with Francis?

Mally – Ok, she’s no longer part of our family physically, but we will always remember her.Â  Since I mentioned her earlier, I thought I’d put her on the list.Â  She was a 10-year-old inbred farm cat.Â  My husband and I were in college, and we drove all the way out to a farm to get a kitten after reading an ad in the newspaper.Â  By the time we got there, we wanted a cat so badly that we got one even though the owners said the mother cat had mated with a boy from a previous litter, which is how Mally came to be.Â  Because of this, she was never ‘quite right’, and was always the size of a kitten.Â  We named her Malice as a joke, but we always called her Mally.Â  I was her world, and she hid from everyone else, prompting family and friends alike to joke about our “invisible cat”.Â  But she existed, I swear, and she was very sweet, at least with me.Â  She liked to lie on my pregnant belly and would ‘groom’ my hair.Â  I miss her a lot and wish I could get another cat, but I’m allergic.Â  I was allergic to Mally, but there was no way I was going to get rid of her.Â  I got her before any of my kids were born, and so I doted upon her and spoiled her while my husband was working in the wee beginning of our days together.Â  For those of you who never saw her, here is my little cat:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/scanner-cat.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**One of the rats doesn't like rat food? Did you try fine French cuisine? :P Welcome back, Francis! Might as well put the two together. You never know, the two could be lady and gentleman! A possible learning experience about life to your oldest girls since they certainly don't, er.. reproduce like us mammals, *that* being a lesson that should probably wait a bit of course...  
**jamiahsh**the three I have come to know and love are as much a part of your family as the rest of you and I am sure the new additions will only add to the fun. RIP, Mally.  
**justj**You need Chinchillas... ;)

# Where's My Happy Little Guy?

My son (after having only daughters for the past nine years, it seems weird to say the word son) must be teething.Â  He will be 6 months old on Sunday already, and for the last 5 days, he’s been crying constantly.Â  Yesterday was the exception, but 4 of the 5 last days, he’s been crying nonstop – it’s quite taxing for both of us.Â  Mostly, the exhaustion comes because I just feel badly for the little guy – he used to be the happiest baby and smiled constantly.Â  But after trying everything to cheer him up, sometimes I selfishly think about how hard it is on me as well.Â  I can’t imagine the pain he’s going through, but in the mean time, I can’t get anything done around the house – and leisure time?Â  Forget it.Â  It’s hard to get anything done while holding him, and holding him offers one of the only ways to keep him from crying – sometimes even holding him doesn’t work.Â  Sometimes there is no choice but to put him down somewhere, like when I’m cooking for instance, and he’s not happy anywhere right now…Â  not in his playpen, his bouncer, his bouncy seat, his crib, the floor, nowhere, which means he is screaming, and it’s a draining form of torture to hear a baby cry all day.Â  The only reason I’m actually able to sit down and write this blog (YES!Â  Leisure time after all!) right now is because he is passed out (after a crying spell) sitting on the couch next to me.Â  He sometimes likes it there too, but that means I’m glued to the couch – can’t leave a baby unattended on a couch of course.Â  So I can sit here and type this blog, but I can’t do things like tackle my accumulating clutter or begin the task of cutting Mt. Washmore down to size.Â  Mt. Washmore is the never-ending, magically replenishing pile of laundry often found lurking in households with 2 or more kids – I have 4 kids, so our Mt. Washmore is taking on a life of its own.Â  If we have any more kids, I’m afraid people who come to visit us will just arrive at the foot of a gi-normous pile of clothes where there once was a house and a family who lived inside.

I try to tell myself that things like backed-up laundry and clutter don’t really matter in the long run.Â  Heck, I’ll probably even be bored and WISH I had lots more laundry to do once my kids are all grown and in school during the day.Â  But just as I convince my brain that this is true, my feet stumble over something that’s in the way and shouldn’t be there – clutter or a basket of laundry to put away.Â  Speak of the devil, the laundry buzzer just went off…Â  if only my son will sleep through the transfer from the couch to his playpen so I can go fold it and put it away, thereby avoiding feeding Mt. Washmore.

HE DID!Â  He’s asleep in his playpen!Â  But now the dogs are barking at the neighbor’s cat again and WAAAAA, WAAAAAA!!!Â  Those dogs have woken the baby again!Â  Sigh…

I guess today will see yet another expansion of Mt. Washmore after all.

### Comments

**derek**A bottle of chloroform and a rag for your late Christmas gift. Check. (Just kidding!)  
**taylhis**Jamiahsh - enjoy today and tomorrow while you're still closer to 30 than 40!  
**jamiahsh**You mean I will be 35.5 on Saturday? Good heavens. I often wonder how Mom did it with her four... we were not that far removed in age either. Jeff is only 5 years older than I and Christi is three years younger. Poor Beeber.  
**taylhis**I should clarify - I like doing laundry, HATE folding and putting away. So our Mt. Washmore is a heap of clean laundry. I would probably notice some strange garments and wonder where to put them... but that's only IF I find the time to tackle the mountain! And now you gave yourself away - if you show up at the next game night with a suspicious bulge, I'm not letting you near Mt. Washmore! ;)  
**justj**So if I add my laundry to your mountain, you would never notice... Now if I can only figure out a way to get my clothes back when you do tackle the mountain.... ;) I just hate doing laundry.

# The Prize

In my previous post I was looking for the title of a song and the artist who sings it, and I promised a prize to anyone who could provide me with the info.Â  Two readers and fellow bloggers, [justj](http://justj.tangents.org/) and [derek](http://sublife.tangents.org/), successfully completed the challenge.Â  So what’s their prize?Â  A blog post of recognition, of course!

Alright, that’s dumb.Â  It’s going to make sure that people never take any challenges I offer again.Â  Isn’t just knowing that you helped a friend enough?Â  Of course it is, but you were promised a prize.Â  Maybe I can treat your ears to a round of *Senorita Mas Fina* (that’s the name of the song I was looking for in case you’re wondering, and it’s sung by Kevin Fowler).

Just kidding!Â  I won’t make you listen to the song.Â  It really seems like something only a country music lover would like – cheesy lyrics, hokey theme, obscene amount of twang – the kind of song I can really use to tease my friends who hate country music!

Well, thanks again derek and justj for playing and for coming up with the info I was looking for.Â  And it’s ironic, I did do searches myself, and I did come up with the name Kevin Fowler, but before I was able to listen to the song, I had to do something else (the baby has been crying for 3 days straight – teething), and I guess I forgot I was close to a result when my computer crashed.Â  So thanks for helping me, and you will get more than the blog post recognition I had planned – I will have a real prize the next time I see each of you – something small, but maybe a little better than blog recognition and being made to listen to an extreme lesson in the country music technique of twang.Â  Thanks for playing!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**what... honesty is totally unrewarded... hmmm... :D  
**justj**Or just the ability to post replies on your blog ;)  
**justj**I'm more than satisfied with the blog recognition too.  
**derek**Just give my prize to your best behaved child of the week, or to someone else who might need it. The blog recognition is enough for me, thanks. :)

# This Gringo Needs Help

From dictionary.com:

***gringo*** [gring-goh] â€“noun, plural -gos. Usually Disparaging.  
(in Latin America or Spain) a foreigner, esp. one of U.S. or British descent.

Sorry – didn’t mean to be disparaging, but I am of U.S. descent and I need help.

This post is an appeal to country music fans to please help me figure out the details of a country song I want.Â  I don’t know the name of it or who sings it.Â  It’s an older song – maybe from the 1980’s or ’90’s…Â  I wouldn’t even rule out the ’70’s.Â  Just about the only lyrics I can remember are “…be your little gringo…”Â  or something like that.Â  The song is uptempo and sung by a male.Â  If you can get me the name and artist of the song I’m looking for, you’ll win a prize.Â  Something tells me Carol might know this…Â  or my dad…Â  WHAT IS THIS SONG?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**no idea... sorry  
**derek**Whoops- the same as your link, justj! I didn't realize you guessed the same song- oops! :D  
**derek**Here's a Youtube vid of my guess: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS29unyG7zQ>  
**justj**Try again Just a bit of searching led me to this: http://www.freelyricsformusic.com/?sec=listing&lyricid=158679 And http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS29unyG7zQ  
**justj**Ok, now I'm trying to post a reply from Internet Explorer  
**derek**I did a search on google using the keywords {country lyrics "be your little gringo"} and found this song if it helps: [Kevin Fowler: Senorita Mas Fina](http://www.cowboylyrics.com/tabs/fowler-kevin/seniorita-mas-fina-6092.html)

# Is Winning The Lottery Worth The Ultimate Price?

As I was making lunch today, I heard the following fascinating story on the radio, so I had to look it up and read it for myself:

The following article is from baltimoresun.com:  
*DANBURY, Conn. (AP) â€” On the day that Donald Peters died, he unknowingly provided financial security for his wife of 59 years and their family.*

*Peters bought two Connecticut Lottery tickets at a local 7-Eleven store on Nov. 1 as part of a 20-year tradition he shared with his wife Charlotte. Later that day, the 79-year-old retired hat factory worker suffered a fatal heart attack while working in his yard in Danbury.*

*On Friday, his widow cashed in one of the tickets: a $10 million winner which, in her grief over her husband’s death, she had put aside and almost discarded before recently checking the numbers.*

*“I’m numb,” Charlotte Peters, 78, said at Connecticut Lottery headquarters in Rocky Hill.*

*Donald Peters usually bought the tickets for 10 weeks at a stretch, so the winning ticket he bought Nov. 1 for the Dec. 2 drawing was among several that Charlotte Peters put aside as she, their three children and two grandchildren coped with his sudden death.*

*“I was in the grocery store and I had it checked and they told me I was a winner,” she said. “I had no idea how much it was.”*

*She said she thought she had won $6 million but was surprised to learn from lottery officials she’d won $10 million.*

*Charlotte Peters has 60 days to decide whether to take a $6 million pre-tax lump sum payment or stretch the winnings into 21 yearly payments of almost $477,300 each.*

*She does not yet know what she will do with the money.*

*“I’ve always wanted a Corvette, but I don’t think I’ll buy one. I’ll stick to a small car. I might go to Mohegan Sun,” she said, referring to the casino in Connecticut. “I’m going to go home and sit and think.”*

*The Peters children think their father would have appreciated the irony.*

*“He’d be very mad, he just passed away and she won a lot of money,” said Brian Peters, one of the couple’s three children. “He’d say, ‘Figures!'”*

Even though Mr. Peters was not aware of his “luck”, in effect he paid the ultimate price to win the lottery.Â  Was it worth it?Â  Probably not.Â  Any sane person would rather have his life, health, and loved ones rather than an extremely large windfall if there was a choice.Â  Since that’s a poll I’d rather not take, here is one about what you would do if you won a huge amount of money in a lottery.

**If you won the lottery, what are some of the things you'd do first? Choose as many as apply:**

* build a community theater building
* build a community theater building anonymously
* consult an attorney
* change my phone number
* quit my job
* take a vacation
* hire a nanny
* hire a laundry service
* hire a housekeeper
* donate to charity
* build a zoo
* build a dream home
* I wrote a creative answer - read it in the comments section
* go to the casino

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I would pay MY bills, give some to family, build an anonymous theatre and subsequently move out of Ohio or at least to a larger city in Ohio.  
**derek**Okay, since you asked for the *first* thing, I would pay my bills. :mrgreen: After that, I would do other things like donate to charity, give family some money, move out to Ohio ;) , among other things.

# The Night Listener Returns

Regular readers of my blog know that I thought [The Night Listener](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0448075/) was a terrible movie.Â  It stars Robin Williams as a radio show host who…Â  you know what, I don’t even remember.Â  For a plot synopsis, click on the link above.Â  I was actually surprised that an A-list actor like Robin Williams would do such an awful movie as The Night Listener, but he did.Â  After sitting through a movie like The Night Listener, my husband and I are weary of Robin Williams.Â  However, 3 of our friends and fellow tangents.org authors all agreed that August Rush is a good movie, so we checked it out.Â  And you’ll notice that the title of this post is called, “The Night Listener Returns”, so uh-oh.Â  But that was more of a joke, and now I’ve explained it, so let’s get on with my review of August Rush.

Not nearly as bad as the Night Listener; I wouldn’t even call [August Rush](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0426931/) a bad movie.Â  At the very least, it was really refreshing to see a movie whose target audience was over the age of 18 that was absent any filth whatsoever.Â  August Rush is a cute story, but I think the movie could have been done a heck of a lot better in some ways.Â  The tale follows the life of a young orphan, an almost magical boy, named Evan Taylor as he “follows the music” to find his real parents.Â  There were a few circumstances and events in the movie that weren’t believable in any shape or form, and even if you suspended your disbelief, the cheesiness of other aspects of the movie was annoying.Â  The storyline is intriguing, and the acting is not bad, but there are a few things that would have to change about August Rush in order for me to consider it a great film.Â  To name just a couple of those things, I couldn’t get over the fact that this entire love story is based upon a one-night stand.Â  Tactfully done – as I said, there isn’t any filth in this PG rated movie, but still, knowing it’s true love after just a one-night stand?Â  Come on!Â  And, I guess you’ll have to see the movie to appreciate this, but would an abandoned theater really still have its electricity working?Â  Doubtful.Â  Like I said, just a few examples of what I perceived to be holes in the plot, but there are other things about the movie that could have easily been changed, improving the film’s quality.Â  Doing so would add much enjoyment and just plain common sense to this movie.Â  And Robin Williams was not the shining star in August Rush either; that was left for Freddie Highmore who played Evan – he was also wonderful playing twins in the great movie [The Spiderwick Chronicles](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0416236/) – another highly recommended flick.Â  Williams seemed almost annoying in his role as a musical outlaw with his multple piercings and goatee.Â  I flip-flopped between deciding if his character “Wizard” was a good guy or a bad guy.Â  Maybe that was the point, I’m not even sure.

The actor who played Buford Benjamin Blue (Bubba) in Forrest Gump played a preacher in August Rush, so I was wondering if the line, “Run August run!”Â  was a reference to the extremely famous line, “Run Forrest run!” from the Oscar-winning film based upon the Winston Groom novel, one of my favorite movies (one that**I** highly recommend).Â  Or maybe it was the filmakers’ way of laughing at us for even thinking of an awesome movie like [Forrst Gump](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0109830/) during August Rush.Â  Ok, it wasn’t that bad…Â  I did appreciate the sentiment.Â  But my lack of suspension of disbelief just got in the way of me getting swept into the magic of the movie, I guess.

Sorry for those who disagree with me, but I’m still glad you recommended the movie; it was definitely worth a screening – thanks!

### Comments

**derek**Oh, could you tell our friendly admin that I have comments awaiting moderation on the front page? I guess I had never commented on any of those posts before. ;)  
**derek**You raise some of the same points I read on IMDB by the ones who didn't like the movie, and they are valid. I guess for some, like me, suspension of disbelief is easier than for others. I do agree that Robin Williams was not at his best. His character actually made me think of a cross between Bill Sykes and Fagin rather than just Fagin.  
**justj**No problem with you not liking the movie. I guess it could have gone either way for me. I didn't have the problem with the 1 night stand that you did, but then my outlook on relationships is kind of based on a love at first sight, so it didn't seem out of place to me. The electricity in the theater could have been stolen from somewhere. There were enough people/children there. Someone may have had the knowledge to do that.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, Freddie is quite a talented young actor. Hopefully, he continues.

# More Cuties

No, I’m not talking about the oranges called Cuties.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/picture-47.jpg)

Have you heard of those?Â  They’re small oranges especially grown to be kid-friendly: less sour taste, seedless, and easier to peel and smaller than regular oranges.Â  I’ve been wanting to try them for our family, but when I finally remembered to pick them up at Walmart, the bag I had hastily grabbed contained smashed and rotten fruit.Â  What else is new – our Walmart always carries terrible produce.Â  But this is not going to be a Walmart-bashing post.Â  Tangents aside, I posted pictures of our new pet rat cuties in my previous post, so here are pictures of our real cuties.Â  Here is our one little guy with his 3 older sisters:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/1-2-09-0031.jpg)

And below are the oldest and the youngest kids in our family – they’re 8.5 years apart.Â  I wish I had blocked the sun before I took this picture!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/1-2-09-002.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Aww... :) (the rest of this is meaningless text so I don't get filtered for too short of a message...)  
**jamiahsh**SWEET... but at least the sun WAS SHINING :D

# You Dirty Rat(s)

According to Wikipedia.com, James Cagney never actually said the line, “*You Dirty Rat*“.Â  The closest he got was saying “Come out and take it, you dirty, yellow-bellied rat, or I’ll give it to you through the door!” in Taxi.Â  But *rats*!Â  That’s not the point of this post.

Seems I couldn’t resist adding to the Food Chain Gang – we’ve added two pet rats to our family, Bobby and Oreo – the kids chose the names.Â  It was kind of an impulsive activity to do today, pet shopping, but it was not an impulsive decision, the type that should never accompany a new pet.Â  We’ve been talking about getting a rat for some time now, but if it ended up being the wrong decision for our family, we didn’t want to *be like rats leaving a sinking ship* and ditch the responsibility. So we’ve been thinking about it a lot, and today just seemed like the right day to do it.

Rats are friendly, intelligent, non-biting rodents who make great pets.Â  Rat owners compare their companionship to that of dogs, believe it or not, and from what I’ve seen so far, I see what they’re talking about.Â  I think rats haven’t caught on as pets because many people don’t like the way their tails look, and they still have a negative stigma from a few incidents of centuries past, namely the Black Death outbreak and the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.Â  I did some research about both of these historical tales – not that they influenced my decision to get the rats as pets; the research was just for fun.Â  But I found that the Bubonic Plague, aka the Black Death was most likely transmitted by fleas rather than rats.Â  True the fleas would travel on the rats, but they more commonly preferred larger hosts such as dogs or cats and used rats when larger animals were unavailable.Â  The Bubonic Plague was attributed to causing the demise of one quarter of the Earth’s population of human beings at that time, it’s hard to blame people for taking it out on rats.Â  And the Pied Piper story is basically a legend that tries to explain the disappearance of over 100 children from the town of Hamelin in Germany just before the year 1300.Â  Most likely, the children were recruited to newer European settlements, possibly by a man in “pied” clothing.Â  In the legend, there is a rat infestation in Hamelin, and the Pied Piper leads the rats out of the town to a body of water where they all drown.Â  The townspeople neglect to pay the Piper for his rat removal services, and he returns and leads their children out of town.Â  Some versions claim they went to a cave, some say another village, and there are even a few versions that say the Piper had ill intentions toward the children – in one they meet a fate similar to the rats.Â  I enjoyed some of the rat research I read and wanted to share it.Â  If you want to continue the research on your own, I’ve added to the level of the cheesiness (and length) of this post by putting some common sayings involving rats in *italics* – try looking them up; the origins are interesting.Â  But anyway, back to our new little friends.

When we were at the pet store, I didn’t want any part of picking out the rat.Â  I felt like they are only in pet stores to become snake food (which is why I won’t join the *rat race* and work in a pet store, as much as I’d like to do the other work in the store), and I didn’t want to have to see the ones that wouldn’t get saved.Â  As it is, I went over there to take a glance, saw little Bobby, who was about to be put back in the snake food tank, and that’s what prompted me to say, “Maybe we should get two.”Â  The pet store sent the rats home to us like this, a brown bag lunch for snakes, thus proving my point:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/rats-1-3-09-001.jpg)

The rats my family chose for us are 4 week old brothers.Â  They are adorable, incredibly tame, and I’ve already really bonded with Bobby.Â  He cuddles me and sits on me and grooms himself – rats are actually very clean animals.Â  The entire start-up for this type of pet set us back about $25.  
$2.99 per rat + $3 for bedding + $9 cage + $3 food (for about 3 weeks worth) + $2 water bottle + tax.Â  We are going to be resourceful about toys and use my kids’ toys for the rats – we’ve already found that they like to crawl through these foam tunnel blocks they have.Â  And we were very resourceful when making their cage as well.Â  Instead of trying to decide between the $19 glass aquarium and the $24 hamster cage (I was concerned about the heaviness and the breakable glass of the aquarium and worried the rats would escape the cage), we opted for secret option #3 – a large $9 transparent Rubbermaid bin with a lid in which we poked air holes.Â  Overall, I’m very happy so far with the new pet decision, and my major concerns have not come to fruition which were: 1.Â  that our Jack (Jerk) Russell Terrier mix would try to hunt the rats, andÂ  2.Â  that the kids would unwittingly hurt the rats.Â  But our dog has not even noticed that the rats are here yet (she’s almost 11 and her sense of smell is failing faster than I thought – that makes me a little sad), and we laid down strict rules for the kids about handling the rats.Â  I was also worried about having yet another chore to do around the house, but I was promised help from both of the enthusiastic new pet owners (there’s a sucker born every minute).Â  Here are the cuties – Bobby is the beige one and Oreo is the gray and white one:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/rats-1-3-09-002.jpg)

### Comments

**Megan**We used to have pet rats and we loved them! Your story reminds me of when I brought home a rabbit from a reptile show I went to, to save it from being food. I can't believe I have had Dusty (short for dust bunny) for almost 3 years. BTW, the rats look adorable, can't wait to meet them:)  
**justj**Rats make great pets. You do need to keep their home clean, or they will get the typical rodent smell, but they are intelligent, fun pets.  
**jamiahsh**I also think rats have gotten a bad rap. Welcome to the menagerie Bobby and Oreo.

# Happy New Year!

Happy New Year!Â  Holy cow, 2009 already!Â  I hope you had a good New Year’s.Â  Ours was wonderul.Â  We hosted a bash, which is always great so that we don’t have to pack up the kids and all their luggage just to haul them out somewhere to stay until the wee hours of the morning.Â  We played charades and other games and ate lots of yummy treats.Â  Our kids – #2 and #4 in birth order – fell asleep way early.Â  The older one stayed asleep all night, but wouldn’t you know it – the baby woke right as we crawled into bed at 4 in the morning.Â  I was able to sleep for a few hours, but that’s more than I can say for my husband who woke with the baby.Â  But then he got a short nap while I ambled downstairs to do some much needed cleanup from the party.Â  After that, we were ready to drag ourselves over to a friend’s house for a New Year’s Day chili feast – I’m told the beans bring good luck in the new year.Â  More food, more fun, and we didn’t plan on staying long but ended up getting home about 7 in the evening.Â  I did miss the hockey game at Wrigley Field, but the Red Wings beat the Blackhawks anyway.Â  I’m not a big hockey fan; I just thought it would be cool to see Wrigley all decked out for hockey.Â  I wonder what they would have done if they had gotten some of that freak 60 degree weather again – how to maintain an ice rink in those conditions?Â  Oh well, that’s a tangent, good thing this site is called tangents.org

So the chili and rest of the food at our friends house was great, but I wish I could have enjoyed it more – seems I partied a little too hard the night before and felt a little tired and queasy come chili feast time.Â  But it’s my own fault – I should know that I’m getting older and can’t handle the late nights (or early mornings for that matter) like I used to.Â  But oh well – my friend did give me some delicious chili to take home, so hopefully it will be more enjoyable now that I was able to rest last night.Â  Now I’ll just have to get used to writing 2009 instead of 2008 all over the place…

### Comments

**justj**I'm also sorry I missed the chili. Your party was one to be remembered. A good time was had by all.  
**Jamiah**Yes, a great bash was had by all. Sorry I missed the chili.

# Last Post of 2008!

Because I barely have time to fit in the writing of this current blog post, I can safely say that with 4 kids running around (Christmas break = parental nightmare) this will be my last blog post of 2008!Â  What better way to go out then but to experiment with the new polling feature of tangents.org and make a New Year’s themed poll?Â  Enjoy, and have a very happy and safe New Year’s celebration!Â  Here’s wishing you the best of luck in 2009!Â  Check all that apply:

**What are your goals for 2009?**

* I don't have any goals for 2009
* lose weight
* further my education
* better my relationship with God
* give up a bad habit
* make more money
* nothing I can say on this blog
* perform in a play
* spend more time with family
* take a vacation
* write an e-book (submitted by Chris)

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**derek**As for goals, #4 is a given and #5 is tied to that one. As for other goals, I just don't know. do need to make a higher income than what I'm currently getting though. It wouldn't be so bad if it were an all-year job.  
**derek**We can do polls? I never saw such an option in the editor. Maybe I can hand-make one should the need arise.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... \*are now totally gone\*... Happy 2009 Everyone.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I seem that my poll options or anything closely resembling them are not toatlly gone and I had some GREAT polls to make :(  
**justj**Glad to see someone can do the polling... ;)

# Marley and Me

Reluctantly, I saw [Marley and Me](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0822832/) in the movie theater yesterday.Â  It’s not that it was a bad movie, but I didn’t want to see it in the theater because I knew it would be a tear-jerker since I read the book by John Grogan.Â  Unfortunately, I don’t remember much about the book since I read it a long time ago, and I do all of my book reading while I’m dozing off just before bed, which sometimes makes it difficult to remember what I’ve read.Â  But I know I really enjoyed the novel and recommended it to my family and friends.Â  The story is about a family who gets a puppy named Marley, and the novel follows his journey through life as the ‘world’s worst dog’.Â  But eventually, Marley charms his way into the hearts of his family, even helping them through life changes and tragedies.

From what I remember, I think the movie stays pretty close to the book, although I don’t necessarily agree with the casting choices of Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson as Marley’s masters.Â  I was a big fan of the tv show Friends, but every movie I’ve seen Jennifer Aniston in since seems like she’s still Rachel, her character from Friends.Â  She’s just not a very diverse actor in my book, which I also think she has in common with Owen Wilson.Â  But characters in this heartwarming ~~family~~ film were not very deep, so in the end the poor casting did little to sink the movie.Â  And you’ll notice that I crossed out family film.Â  Another thing that disappointed me was the PG rating Marley and Me received.Â  There are about 3 too many adult-themed scenes that I wouldn’t want my kids to see, and I’m really glad I previewed this film before I let them see it, which I usually do anyway.Â  This movie should NOT have received a PG rating, and it will make me more careful about making sure I preview *everything* before the kids view it, regardless of rating.

But overall, cute movie.Â  If you’re an animal lover or have ever owned a dog, prepare to cry.Â  Sorry if you consider that a spoiler, but it’s been all over the media and has dominated water cooler talk everywhere about how sad the movie and book are.Â  I’m sure you can guess what happens and you think you can prepare yourself, but you can’t.Â  I was a total wreck in the theater and have had a bit of a cloud over me ever since.Â  But don’t let that scare you away from seeing Marley and Me.Â  I think it just struck a chord in me because we own a dog who was once ‘The World’s Worst Dog’ and is now an old lady who has been a huge part of our family for over 10 years.Â  I probably would not watch this movie again, but only for lack of wanting to ride the emotional rollercoaster it provokes in its viewers.Â  The big screen version of Marley and Me was entertaining, and it made me definitely want to read the book again…Â  if only I had time for that.

### Comments

# High School - yuck

I don’t have many fond memories of high school.Â  It wasn’t horrible, but it certainly hasn’t come close to being the best years of my life as some people had promised.Â  Even so, when I saw this copy of an email forward on my friend’s blog, I couldn’t resist filling it out and making it a blog post of my own, especially since he didn’t send me the email version for me to forward.Â  Feel free to make it an email and forward it to your friends.Â  Coincidentally, I’ve been working on a post about a different version of classmates.com…Â  stay tuned – I might eventually have time to finish it!Â  Here is a copy of the email forward:

*Here is a fun email I received from my cousin who shares my alma mater as well as the year I graduated.Â  Some of the questions brought a chuckle as well as made me think.Â  See if it does the same for you.*

*Fill this out about your Senior Year of high school! The longer ago it was, the more fun the answers will be!!Â  FORWARDÂ  (or post in comments) with name of high school and graduating year in the subject box. Send this to all your friends, but donâ€™t forget to send it back to me.  
> >  
> >  
1. Did you date someone from your school? No*

*2. Did you marry someone from your high school? No*

*3. Did you car pool to school?Â  yes*

*4. What kind of car did you have? black Pontiac Sunbird*

*5. What kind of car do you have now? minivan*

*6 . Itâ€™s Friday nightâ€¦where are you now? In high school?Â  hanging out at a friends house, shooting pool or hanging out at Denny’s – lots of hanging out*

*7. What kind of job did you have in high school?Â  Wendy’s*

*8. What kind of job do you do now?Â  Homemaker*

*9. Were you a party animal?Â  more than some, less than others*

*10. Were you considered a flirt? no*

*11. Were you in band, orchestra? band freshman year*

*12. Were you a nerd?Â  depends who you asked I guess*

*13. Did you get suspended or expelled? no*

*14. Can you sing the fight song? no*

*15. Who was/were your favorite teacher? I don’t remember*

*16. Where did you sit during lunch? in my car – how dangerous was it to speed to McD’s and back in 25 mins every day?*

*17. What was your schoolâ€™s full name?Â  this makes me nervous – are you trying to track me down?!?*

*18. When did you graduate? 1996*

*19. What was your school mascot?Â  Tigers*

*20. If you could go back and do it again, would you? no thanks*

*21. Did you have fun at Prom? not really*

*22. Do you still talk to the person you went to Prom with? No*

*23. Are you planning on going to your next reunion? no*

*24. Do you still talk to people from school? trade a few emails a year with some people back and forth*

*25. School Colors? orange and black*

*26. If you could do 1 thing differently in high school, what would itÂ  be?Â  I would have been a little nicer to people – not that I was mean, I was just quiet and disconnected from my huge community of a school.*

### Comments

**derek***1. Did you date someone from your school?* No *2. Did you marry someone from your high school?* Still a bachelor *3. Did you car pool to school?* No *4. What kind of car did you have?* Chevy station wagon *5. What kind of car do you have now?* Chevy Metro *6. Itâ€™s Friday nightâ€¦where are you now? In high school?* Nowadays? At home. In high school? Probably at home. *7. What kind of job did you have in high school?* Retail, though I did have a job involving newspapers as well. *8. What kind of job do you do now?* Substitute teacher. *9. Were you a party animal?* Parties? *10. Were you considered a flirt?* Nope *11. Were you in band, orchestra?* Yep- played trumpet *12. Were you a nerd?* Not really, though I *was* outside pretty much all social circles. *13. Did you get suspended or expelled?* One detention was all- I was a good boy. :D *14. Can you sing the fight song?* No, but I remember it was borrowed from Northwestern U *15. Who was/were your favorite teacher(s)?* In high school I don't remember most of them oddly enough. *16. Where did you sit during lunch?* At a table by myself. *17. What was your schoolâ€™s full name?* Named after the town. *18. When did you graduate?* 1988 *19. What was your school mascot?* Mustang *20. If you could go back and do it again, would you?* No, I think not. *21. Did you have fun at Prom?* This question assumes one actually went to said prom. *22. Do you still talk to the person you went to Prom with?* See answer to #21 *23. Are you planning on going to your next reunion?* Haven't been to one yet. I don't see this changing anytime soon. *24. Do you still talk to people from school?* None from my high school. *25. School Colors?* Purple and gold. *26. If you could do 1 thing differently in high school, what would it be?* Be more sociable? Get involved in acting sooner? I don't really know.  
**Chris**1. Did you date someone from your school? Yes 2. Did you marry someone from your high school? No 3. Did you car pool to school? No 4. What kind of car did you have? Like this one http://www.vfrclc.org/images/DMil76.jpg 5. What kind of car do you have now? Minivan 6 . Itâ€™s Friday nightâ€¦where are you now? In high school? Hanging out with Derek. 7. What kind of job did you have in high school? PJ's Trick Shop (Magician) 8. What kind of job do you do now? Witness Protection Program :-) 9. Were you a party animal? Not even a little. 10. Were you considered a flirt? No 11. Were you in band, orchestra? Nope 12. Were you a nerd? Nerd implies smart -- so no. 13. Did you get suspended or expelled? Got detention after detention. 14. Can you sing the fight song? We had a fight song? 15. Who was/were your favorite teacher? Mr. Druin (Acting) 16. Where did you sit during lunch? It depends on which lunch hour. I would skip Gym and attend them all. 17. What was your schoolâ€™s full name? John Hersey High School 18. When did you graduate? It would have been in 1993, but... 19. What was your school mascot? Huskies 20. If you could go back and do it again, would you? YUCK! 21. Did you have fun at Prom? I went to six proms, had fun at one. 22. Do you still talk to the person you went to Prom with? None of them. 23. Are you planning on going to your next reunion? No. 24. Do you still talk to people from school? Every once in a 5 year period I will get an email. 25. School Colors? Don't remember. Red and Grey? 26. If you could do 1 thing differently in high school, what would it be? My hair. P.S. I am in love with the author of this blog!

# Classmates.com

You’ve heard of it.Â  You might even be a member of classmates.comÂ – the first step is admitting it.Â  But seriously, based on the popularity of websites like classmates.com, reunion.com, facebook.com and myspace.com, it’s obvious thatÂ human beingsÂ have an innate curiosity regarding the fates of the people they knew way back when.Â  Well, I thought of a whole new take on these types of sites – a sort of a dark side…

See, the suburban Chicago high school I attended was large.Â  My graduating class numbered about 500.Â  Of those 500 students, there were more than a few who were always into some kind ofÂ trouble.Â  When I used to have free time a few years ago BK (Before Kids), I would occasionally rack my brain, trying to remember the names of the trouble-makers from my school daysÂ in order to be able to look them up on the Â IDOC’s website – Illinois Department of Corrections.Â  And surprisingly – or not so much, I guess; they haveÂ to come from somewhere – but anyway,Â in my random searches, I did locateÂ a few former classmates in the IDOCÂ who wound up serving time in the slammer rather than spending time atÂ our classÂ reunion…

First up isÂ Tracy Wargo, who was a girl who used to live down the street from us.Â  The family was known for getting into trouble, and so when I did the IDOC search and found her name, I wasn’t really surprised.Â  She was in for DUI, and has since been released.

Next is Tony Devitto who was the brother of one of my friends I had when growing up.Â  We’ve lost touch over the years, butÂ I wondered ifÂ my friend or her brother would wind up in IDOC’s systemÂ someday –Â they didn’t have a very nice home life.Â  Unfortunately, my prediction was right, and Tony was just put into custody in November for retail theft – at least it’s nothing more serious.

And finally, there’s James Ray, who I knew from middle school – by the time we got to high school, he had all but disappeared, probably dropping out.Â  But anyway, imagine my surprise when I saw that a boy I last knew at the age of 12 was in trouble for armed robbery and solicitation of murder.Â  I don’t know what happened, but it was sad to learnÂ that a former classmateÂ has to wait until 2038 to be considered for parole.Â  I don’t know the full story of what he did; I just hope no one was hurt.

So anyway, because it was easy enough to find these people and information regarding the poor choices they made in life leading to what they’re doing nowadays, I think it would be a fruitful endeavor to begin a siteÂ like cellmates.com, if it doesn’t already exist – a reunion-type site that lists the dark and depressing updates aboutÂ our classmates.Â  I knowÂ some of the readers of this blog have their own stories they could contribute, so come on, no holds “barred”.Â  Publish (brief versions of) your interesting stories in my comments.Â  I have more; these are just the ones I have links to right now.

### Comments

# Christmas With The Kranks

Ok, going in, I knew it would be a terrible movie.Â  When [Christmas With The Kranks](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0388419) came out in the movie theater, it was met with terrible reviews from critics, and its imdb.com rating is a measley 4.7 with over 7,000 votes.Â  So why did I want to watch it?Â  Two reasons – I wanted to watch a Christmas movie on Christmas Eve, and I had read *Surviving Christmas* –Â  one of the rare John Grisham books that isn’t legal fiction, “Surviving Christmas” months ago – I always like to see books come to life on the screen.Â  Well, ok, not always…Â  because Christmas With The Kranks was simply awful – even worse than I thought.

The story is about a couple of empty-nesters who decide to skip Christmas since their daughter will be out of town.Â  They plan to take a tropical cruise and go about getting fake tans and whatnot to prepare for their unconventional holiday celebration.Â  Not such a big deal, you’d think.Â  Except that the Krank’s live on a street that is famous for their Christmas decorations.Â  Every house is expected to put a Frosty the Snowman decoration on their roof every year, and so when the Kranks are preparing to leave town without doing so, the neighborhood is abuzz.Â  That’s it.

The novel was alright; it was a fun little story, and although it wasn’t one of the best books, I did get all the way through it.Â  But I can’t say the same about the movie.Â  We turned it off in the middle and I can’t say I missed the rest.Â  My main problem with it was the casting of Tim Allen as Luther Krank.Â  While reading the book, I kept picturing Luther as a crabby senior citizen, but Tim Allen made Luther more angry than crabby.Â  In the novel, John Grisham does a nice job setting scene of a small, close-knit community, but all that is lost in the movie, especially with Tim Allen involved.Â  I was shocked to read on imdb.com that John Grisham has casting approval rights for movies based on his novels.Â  Maybe that was established *because* of Christmas With The Kranks.Â  Well anyway, that’s enough time wasted on this movie.Â  From what I hear, it’s not the best example of a John Grisham book, but worth a try, I suppose, if you have lots of spare time and like to read.Â  On the other hand, I wouldn’t recommend the movie to anyone.

### Comments

**Entertainment News! | Eminem Disses Mariah Carey**[...] Christmas With The Kranks | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**Big Family Christmas » Blog Archive » Christmas With The Kranks | My Food Chain Gang**[...] unknown wrote an interesting post today onChristmas With The Kranks | My Food Chain GangHere’s a quick excerptOk, going in, I knew it would be a terrible movie. When Christmas With The Kranks came out in the movie theater, it was met with terrible reviews from. [...]  
**jamiahsh**Makes 4 Christmas seem like Citizen Kane.

# It WAS A Very Merry Christmas, Thank You!

Our Christmas was wonderful, thanks for asking!Â  Our ~~8~~ 9 year old and our 2 year old were awake first on Christmas morning, and they crept downstairs to see if Santa came.Â  He did, and surprisingly, they waited very patiently until Mom and Dad were ready to roll out of bed to open their presents.Â  Christmas Eve was a late night, and because we weren’t really being pestered, we stayed in bed until about 9:45 Christmas morning.Â  After that, it took A LOT of prodding to wake our middle daughter who is 4.Â  Believe it or not, even telling her to check if Santa came didn’t do the trick…Â  she was apparently tired!Â  Like I said, late night last night.

Finally she was awake and excited, so then the kids opened their gifts, and they were really happy with what Santa had picked out.Â  So happy, in fact, that they were really good during the day, and we had few fights amongst the natives – a rarity in our house.Â  Their favorite toys seem to be these large inflatable balls with handles that they sit on and bounce.Â  I guess Santa didn’t realize how annoying it would be to have 3 little girls bouncing all around the house 

So what did I get?Â  My husband got me a game based upon our favorite tv show, The Office.Â  A good friend had gotten us another board game (with a dvd as a big part of the game) based upon the show, and so now we have both games – the complete set.Â  I love it.Â  I was looking forward to playing it all day, and it’s easy to see that the game is REALLY cool.Â  It’s different than your average trivia game; lots of added elements, making it a stand-out favorite board game.Â  But then again, we feel the show is a stand-out favorite.Â  My husband also got me a Snuggie – ever heard of them?Â  Snuggies are big blankets with sleeves, essentially.Â  That way you can do many a chore (or even fun things, like changing channels on the remote or blogging) while still being covered by a blanket.Â  We’re waiting for mine to arrive, and once they do, they will be an especially appreciated gift since our electric bill *doubled* between last month and this month – must be all those space heaters we were using to supplement our giant furnace because we thought our gas bill was too high.Â  Just wait til we get that bill in the mail this month… ugh.Â  At least it didn’t come on Christmas Eve like I was sure it would.

So what did I get for my wonderful hubby?Â  It’s lame I know, but months ago while I was still pregnant with our son, I found a picture frame that says “I get my good looks from my Daddy”.Â  I liked it immediately and bought it, and it’s ironic that at that time, I thought we were going to have a baby girl instead of a boy which would make more sense when it comes to the photo frame.Â  But then we found out we were indeed having a boy, and so I was able to give my husband the picture frame with a picture of our son inside.Â  A good gift, but I had wanted to get him something else.

I almost asked a friend to get something for him from me.Â  My husband usually wants-for-nothing, but this year, he did spy a few gadgets for his wish list.Â  Since he’s usually with me when we’re shopping at the stores that carry the items, I was going to ask a favor of someone to pick them up.Â  But alas, my plan was foiled when I told my husband (and the captain of our family finances) I need some money for Christmas shopping.Â  He basically vetoed the idea of me getting him anything, and I was under the impression it was mutual, that we were going to focus on the kids this year and not get each other anything.Â  But he sneakily got me some really good gifts, and I’m not going to let this happen again – I’ll be squirreling away some money here and there until I have enough to buy him a birthday present in June – HA!

Hope you and yours had a very Merry Christmas!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**There you go... get him something tremendous for his birthday ;) I remember having a Mickey Mouse bouncy ball. Wonder why they don't make them adult sized. That would be fun. Somehow, I remember mine being even bigger than the girls'. Glad yo had a great day. I still can't believe your four year-old was in bed until after 10... or that you were able to sleep in that late. We would have been too impatient.

# Greenstuff

Ok, I have to issue a warning for the following post because admittedly, it’s in poor taste.Â  And I usually try toÂ write a family-friendly blog, but the following video has some non-family friendly content.Â  If your kids are anything like mine, they come running when they hear audio coming from theÂ computer.Â  Too many fun forwards andÂ youtubes of the DoodleBops and Barney, I guess.Â  ButÂ shoo the kids away andÂ consider yourself warned.Â  ThoseÂ of youÂ who find sloppy drunkenÂ behavior funny should proceed to watch the followingÂ video.Â  It’s a version of the 12 Days of Christmas sung by the late comedienne Fay McKay.Â  In the song, she replaces all of the presents from the true love with gifts of liquor, leading to her being completely trashed by the song’s end.Â  I heard it when I was a kid; they used to play it on the radio.Â  And although I didn’t understand the scope of what was happening, I knew that the singer was acting goofy andÂ it was fun for a kid.Â  So my sister and I called the song “Greenstuff” (you’ll know why when you hear the song), and we made a cassette tape of it.Â  Oops – I didn’t mean to lose all youÂ readers who are under the age of twenty (a WHAT tape?).Â  On the other hand, maybe you shouldn’t be watching this video if you’re not old enough to legally enjoy alcohol responsibly.Â  Thanks to the modern inventionÂ called youtube, I was able to dig up the recording of the song I enjoyed so much as a kid.Â  Maybe I shouldn’t admit that, it seems kind of strange…

The only video I could findÂ of Fay McKay performing the song was audio/video mismatched, if you know what I mean.Â  The audio didn’t match the way her lips were moving, and it was annoying, so I’mÂ reluctantly postingÂ a different version insteadÂ  – one with a slide show that matches the lyrics.Â  Some of the add-ins are funny, while I failed to see the humor in others.Â  And I don’t know why they showed the woman on the table so many times…Â  maybe she is someone that knows the youtube poster – how embarrassing.Â  How does something like that happen anyway?Â  See for yourself, if you dare, and don’t forget to listen to the song:

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**Wonderfully twisted videos both :D  
**taylhis**a bit... Chris said, "Is that what they've been reduced to? Playing in a garage?"  
**derek**Apparently so- looking their age, aren't they? :)  
**taylhis**Is that the REAL Twisted Sister?  
**derek**If we're on this sort of thing, Twisted Sister apparently recently released [their own version](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grwP8QvI1jY)... :mrgreen:  
**justj**That was just plain wrong... And I loved it. ;)

# Merry Christmas!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/christmas-2008-010.jpg)

***Merry Christmas!***

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/christmas-eve-2008-009.jpg)  
We hope this Christmas Blogcard finds you and yours happy, safe, and healthy.Â  We want to thank all of you who thought of our family this year and sent us the wonderful Christmas cards.Â  I was going to send out Christmas e-cards with pictures of the kids this year, but somehow time got away from me (somehow?Â  I have 4 kids!) and wouldn’t you know it – it’s already Christmas and we never even got our family Christmas picture taken!Â  So I gathered the kids, put them in front of the Christmas tree, and viola!Â  Our family’s 2008 version of Christmas cards, and this is the fastest way to make sure we sent our Christmas wishes before the holiday is over.  
As for our family, 2008 was busy but great.Â  The kids are doing wonderfully!Â  Taylor just turned 9 and really likes 3rd grade.Â  She loves to read and is a very talented artist.Â  Sammie is 4 and in preschool.Â  She is learning to write her name and loves Barbies.Â  Disney is 2 and still very sweet.Â  She loves to play with baby dolls and play-doh.Â  Baby Christopher has learned to jump in his bouncy seat, and he loves to use his hands, especially to grab his toes.  
God Bless everyone and we wish you and your family a truly happy holiday season, as well as the rest of the year, of course!Â  We are so lucky to have such wonderful friends and family!Â  Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
Love,  
Chris, Lisa, Taylor, Sammie, Disney, and Christopher

### Comments

**Aunt Deb**happy new year  
**Aunt Deb**Lisa, Chris and family, Good to hear from you. Sounds like you have a wonderful busy family. Thanks for the e-card. All the girls were home for Christmas, unfortunately, Em could only stay 36 hours. They drove in horrible weather. Everyone is great here. Have a Wonderful Christmas time and A Happy New Year. Aunt Deb, Uncle Bill, Christine, Patrick, Audrey, Katharine, Bridgette, Emily & Josh.  
**Shirley**Merry Christmas from rainy Cleveland! It's Christmas morning and the gifts have been opened and all is wonderful here. See you back in Bryan soon!  
**justj**Joining in on the best wishes for the Christmas season.  
**Chrismas Sale Online » Blog Archive » Merry Christmas! | My Food Chain Gang**[...] unknown wrote an interesting post today onMerry Christmas! | My Food Chain GangHere’s a quick excerptMerry Christmas! We hope this Christmas Blogcard finds you and yours happy, safe, and healthy. We want to thank all of you who thought of our family this. [...]  
**Denver**Thanks for including me in your 'extended' family. Merry Christmas and Happy Hannukah. (That last one is for Chris, my Jewish brother!)  
**derek**Merry Christmas, and thanks for the photo! Printing now. :)  
**jamiahsh**Thank you all. You guys are truly the best. These past few months have been really tough and you have been there for me... esp. with the trip south. Thank you so much. I love you all alot. Here's to a Happy Holiday season and an even better New Year. see you friday.  
**Chris**Merry Christmas everybody! And Merry Christmas Lisa. I love you!!

# Who Needs Pockets?

Given my fear of frogs, no matter how illogical it is, this video terrified me to the very core.Â  I couldn’t even watch the whole thing, and what I did see was watched with my feet picked up off the floor – just too creepy.Â  But I still hope none of the buggers were injured in the filming of this video from youtube called “Who Needs Pockets?”

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

**derek**I think we're safe from that treatment- unless a rhinoceros starts wearing shorts. :D Agreed, poor frogs.  
**justj**All I can say is Poor Frogs.  
**jamiahsh**I can think of a few other little girls who would do that.

# Front Page News

My husband, aka Admin, logged into my computer to check stats, and never logged out, so my spellbinding account of unusualhotelsoftheworld.com was posted as an admin post and is now on the front page of tangents.org!Â  Just wanted to let you know what happened.Â  [Check it out here](http://tangents.org/2008/12/23/i-feel-like-i-am-already-sleeping-in-an-igloo/) – it’s called, “I Feel Like I Already Am Sleeping In An Igloo”.

### Comments

**justj**One should never leave an Admin Account unattended. All sorts of trouble could occur. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yes, read it and did not make me any warmer sorry to say. But I think a hotel underwater would be interesting... now all that is needed is to win the lottery to afford the night's stay ;)

# I'm The Only One Professional Enough...

“…in this room, that I know of, to carry this force.” says the DEA agent teaching a class on gun safety seconds before he *shoots himself in the foot!* Seriously, this really happened, and it’s kind of funny.Â  Well, maybe that’s the wrong word to use since someone **did** get injured…Â  But admit it, the irony of the situation is tremendously thick.Â  And if *he’s* the most qualified person in that room to handle the weapon he accidentally *shot* himself with, how scary is that?!?

I consider it a small miracle that no one was seriously injured.Â  Obviously this guy should not have been teaching this class, and I would bet that he was **not** the only person in the room “professional enough to carry that force”.Â  But why was the gun loaded in a classroom in the first place?Â  And why was there at least one little kid in the class?Â  You can see someone carrying her out of the classroom near the end of the video.Â  I don’t really know what else to say, so watch it for yourself…Â  and don’t worry if you surprise yourself with a chuckle – I don’t think it means you’re twisted or anything…Â  just a healthy dose of irony.Â  If I was not writing this post so close to bedtime, I would use the opportunity for jokes on puns aplenty about shooting oneself in the foot, putting one’s foot in mouth…Â  oh, too easy, but not when I’m this tired!Â  Enjoy, and note how the guy is able to keep his composure and regain control of the classroom, all while being in tremendous pain and presumably bleeding all over the floor – he finally just limps on out of the classroom!

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**This happened, a few years ago, to one of our local police officers. Sure am glad I get my police service from the county Sheriff, and not the town of my mailing address.  
**derek**Interesting. He said the gun was unloaded and even pulled the trigger once to prove it. Was it loaded with the safety on then? Then he took the safety off? Ouch.  
**jamiahsh**What is it lately... our out-going president having shoes thrown at him and now this.

# Awesome Anthem Of Moms Everywhere

Apparently while people are on Christmas break – off work or just home with their kids – they like to send email forwards.Â  I’ve gotten a burst of them lately, and 2 caught my eye so I will share them.Â  The first is another personality quiz, but it had some different questions than ones in the past, so I’m posting it.Â  Second is a really cute youtube video of a lady doing a marvellous job singing a song with which every parent will identify.Â  She is very talented, and it’s a good performance.Â  Not only do the lyrics ring true, but the woman has a niceÂ voice, and she just performs the song very well.Â  It’s amazing to me that she was able toÂ memorize all those words – they come awfully fast!

Here’s a copy ofÂ the personality quiz email with the answers I wrote:

A little fun thing to do.  
44 ODD Things about you! If you opened this, FILL IT  
OUT! Learn 44 things About your friends, and let them  
learn 44 things about you! Send back to Me and to  
several more friends !!

1. Do you like blue cheese? yes  
2. Have you ever smoked? yes  
3. Do you own a gun? NO!  
4. What flavor of Kool Aid was your favorite? mountain berry  
5. Do you get nervous before doctor appointments? yes  
6. What do you think of hot dogs ? like em – especially Vienna Beef or Nathans  
7. Favorite Christmas movie? Elf  
8. Favorite thing to drink in the morning:water  
9. Can you do push ups? barely  
10. Favorite piece of jewelry? my wedding and engagement rings  
12. Do you have A.D.D.? I just might  
13. What is one trait you hate about yourself?Â  that I can be high strung  
14. Middle name ?Â  Marie  
15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment. My Grandma’s Christmas village is cooler than the one they’re showing on the news – I can’t wait until Christmas – I can’t wait until Chris gets off work  
17. Current worry? money  
18. Current hate right now? arrogant, self-absorbed people  
19. Favorite place to be?Â  home  
20. How did you bring in the New Year? with friends  
22. Name three people who might complete this.Â  Jamy, Megan, Mary Beth  
23. Do you own slippers?Â  no – I wear imitation Crocs around the house  
24. What shirt are you wearing? a red sweatshirt with snowflakes on it  
25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? yes – but only in the summer  
26. Can you whistle? yes  
27. Favorite color?Â  green  
28. Would you be a pirate? I’ve got a parrot…Â  but I don’t really know what this question means.Â  I would not hijack ships and steal from people, so I guess not  
29. What songs do you sing in the AM. Country  
30. Favorite girl’s name?Â  Taylor  
31. Favorite boy’s name? Christopher  
32. What’s in your pocket right now? a piece of Barbie fake dog poop – don’t ask  
33. Last thing that made you laugh? My girls seeing their baby brother jumping in his bouncy  
34. What vehicle do you drive? minivan  
35. Worst injury you have ever had? emergency cesarean with a blood transfusion  
36.Â  Favorite Season?Â  Spring  
37. How many TV’s do you have in your house? 6  
38. Who is your loudest friend? Lisa H. I guess  
39. Do you have any pets? 2 dogs, a parrot, and one hibernating ladybug  
40. Does someone have a crush on you?Â  does marriage count as a crush?  
41. What is your favorite book? Monkeys on the Interstate by Jack Hanna  
42. Do you collect anything?Â Â  board games, Legos, Cubs stuff, local historical memorabilia and books  
43. Favorite sports team? Chicago Cubs / Bears  
44. What song do you want played at your funeral?Â  Whatever other people want to listen to, I guess…Â  it’s not like I’ll be enjoying it!

And here is the Mom’s Anthem 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.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**WOW... justj and I are alike in terms of dr. appts. I loved the video. "I'll thank you to not roll your eyes at me". 1. Do you like blue cheese? no 2. Have you ever smoked? only when the part called for it 3. Do you own a gun? NO! 4. What flavor of Kool Aid was your favorite? tropical punch 5. Do you get nervous before doctor appointments? depends on what it is for 6. What do you think of hot dogs ? like em 7. Favorite Christmas movie? Miracle on 34th Street (1947) 8. Favorite thing to drink in the morning? Orange Juice 9. Can you do push ups? sure 10. Favorite piece of jewelry? my class ring is the only piece I have 12. Do you have A.D.D.? never been tested... so couldn't say for sure 13. What is one trait you hate about yourself? procrastination 14. Middle name ? Lynn 15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment. Going out tonight to spread some Christmas cheer, Thank Elizabeth for wrapping my presents. Soap Operas are no good :( 17. Current worry? no worries 18. Current hate right now? the nearly sub-zero temps 19. Favorite place to be? on stage 20. How did you bring in the New Year? with friends 22. Name three people who might complete this. Terri, Courney, Megan 23. Do you own slippers? Pluto ones 24. What shirt are you wearing? The Clinic Sweatshirt with an OSU shirt underneath 25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? I'm sure I would 26. Can you whistle? let's see... Elizabeth says yes 27. Favorite color? red or blue both very close 28. Would you be a pirate? ARRRGH... That I would, Matey. Yo, Ho, Yo, Ho. A Pirate's Life for Me 29. What songs do you sing in the AM. Sing in the AM? You must be kidding... unless I'm playing a game that calls for it and it is after midnight 30. Favorite girl's name? Cruella... how's that for a name 31. Favorite boy's name? Elizabeth (niece) says Derek (Whoa, baby) 32. What's in your pocket right now? my empty wallet 33. Last thing that made you laugh? Elizabeth saying that her favorite boy's name is Derek 34. What vehicle do you drive? Pontiac Sunfire 35. Worst injury you have ever had? punching the front door window window with my fist 36. Favorite Season? Autumn 37. How many TV's do you have in your house? 5 38. Who is your loudest friend? Mandi... now if I just knew where she was 39. Do you have any pets? no 40. Does someone have a crush on you? wouldn't it be nice 41. What is your favorite book? To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee (her only novel... amazing) 42. Do you collect anything? Superman memorabilia, books, movies 43. Favorite sports team? New York Yankees 44. What song do you want played at your funeral? All the Small Things (whatever that is... Elizabeth's request)  
**justj**Here you go... 1. Do you like blue cheese? Don't know, never had it. 2. Have you ever smoked? Yes, a pipe 3. Do you own a gun? yes 4. What flavor of Kool Aid was your favorite? lemonade 5. Do you get nervous before doctor appointments? Depends on what the appointment is for. 6. What do you think of hot dogs ? Want them swimming in Chili sauce 7. Favorite Christmas movie? "A Muppet Christmas Carol" 8. Favorite thing to drink in the morning: Coffee 9. Can you do push ups? sure 10. Favorite piece of jewelry? none 12. Do you have A.D.D.? I don't think so. 13. What is one trait you hate about yourself? procrastination 14. Middle name ? Yes 15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment. These questions, It's cold out, what time do I have to pick up the youngest? 17. Current worry? What is the driving going to be like for Christmas 18. Current hate right now? Don't hate, isn't good for me. 19. Favorite place to be? home 20. How did you bring in the New Year? with tears 22. Name three people who might complete this. you're guess is a good as mine 23. Do you own slippers? Yes 24. What shirt are you wearing? a green/beige plaid 25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? Don't know, never slept on satin 26. Can you whistle? Sure 27. Favorite color? Royal Blue 28. Would you be a pirate? Arrrh! 29. What songs do you sing in the AM. I don't sing 30. Favorite girlâ€™s name? Sarah 31. Favorite boyâ€™s name? Paul 32. Whatâ€™s in your pocket right now? a cell phone 33. Last thing that made you laugh? A gift exchange at work 34. What vehicle do you drive? Crew Cab midsized truck 35. Worst injury you have ever had? Minibike accident, bad scrapes and burns, but could have been worse by inches. 36. Favorite Season? Fall 37. How many TVâ€™s do you have in your house? 1 that works, 1 that doesn't 38. Who is your loudest friend? I'm too much of a gentleman to say 39. Do you have any pets? 1 dog and a bunch of Chinchillas 40. Does someone have a crush on you? If I do, would someone tell me? I wouldn't know. 41. What is your favorite book? The Lord of the Rings series 42. Do you collect anything? Books, Indiana Jones stuff, computers and parts. 43. Favorite sports team? Detroit Tigers 44. What song do you want played at your funeral? I don't care.

# KidsSpeak

Kids say the darndest things, as we all know – they even made a tv show about it.Â  Here is a list of some of the cute mispronounciations my kids have made and their ages when they said them.

“ah-cro-poose” saidÂ by Sammie, age 3.Â  Translation: octopus

“Taylor lelled at me” said by Sammie, age 4.Â  Translation: lelled = yelled

“Beeber” said by Disney, age 2.Â  Translation: Christopher (her baby brother).Â  This has actuallyÂ led to Christopher having nicknames of Beeber and Beebs.

“Kipper” said by Disney, age 2.Â  Translation: Christopher.Â  She moved out of the Beeber phase and now calls him Kipper.

“may-sa-peer” said by Sammie, age 3.Â  Translation: disappear

“tormado” said by Sammie, age 4.Â  Translation: tornado.Â  Look closely at how I typed the word – she replaces the “n” with an “m” sound.

“ith ith” said by Taylor, age 1.Â  Translation: kitty.

“diaper call off!”Â said by Disney, age 2.Â  Translation: Help!Â  My diaper is falling off!

“gggg” said by Christopher, age 5 months.Â  Translation: various.Â  I just wanted to put his soundsÂ in this list too.

### Comments

**derek**:D  
**taylhis**yes, and Art Linkletter before Cosby, In the old reruns with Linkletter, you can see him mouthing the words that the kids are supposed to say. Kids Memorize The Darndest Things?  
**derek**Bill Cosby, wasn't it? Host of Kids Say...?

# Clap, Clap, Slap The Chest...

What IS this?Â  It’s something that is popular among tween girls lately.Â  They walk around doing some kind of ritual that involves clapping and slapping their chests, among other things.Â  I didn’t really think much of it, until my daughter’s 9th birthday party, and there were other kids here doing it.Â  When my 2-year-old picked it up, it became annoying andÂ I decided to take action by writing a blog post and looking it up on the internet.Â Â  I asked my daughter if it’s from a movie or a tv show or something, but she didn’t seem to know where it came from.Â  When I tried to look it up on the internet, I just got instructions for other games of this type and didn’t see anything about any sort of fad that’s sweeping our tweens.Â  So is anyone reading this whose kids do the same thing, or is this a NW Ohio thing?Â  I’d like to know where it came from so I can decide if it’s a behavior I want all of my kids duplicating.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I haven't noticed it, either. And I have one teenage (NO) niece and one approaching. Local thing?  
**derek**Kids and weird fads... Sorry, I can't be of help here except to say I haven't noticed it myself, but then I am Mr. Unobservant sometimes.

# You Delivered My Pizza, But Please Don't Watch Me Eat It

We had a great weekend, even though the weather on Sunday was horrid – so cold my Christmas teddy bear got frozen to the window!Â  Friday night was an all-night work session to finish up the planning and organization of our community theater’s awards show, which isÂ where we wentÂ Saturday night.Â  But first on Saturday afternoon, it was a birthday celebration for our oldest who turned 9 on Sunday with a MUCH anticipated visit from family who live out of state.Â  We had a great time catching up and watching the kids open their birthday and Christmas presents, and the kids got to have a sleepover in the hotel with Grandma, Papa, and Uncle BudÂ while we went to the awards show.Â  The awards show was lots of fun, as always, and I got to watch 2 very good friends win much-deserved achievment awards.Â  Congratulations, guys!

It was lots of fun putting the show together, even if we didn’t have much time to do so due to last minute notice from the theater.Â  It was fun and also rewarding to watch the individual skits, shorts, songs, and awards presentations start as ideas on paper andÂ then watchÂ when they came together as a whole.Â  It’s also a fun excuse to get everyone together, and it’s always nice to see long-lost busy friends who are unable to get together but for this one night.Â  It might be fun to produce the awards show again next year, but then again, I’d love to have my best friend sitting beside me to watch them because I missed him this year – even though he did make an excellent host.Â  If there are a few individuals in the theater community who have a hard time because they don’t win awards, then let them have their hard time.Â  There is talk of cancelling this awards show, and I would be very sad if that happened.Â  It’s definitely a whole ton of fun for most of us, and I really don’t think we should let a few individuals ruin it for everyone.Â  That’s all I’m going to say on the subject for now, but expect to hear more from me once this very topic is discussed at the next production board meeting.

Sunday we had major Grandma-let-down, and because we didn’t want our oldest daughter to be depressed on her actual birthday, we let her have a friend sleep over.Â  During football season, we usually set aside Sundays for low-key stuff, like watching football, reading newspapers, and blogging, but we always end up with crazy kids so it’s never exactly low-key.Â  But I don’t usually cook dinner on Sundays, and today we ordered pizza.Â  Five minutes after the pizza was delivered, we noticed the delivery guy was still parked out front and that heÂ was standing outside ofÂ his car.Â  Turns out, he had locked himself out of the car, and so we offered him a warm place to wait for his ride.Â  Since the temperature outside has been hovering around 0Â° all day, with wind chills near -20Â°, he gratefully accepted.Â  And he stood in our front hall for almost 30 minutes!Â  If he were outside, he would have frozen to death.Â  But it did feel a little awkward eating the pizza he deliveredÂ while he stood there.Â  We offered him a seat in the living room, but he opted to stand in the entryway, and I’m kind of glad because at least we were then eating out of his view.Â  Our 2-year-old kept asking about “the pizza guy”, and thenÂ he became scary to her – “I scared pizza guy”Â – probably cuz he was just standing there, doing nothing, and she’s never seen anyone do that in our front hall before.Â  But finally his ride came, thank goodness, and he left.Â  I wonder if he gets paid for the time he was standing in our house?Â  I wonder who pays for the gas that was used in his running car while he was waiting for his ride?Â  Should we have offered him some pizza?Â  It was kind of a weird situation, but it does make for interesting blog fodder.Â  Of course it had to happen on the coldest day of the year – that guy has a new story to tell!

### Comments

**Megan**Well I guess it was a good thing that I went to go get our pizza that we ordered tonight. I would have had it delivered but I really wanted to get out of the house, where I stayed all day because of the bitter cold, and I didn't want to fork out the extra bucks for a tip. (Esp. if the delivery guy is cute, they get extra;) It was so nice of you for what you guys did. However, I can see the awkwardness.  
**derek**Speaking of, just imagine my sense of awkwardness when I, a 30something male, had to ask several parents for permission to call their 10/11yo kids for church ministry as a new way of keeping contact with the kids in our small groups. Most said yes, but one rescinded the permission after I actually talked to his son. Yeah, I would be a little uncomfortable too as the parent. I'm glad you invited Jesus in (for what you do to the least- I would presume this to mean all and not just the lowest of the low- of His people you do for Him). :) Blessings on you.  
**taylhis**Oops... maybe I should have erred on the side of nice. But then again, it's much different to invite a stranger into your home when you have kids.  
**justj**I would have offered the pizza if I bought it, but if I were the pizza guy, I would have declined the offer. I actually know I would do this, but our pizza guy didn't decline. I made a very good college friend by doing that. By offering him a few slices, when he had car trouble, we would get free pizzas on occasion. Pays to be nice.

# Toy Culling

A few weeks ago, our kids were chronically misbehaving.Â  Our oldest, a tween,Â was sassing back and saying “no” too much, her younger sister (the “spirited” one) was throwing lots of tantrums and trying to cause trouble with her sisters, and our youngest daughter was constantly upset and insecure about the continuous chaos in the house.Â  Desperate times call for desperate measures, so one day while the oldest kids were at school and the younger ones were sleeping, my husband took off work for anÂ afternoonÂ of “toy culling”.Â  This is a drastic discipline measure we only use in emergency situations.Â  It is time-consuming and intensiveÂ laborÂ for the parents, but well worth it, at least in our house.

ToyÂ culling consists of us goingÂ into the girls’Â room (the three oldest girls share one big room, and our baby boy isn’t yet old enough to cause trouble) and taking out every toy.Â  We leave the tv, computer with educational games, books, and the clothes and board games in the closet.Â  Everything else goes – dressup clothes, doll clothes, dolls, stuffed animals,Â all the little miscellaneous toys that can really junk up a child’s room quickly, etc.Â  If you have lots of time, you can sort it all by what you want to keep and organize the rest, but we are very busy people and so we just took all their junk and put it in our son’s room for now.Â  He’s a baby who wakes in the night so he’s still in our room.Â  When it’s time to move him into his room, we’ll have to clean it out obviously, but for now it was a means to an end of the horrible behavior of the girls.Â  We leave the board games, and they know that they take one out and put it away when they’re done, just like the books that are left.Â  If the rules aren’t followed, anything that’s left on the floor in subsequent daysÂ gets culled.Â  You need to check their room everyday, and it’sÂ **imperitive** that you follow through with rule-enforcing.Â  And for some reason, this process really works.Â  I don’t know what it is…Â  PerhapsÂ a feng shui effect where the much more pleasant ambience of the room and the *mucho* extra space is what leads to the kids being in better moods and hence,Â less trouble and more obedient.Â  It could be the fact that there are less toys over which to fight.Â  Maybe they’re happier not having it constantly hanging over their heads that they’re going to have to clean their room.Â  But I don’t care what the reason is, the toy culling has worked wonderfully the 3-5 times we’ve had to set aside a chunk of time to do it.Â  My kids are now putting their dirty laundry in the hampers that are provided, and their trash is going into garbage cans.Â  Also, their room is staying clean, and I don’t have to worry about it staying that way because they don’t have anything with which to mess it up!Â  And, as the behavior improves, they can earn their toys back – you don’t have to spend money to get them any special reward PLUS the kids feel senses of accomplishment = WIN/WIN.Â  Toy culling proves that less is more, and it helpsÂ put a damper onÂ the sense of entitlement that can cloud the good attitude of even a generally well-behaved child.

I think I first read about the method in a parenting column in the newspaper.Â  I’m not sure which expert gets the credit, but I do know that I highly recommend toy culling!Â  And oh yes, early December is a perfect time to do this – makes room for the burst of new things they might receive for the holidays!

### Comments

**derek**Culling- makes me think of one of the shows I watch, Stargate: Atlantis. Only it's not toys that get culled. Let me just leave it at that lest there be nightmares... Sounds like a good tool for the parental arsenal. I don't think I ever had toys culled, but I remember my aunt telling me how she would throw her kids' coats outside if they left them on the floor.  
**justj**I did toy culling too, but sometimes they never got them back. If they didn't miss it, it wasn't too important. Unless it was Barbie shoes on the floor (any other small toy) If I stepped on it, goodbye. I had to pull one of the Barbie earrings out of my foot once, so this was my way of handling small toys on the floor. For some reason, it never worked on the oldest. Her imagination was just too good, she didn't need any toys to have fun.  
**taylhis**Ah yes... it does seem to work on every kid. But your parents let themselves down on the follow-thru... not easy to make sure the kids stay out of the 'forbidden' zone, as you well know, especially when there's 4 of them! They tend to gang up on the parents!  
**jamiahsh**I remember a similar process in which a room full of baseball cards were put into large garbage bags (sometimes 5 heavy duty size). Not mine but those of my roommate growing up. It worked for a while, but within a wee or two, they would be right back where they were. Mom would go up while we were in school and spend the day shoveling.

# Please Come Home For Christmas

It’s my favorite contemporary classic Christmas tune, yet I can’t find the original version that made me fall in love with the song, “Please Come Home for Christmas”.Â  I spent much ofÂ yesterday evening downloading different samplesÂ of the song; it seems every famous recording artist from the past few decades covered it.Â  The musical acts that were sampled were very diverse: Aaron Neville, Sawyer Brown, Bon Jovi, Vonda Sheperd, Gary Allan, the Drifters, Lonestar, Toby Keith… Â Twenty renditions later and I still haven’t found the originalÂ version I heard – my favorite one to date.Â  I heard it in the 80’s or early 90’s, and it was the most popular version they would play all the time on the radio; country and easy listening / rock.Â  It’s sung by a male artist or group…Â  if anyone has any suggestions of who it might be, I might be up to fishing through a few more versions of the song.Â  That is, unless any of them are as bad as Toby Keith’s.Â  And this is coming from a country music fan!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Ah, yes... I know that phase. Thank goodness for the occasional visitors who come around..  
**Women and Their Nutrition.very Important to All of Us! | Diet and Weight loss Information**[...] Please Come Home For Christmas | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**taylhis**It's worse than running around - he wants to be held all the time and cries ant time he's put down.  
**jamiahsh**Christopher can run around already?! Or did you inherit another rambunctious kid to run around?  
**taylhis**Thanks everyone for your help - the Eagles version is very good, still not the one I was looking for, but definitely a favorite. I haven't had a chance to find Charles Brown's version yet though... today is a snow day, and it WAS going to be a catchup-on-work-clean-the-house-for-complany-tomorrow day, but now I have 4 rambunctious kids running around here - EEK!  
**Chrismas Sale Online » Blog Archive » Please Come Home For Christmas | My Food Chain Gang**[...] unknown wrote an interesting post today onPlease Come Home For Christmas | My Food Chain GangHere’s a quick excerptIt’s my favorite contemporary classic Christmas tune, yet I can’t find the original version that made me fall in love with the song, Please Come Home for. [...]  
**justj**Youtube Eagles version here http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiRgC3CA38g  
**justj**According to Wikipedia, it was originally recorded by blues singer Charles Brown in 1960. Found that here: http://www.artistdirect.com/nad/store/artist/album/0,,57692,00.html  
**jamiahsh**About the most popular version I can think of was The Eagles version, but Jon Bon Jovi also recorded it in the 80s.

# Road Kill Etiquette?

Saturday morning started off completely crazily of course – it was the morning of our oldest daughter’s ninth birthday party.Â  We were running around like lunatics, trying to take care of our own 4 kids and getting last minute details for the party worked out – we didn’t even know how many kids were going to show up since people refuse to RSVP, but that’s a separate post altoghter.Â  I had invited 25 kids – I know that sounds completely crazy, but my daughter’s school has a rule that you have to invite the entire class if you’re handing invitations out at school (understandable, don’tÂ wantÂ any kids’ feelings hurt)Â – so with the 17 in her class + Brownies + outside of school friends =Â meantÂ almost 30Â eight and nine-year-olds could have shown up at my house on Saturday.Â  But thank goodness, only about 6 or 7 showed up (theyÂ never stoodÂ still long enough for me to count them), which is another reason why I invite every kid my daughter knows – if we had only invited 5 kids, none of them would have been able to come probably.

So Saturday morning was hectic, to say the least.Â  Various kids were melting down in anticipation of the party, and adults were scrambling to decorate and plan games for somewhere between 5 and 25 kids.Â  My husband is brilliant and came up with an idea to do a craft, and luckily we have a pretty big supply of craft items.Â  So we threw a bunch of stuff together, and the kids made Christmas ornaments out of small red plastic cups and whatever else we found and had an awesome time doing so.Â  I was feeling much better after the craft idea was hatched, because it was almost time for kids to arrive and nowÂ everything was ready.Â  My dog started barking, so I went to the window to see what the barkingÂ was about this time.Â  Just as I got to the window, a squirrel ran out in front of a car and got hit – right in front of my house and my eyes – ugh.Â  What an awful way to start a birthday party – I’m really sensitive about those kind of things.Â  I wanted my husband to go out and move it – it was right in front of our house – but he refused.Â  I can’t say I blame him, I wasn’t going to go near it for anything, and I made him tie the party balloons out front.Â  But I knew at the very least, kids (especially boys) would be talking aboutÂ the dead squirrel for the entire party.Â  At least it wasn’t warm out, which would have increased the chances ofÂ the party spilling outside, further leading to more attentionÂ on the poor unlucky squirrel.Â  So I don’t know, what’s road kill / birthday party ettiquette?Â  Should we have removed the squirrel?Â  Never had to deal with THAT problem before.Â  And I hope I never have to again; it cast a terrible shadow over my day.Â  But as it happened,Â no need to worry about the squirrel – by party time he was flat as a pancake and no one noticed him.Â  By the end of the party, he had disappeared completely.Â  I’m just glad none of my kids had to see it happen; I think that would have been rough on them.Â  And I’m happy to report that the birthday party was a HUGE successÂ with several kids exclaiming that it was the best birthday party they had ever been to…Â  of course one of those comments came from a kid who was at his first birthday party ever.Â  ButÂ we did catch one kid lying aboutÂ calling her grandma to come pick her up.Â  She said grandma wasn’t home but it turns out that she hadÂ never dialed – I’m glad I’m well-informed of that trick now.Â  This same kid’s grandma didn’t show up last yearÂ until an hour after the party was over, hmmm…Â  As President George W. Bush would say – Fool me once, shame on…Â Â fool me twice….Â  if you get fooled, you’ll be fooled again.

Happy 9th Birthday Taylor!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Easy to see why it would be proclaimed as one of the best parties ever. Aside from the squirrel of course. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TAYLOR!!!!  
**derek**Be glad. That girl clearly likes to spend time with you (and T). :) We had a dead squirrel in fron of our house a couple of months ago. It really is sad to see animal life lost in unnatural ways. So why did the squirrel cross the road? I don't know, but not to play chicken with a car... :( Hmm. Did the chicken then play "squirrel" when it crossed the road...? :P

# Francis = MIA

It seems my new pet has gone missing.Â  Thank goodness I didn’t end up with something bigger, like a rat or a tortoise or something I wouldn’t really want crawling around the house unattended.Â  But I didn’t see this coming.Â  If anything, I thought my new ladybug friend would kick the bucket.Â  I wouldn’t have guessed that he’d vanish.Â  I don’t think the kids got to him; they wouldn’t have been able to keep something like that a secret for long.Â  But today when I went to check on Francis the ladybug he wasn’t in his cage.Â  And by the way, the name is after the ladybug inÂ A Bug’s Life, not my late GrandmotherÂ – that would be FrancEs and yes, I still want a daughter to have that name.

Yesterday at the thrift store I found a bug catcher for a quarter, so I bought it and put Francis in his new home last night.Â  Today when I went to check on him, he’s no where to be found in the bug catcher.Â  My husband and I both examined the lid, and we don’t think he escaped, so my guess is that he’s hiding in these little pockets in the bug catcher that hold the screws – people can’t see in them, but they’re ladybug-sized.Â  And I think ladybugs hibernate during the winter, so we might not be hearing from Francis for awhile if he crawled into one of those holes to hibernate…Â  Nuts, he had a bunch of visitors all lined up!

### Comments

**justj**Oh darn, I missed the newest pet. Francis, we will miss you, where ever you went.  
**jamiahsh**aww... :(

# Biological Treasure Trove

As a change of pace from the usual “the world is falling apart”-type articles about conservation, I decided to share the following article from CNN.com about an area of Asia called the Mekong Delta region.Â  Scientists are calling theÂ place a “biological treasure trove” because of its rich diversity of floraÂ and fauna.Â  1,068 species were discovered thereÂ between 1997 and 2007 alone; including 15 new species of mammals.Â  Fascinating stuff AND something to read that contains *promisingÂ*news about the statusÂ of the Earth, rather than the usual bad news and negativity.Â  Here is the article – I find the part about the hot pink cyanide-producing dragon millipede particularly interesting – there’s a picture of it on cnn.com, see the link at the bottom of this post.

***(CNN)*** *— A rat believed to be extinct for 11 million years, a spider with a foot-long legspan, and a hot pink cyanide-producing “dragon millipede” are among the thousand newly discovered species in the largely unexplored Mekong Delta region.   
The “dragon millipede” is among the 1,068 new species discovered in the Mekong Delta region.*

*more photos Â»Â  The region, including parts of Vietnam and five other countries, is home to 1,068 species found between 1997 and 2007, according to a World Wildlife Fund report released this week.*

*Some of the creatures were not lurking in fertile floodplains or tropical foliage.*

*A scientist visiting an outdoor restaurant was startled to see a Laotian rock rat among the nearby wildlife. The hairy, nocturnal, thick-tailed rat, which resembles a squirrel, had been thought for centuries to be extinct.*

*“There is a certain amount of shock because our scientists will sometimes see something that doesn’t fit anything they know,” said Dekila Chungyalpa, Director of the Fund’s Mekong Program. “They run through a catalogue of wildlife in their brain, asking themselves, ‘Have I seen this?'”*

*Perhaps a more startling discovery than the rat was a bright green pit viper scientists spotted slithering through the rafters of a restaurant in Khao Yai National Park in Thailand.*

*The Fund dubbed the Mekong a “biological treasure trove.” The organization’s report “First Contact in the Greater Mekong” says 519 plants, 279 fish, 88 frogs, 88 spiders, 46 lizards, 22 snakes, 15 mammals, four birds, four turtles, two salamanders and a toad were found.*

*Scientists are still trying to determine if they have uncovered thousands of new invertebrate species.*

*Scientists are discovering new species at a rate of two per week, said Chungyalpa, who said the reason for publishing the report now was twofold.  
  
“We realized that we should highlight these discoveries in part because of the legacy of war and conflict in the region,” she said. “There’s an urgency with the threat of development in the Mekong countries.”*

*A horned bovine found in 1991 living in the evergreen forests of the Annamite Mountains of Laos and Vietnam has not been found in recent years, she said.*

*Timber development and mining industries are encroaching. There are 150 large hydropower dams that have been constructed along the Mekong river, and another 150 are slated to be built, according to the Fund. Dams that can trap and kill fish are at different stages of planning in the Greater Mekong.*

*High variation in geography and climate zones that enabled species to flourish are now jeopardized by climate change, said Chungyalpa.*

*War is always a threat in countries touched by the Mekong River, particularly Burma. Also known as Myanmar, the largest country by geographical area in mainland Southeast Asia has been ravaged over the years by conflict, political instability and natural disaster.*

*This summer, for example, the United Nations reported that as many as 100,000 people were killed by a cyclone that hit Myanmar. The country’s ruling military junta blocked the outside world for weeks before allowing aid to flow into the region.*

*There are cultural obstacles to protecting rare species, too. Many restaurants serve them as food. Restaurants often have rickety bamboo floors that one can look through to see cages filled with exotic animals, Chungyalpa says. The more exotic the animal, the more status it often bestows on the person who consumes it.*

*“Reports [like the WWF’s] are important because these regions can be educated,” said Maureen Aung-Thwin, the director of The Burma Project, which is funded by the George Soros Foundation and supports local Indonesian organizations working toward an open society.   
“People are taking climate change more seriously and even the ruling junta have a forestry NGO. There are glimpses of hope,” said Aung-Thwin. “But it’s also a situation where someone could step forward and say ‘We don’t need this’ and cut it all down.”*

*WWF said it is working with governments and industry to plan the conservation of more than 231,000 square miles of forest and freshwater habitats that cross borders with all countries in the Greater Mekong.*

The preceding article was published on CNN.com.Â  To read the entire original article, [click here](http://www.cnn.com/2008/TECH/science/12/16/rat.mekong/index.html?iref=mpstoryview).

### Comments

**taylhis**oopsie! Thanks for drawing it to my attention - fixed!  
**jamiahsh**In your prologue, you stated the years being between 1997 and 2997... that's a long time ;)

# My New Pet

I’ve wanted a new pet for awhile, mostly since my cat passed away almost a year ago now.Â  What I want most is another cat – I love cats, and it would be the perfect type of pet for our household.Â  But unfortunately, I’m allergic to cats.Â  When I had my cat, it was a constant struggle to decide if I should pet her or not.Â  I always wanted to of course, but then I would itch for hours, my eyes would water, and sometimes I’d get hives.Â Â And, my allergy symptoms wereÂ worseÂ during my 4 pregnancies.Â  I just don’t want to go through that again – so no cat for us.Â  We have a Jack Russell Terrier mix, so any type of animal she’ll want to chase and bark at is out also – which means no rats, ferrets, small birds, etc.Â  So that leaves me with reptiles or bugs, I guess.Â  And the only reptile I’m interested in owningÂ is a tortoise.Â  Those can be kind of costly and I’m not entirely sure that my Jerk Russell Terrier mix won’t want to hunt it, so I’m going to hold off on the tortoise for a little bit.Â  Also complicating the situation is that I really don’t have any extra time to spend with a pet, so that limits my options even further.Â  So lately I’ve been in limbo, trying to decide what to get.Â  But the other day, a new pet sort of fell into my lap.

It’s a ladybug I found in the house – normally I’d let any bugs go outside that I find in the house, but it’s way too cold out for a ladybug, and IÂ don’tÂ want him toÂ suffer while he froze to death.Â  So I looked up what ladybugs eat, and I found out that their favorite food is aphids, which are an even smaller group of insects.Â  Knowing I couldn’t get any of those easily, I put a drop of honey in a little container with the ladybug.Â  He went over to it and started eating it!Â  So I put a little drop of water in there too, and he must have smelled that or something, because he left the honey and went over to the water – it was really interesting to watch.Â  He’sÂ survived in captivityÂ about a week now, and I have to say I’m getting a little attached to him as a pet.Â  It started out as just a fun little project,Â and I didn’t expect it to live more than a few days.Â  But he did, and I’ve named him Francis (like the ladybug from A Bug’s Life), and he is my secret pet – the kids don’t know about him.Â  If they did, he’d be dead already because my 4-year-oldÂ adores bugs and often smothers them with love – literally.Â  I think today I’ll go out and get Francis some grass for his container, because earlier when I fed him, he REFUSED to go back into his container!Â  I’m not kidding; he was sticking to my finger and just doing everything possible to not get locked back in there.Â  Finally, I put him on a Q-tip and cut it to fit in the container and locked him in.Â  I feel a little badly that I’ve kidnapped this ladybug, but I think I’m his only chance at life.Â  Outside, he’d freeze, and if I let him go into my house, I don’t think he’d be able to find food and water and he’d either die or go into hibernation until a kid or a dog got him.

So anyway, I guess I have my new pet.Â  I still don’t expect him to last very long, but for now it’s fun just taking care of an animal, especially since he’s my little secret.Â  If he’s still around in another week or so, I’ll take his picture and post it.Â  Say hi to Francis!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Hi Francis :)  
**derek**A fill-in pet then until Santa hopefully gets you something special for that Dec. 25 holiday. :)

# Indiana Jones-ette

Remember thatÂ CNN.com articleÂ I wrote about the unusual names?Â  The article spotlighted a little girl namedÂ Indiana Elizabeth Jones and her brother, Dow.Â  Well, this post is not going to be about them.

Rather, it’s an excuse to post a cute photo of my 4-year-old daughter wearing an Indiana Jones-like costume.Â  For the real buffs out there, I know it’s not exact, but it’s still cute…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/december-kids-009.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Okay, I'll say it then- **Ohio** Jones... :mrgreen:  
**justj**Ok, just too cute. :)  
**jamiahsh**I've seen that outfit before if I'm not mistaken. I believe we found it in the forbidden room your daughters convinced me that it was ok to go into... oops. I think they had me try on the hat, but the jacket was a bit small.

# Now THAT Is One HORRIBLE Stage Manager

Wow – what happened here?Â  Due to a props department mix-up, an actor was doing a suicide scene with a real knife instead of a fake one.Â  Luckily, he wasn’t killed, but this qualifies as a bit more than a simple mistake, wouldn’t you say?Â  Perhaps I’ll think twice about offering to stage manage anything in the future – apparently there’s a lot at stake.Â  And for you actors who read this, how much trust do you have in your props people?Â  And how much will you trust them after reading something like this?

*From Time.com  
by Adam Smith  
Try this for an Agatha Christie plotline: performing on stage inside Vienna’s Burgtheater, one of Europe’s oldest and grandest, an actor takes a knife to his throat in his character’s desperate attempt at suicide. As audience applause fills the opulent theater, blood pours from the actor’s neck. But something’s not right. Buckling and staggering his way off stage, the actor collapses to the floor. That’s because the knife, and the harm that it’s done, are both tragically real.   
Unfortunately for Daniel Hoevels, a 30-year-old actor from Hamburg, those pages from a murder-mystery came to life last Saturday night during a performance at the Burgtheater of Mary Stuart, Friedrich Schiller’s play about the wretched life of Mary Queen of Scots. Rushed to the nearby Lorenz Bohler hospital having sliced through skin and fat tissue but thankfully not his main artery, Hoevels was fortunate to survive. “Just a little deeper,” said Wolfgang Lenz, a doctor who treated him, “and he would have been drowning in his own blood.”  
The police investigation into the calamity points more to a foul-up than foul play. Viennese police say they’re not probing the possibility of attempted murder; press reports had speculated a “jealous rival” could have had a hand in Hoevels’ injury. Instead, investigators are focusing on possible negligence within the props department of Hoevels’ Thalia Theater ensemble. According to local media, the company picked up the knife in Vienna to replace one brought from their Hamburg base that was then found to be defective. One possibility: that props staff forgot to blunt that new blade, which, police say, still had the price tag on it.  
Hoevels himself seems to have put the snafu behind him. “I am now absolutely fine again,” he told local media, “but I will always for the rest of my working life have a strange feeling about this scene.” After reprising the role Sunday, albeit with neck bandaged, Hoevels headed back to Hamburg Monday in preparation for his role in Goethe’s The Sorrows of Young Werther. In that play, the long-suffering title character winds up shooting himself in the head. Someone might want to double-check the gun.*

### Comments

**derek**What a mistake to make. At least this one didn't have a tragic ending. Speaking of tragic, I hope those roles he takes don't ever extend to his own life. How depressing to go from a role involving suicide by knife to one with suicide by gun.  
**justj**taylhis I'm always up front. If it is my prop, as an actor, I want to make sure it is there. I only take care of me, and then sometimes I mess up. Only me to blame.  
**taylhis**I see your point, I would probably do the same, but looking at it from a stage manager's POV, it's beyond annoying when the actors do that. My first stage managing job had me dealing with that, and the actor checked EVERY one of the numerous props, not just his own. No, I'm not mentioning any names - at least not on the blog. But it gave me a complex as a stage manager - I thought I wasn't needed, so when our babysitter cancelled on us for the Mother's Day performance of that show, I thought, no problem, I'm not needed anyway since (the actor) will do my jobs. WRONG! He missed something, but technically it was my fault because my job was not done, and everyone suffered. If checking your own props is something you must do as an actor, I suggest that you be up front about it with your stage manager. Just lay it out for them from the beginning, and instead of feeling useless, they might appreciate the help.  
**justj**Call me superstitious, but I've almost always checked my own props. Guns, knives, drinks, and sometimes even food. Drinking some stale tea for whiskey, or flat cola for coffee just doesn't do it for me. If I'm called to drink coffee onstage, I'll have a pot backstage. Whiskey, I make my own tea for each performance. Clean glasses, yep, I check them too. I don't think it has anything to do with the stage manager, that is just me.  
**jamiahsh**Indeed... better check that gun. I assume none of the food from The Nerd gave any ill effects... apart from maybe a pseudo-deviled egg. This sure gives new meaning to the term "Verisimilitude."  
**adam smith | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Now THAT Is One HORRIBLE Stage Manager [...]

# These Are A Few Of My Favorite Things...

animals.Â  Animals are my favorite things.Â  If I’m bored – yeah, right, with 4 kids, when does that happen?Â  Ok, if I were ever bored, my activity of choice would be to visit a zoo, wildlife park, pet store, or anyplace I could see animals.Â  Without leaving the house, I can also research animals on the internet.Â  One of my favorite animal sites is the [University of Michigan’s Animal Diversity Web](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/index.html).Â  It’s amazing how much they’ve changed the taxonomy (classification of animals) from when I first started doing research on the subject not more than 10 years ago, but it’s true – this field is one that’s ever-changing.

Every now and then, I think I’ll choose an animal to share on my blog.Â  Today’s animal is the pangolin.Â  What is a pangolin, you ask?Â  Well, it’s a mammal, and it’s not a marsupial, a group which contains some ofÂ the lesser known species.Â  See, in the classification of mammals, you begin by separating them into placental mammals (live birth)Â and marsupials (young live in the mother’s pouch – all but oneÂ type live in Australia).Â  Of course, there is also a third category – egg-laying mammals, but we won’t go there because I don’t want to lose people’s interest by getting too complicated.

So anyway, the pangolin is a placental mammal, yet it’s scaly.Â  The scales are actually made of a hair-like material, thereby preserving its status as mammal.Â  Check this out – does this thing look prehistoric or what?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/pangolin.jpg)

ButÂ they’reÂ not prehistoric; they still exist todayÂ – I wonder how come I’ve never seen one at a zoo?Â  I guess it’s because some animals do better in captivity than others, and I applaud the zoo community for recognizing this.

Interesting tidbits about pangolins, as stated on the Animal Diversity Web:

*Pangolins are a small group (seven living species placed in one genus and one family, Manidae) of mammals that feed mostly on ants. They are found in the tropical regions of Africa and Asia.Â  Pangolins are conspicuous and remarkable because their backs are covered with large, overlapping scales made up of agglutinated hairs. But they are strange in other ways as well. Their tongue is extraordinarily long and muscular, arising from the pelvis and the last pair of ribs deep in the animal’s chest. As a result, the tongue and associated muscles are longer than the animal’s head and body, allowing the tongue to be extruded to an astonishing degree. Pangolins lack teeth. Instead, the the pyloric part of their stomach is thickened and muscular, with odd keratinous spines projecting into its interior. It usually contains pebbles and seems to be used for “chewing” in much the same way as a bird’s gizzard. Pangolins have the ability to close their ears and nostrils as well as eyes, presumably to keep ants out.*

In short, pangolins are fascinating animals thatÂ are closer to you and me on the taxonomy tree than most people would guess – they are mammals, after all.Â  Yet they are a mammal that most people have not heard of, and surprisingly, there are more than a few mammalian species that have this in common – I will try to share little known facts about little known mammals in my blog.

And oh yeah, since there was a complaint in the comments of another tangents.org blog about this – the song I quoted in my title is “My Favorite Things” from The Sound of Music.

### Comments

**A Living Breathing Hoax | My Food Chain Gang**[...] in my Interesting Animals series.Â  To read chapter one about a scaly mammal called the pangolin, click here. For chapter two, I chose to focus on the duck-billed platypus; an animal who is so strange [...]  
**derek**+1 to the never heard of before category. But then animals have never really been my thing. A scaly mammal really is strange, no matter what the scales are made of.  
**justj**I almost always read the comments on things I post to. You may reply to me. Ego strokes are always good. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Raindrops on roses, pangolins on kittens... fascinating creatures that you have introduced us to.  
**taylhis**oops. Justj - hope you read the comments after you post one because you didn't learn something new from the post. Apparently, pangolins ARE endangered! Sorry for the misinfo!  
**justj**Always liked those animals. I did think they were endangered, since they were never at a zoo. Learned something new.

# Frumpy or Stylish?

What follows is an insignificant blog post about nothing of particular importance – pure fluff!Â  And this post is for Office fans only!Â  Have you noticed that Pam Beesly has changed her look?Â Â When you watch episodes ofÂ The Office from Seasons 1, 2 or even 3, you’ll notice that Pam used to be frumpy.Â Â Her hair was blah, and she wore the ugliest shirts, sometimes two at a time!Â  But nowadays, she has a nice chic hairdo andÂ dresses less like a 60-year-old libarian and more like a young woman in her late 20’s or early 30’s.Â  At first, I was wondering if the popularity of the show and the character was theÂ inspiration for the change in her character – you know, make her more appealling to her adoringÂ fans.Â  But The Office is my favorite show, and I don’t like to think that it’s sinking to that level – I prefer to attribute the change in Pam to her finally being happily in true love.Â Â In the first fewÂ seasons, she wasn’t yet in love with Jim (that she was consciously aware of, anyway), and she wasÂ unhappy being a receptionist because that’s a far cry from her callingÂ in life – art andÂ illustration.Â  Now she is truly happy, she is in love, and her looks-update reflects this.Â Â Ironic that as the characterÂ Pam Beesly finds love,Â the actress who plays her, Jenna Fischer, Â is in the process of a real-life divorce from her husband, JamesÂ Gunn.Â  I don’t know, what do you think?

All I know for sure is that I amÂ happy to see Pam’s oldÂ wardrobe go by the wayside.Â  It was truly hideous and sometimes evenÂ difficult to watch –Â as you can see by watching some of the older episodes!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yes... now that you elaborated on it, she has changed her look. I just rewatched the first Christmas episode... the Secret Santa game and Michael buying booze with his bonus. I like the new look, too. Intentional to show the transition?

# How To Pack For A Family Of 6

We’ve travelled (road trips only!) as a family a bunch, and now that there are 6 of us, the job of packing suitcases for everybody hasÂ become more difficultÂ than ever!Â  None of the kids are old enough to be trusted to do the task themselves (sucessfully, anyway), so it falls to mom or dad to do it.Â  With all the experience, I’ve discovered some things that work better than others to help the family stay organized throughout the trip.Â  I’ve decided to share my pointers for big-family-road-trip packingÂ in case any other parents reading this could use some tips that’ll make this daunting chore seem easier.

I find it works best to pack one of two ways – either 1 suitcase for everyone or 1 suitcase per person.Â  To figure out which of theseÂ would be best for your situation, think about how many daysÂ your trip will last (including travel time) and how many times you will be loading and unloading the luggage from the car.Â  Depending upon the ages of your kids, it might be easier to have a duffel bag per kid of which they are to keep track.

First, I start with a checklist in a grid format.Â  Down the side you list each person’s name, and across the top, you list types of clothing – socks, pants, shirts, underwear, etc.Â  You determine how many of each you will need for each person, and when it’s packed

1.

### Comments

# Technology And Santa

Due to the many technological advances that have been made in the worldÂ since we were kids, I think today’s youth have somewhat of a different perspective on Santa.

First of all, on Christmas Eve, they can trackÂ Santa’s travelsÂ on the internet.Â  When we were young, it was “get to bed, and if you’re not sleeping by the time Santa gets here, he’s going toÂ skip our house!”Â  And in 2008, you can forget about needing the zip code for the North Pole so that your kids can use the post office to snail-mail their lists to Santa.Â  In today’s world, kids communicate with Santa via email.Â  Also, the lines “He sees you when you’re sleeping; he knows when you’re awake… etc.”Â  have a whole new meaning with the modern-day concept ofÂ Big Brother.Â  I reminded my 4-year-old daughter the other day that Santa is always watching her and can see when she’sÂ not behaving.Â Â Her reply is what led me to wonder about the perception kids in 2008 have of Santa:Â  “Mom, do you have blue lights on the Christmas tree cuz they have cameras and Santa can see.”Â  So somewhere my daughter had gotten the idea that Santa uses cameras to watch kids, and the cameras are inside theÂ blue Christmas lights!Â  I wonder, if I invest in some blue Christmas lights, will that make her behavior impove any?

### Comments

**justj**I have a Santa cam in my eyeglass frame!!!  
**tracking santa on christmas eve | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Technology And Santa [...]  
**jamiahsh**I remember the radio's annual tracking of Santa's ride that ended at midnight on Christmas morning. Christmas Eve Mass was at 11... so never got to hear his arrival, but we would always crawl up to bed and quietly turn on the radio to listen. A few years, the big guy had already arrived before we got back from church. I've warned the young ones a few times this year... none of their responses were as creative as your four year old's.

# Speaking Of Blagojevich...

In my previous post about Governor Rod Blagojevich of Illinois, I forgot to include a [funny clip from the Daily Show](http://www.thedailyshow.com/video/index.jhtml?videoId=115852&title=pill-of-rights" \t "_blank) featuring Mr. Blag….Â  Mr. Blavo, um Governor Smith.

And if you have trouble pronouncing his Serbian surname, here is a pronounciation guide from wikipedia.com:  
Milorad “Rod” R. Blagojevich (pronounced /blÉ™ËˆÉ¡É”ÉªÉ™vÉªtÊƒ, born December 10, 1956) is an American politician from the state of Illinois.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Front page of at least 2 papers... our local hometown rag and one from another larger city paper... oddly not the one closest to Illinois  
**jamiahsh**Gov. Blagowhosits?  
**jamiahsh**RON STEVENS!!! OOPS... wrong spelling. Hilarious.

# A Stricken State

I took the tv away from the kids todayÂ (not that they watch it that much anyway) so I can watch the events in Illinois unfold as their governor Rod Blagojevich is arrested on corruption charges.Â  No surprise there, just an interesting story being followed by a former resident of that state.Â  In fact, we left Illinois for good in 2003Â just months after Blago assumed office, which was mostly a coincidence, but I would say that his being elected to the governor’s officeÂ did addÂ to the feeling we had that the state was falling apart.Â  It was that obvious from the beginning that Blago was no good.Â  Over the years, I’ve been following news stories in Illinois by reading dailyherald.com, an online version of a suburban newspaper.Â  Every time there was anything in the paper related to Blago, there was no shortage of comments from readers about the purported corruption of the governor.Â  In October of this year, the governor’s approval rating was a measly 4%.Â  And today, the you-know-what has hit the fan.Â  The governor of Illinois is in prison – the secondÂ gov in a row from that stateÂ to serve time, as a matter of fact.Â  As we speak, err,Â as you read this,Â former IllinoisÂ Governor George Ryan is probably watching the Blagojevich coverage from the federal prison he currently calls home. Â I’m just curious if it makes anyoneÂ nervous that our new President-elect is from a state that can’t seem to keep its leaders out of the slammer.Â  Hopefully, Barack Obama can set a new standard for politicians from Illinois – that would be refreshing.

But in the meantime, watching Blago’s saga unfold is compelling – the reporters on CNN are saying that the breadth of the corruption isÂ unimaginable.Â  They’re saying Blago engaged in a ‘crime spree’ while in office and the details areÂ troubling – including allegations of $8 million inÂ fundingÂ beingÂ pulled from a children’s hospital becauseÂ its CEOÂ did not contribute $50,000 to Blago’s campaign.Â  And I’m not writing this to pick on Blago or make any sort of political statement – it’s not that I’m the type of person who smiles at the misfortune of others either, but hey, he did this to himself.Â  I just feel badly for the residents of Illinois who trusted this man to be their leader and their representative, and now they’re forced to watch with the rest of the world while he is exposed for what he truly is, giving their state aÂ horrible reputation in the process.Â  The main victims in this situation are the Blagojevich family, and it’s sad thatÂ Rod’s two young children will probably have to grow up now without a father in their lives.Â  And unfortunately, Blagojevich is just the latest in a long line of corrupt officials fromÂ the Land of Lincoln.Â  Since the early 1970’s, 3 former Illinois governors have served time in prison, not including Blagojevich who is a current governor.Â  Here’s to hoping the politicians of Illinois can get their act together amidstÂ their growingÂ tradition ofÂ disreputableness.

### Comments

**taylhis**That's a good question jamiahsh - I don't know who will be Blagojevich's successor; I haven't seen it reported anywhere. Will they have a special election like they did in CA when Schwarzenegger took over for Davis? And justj - I always thought that's just how politics are. And Blago was born and raised on the northwest side of Chicago.  
**jamiahsh**So... what corrupt leader do the Illioni (is that the proper term) have to look foward to?  
**justj**I always thought Chicago politics was a bit corrupt. Is Blagojevich from Chicago, or is it just politics in general?

# Number Quest

One thing I was excited about doing in my blog was writing board game reviews.Â  Since my husband and IÂ have a game collecting hobby and thereby an extensiveÂ amassment of games, we can find a new game to play on any given night.Â  But the kids keepÂ us really busy, and so I forgot all about reviewing board games on my blog, not to mention that it’s difficult for us to find the time to play them.Â  But last night amidst the chaos of our house, we found time to haul out a new game and learn it.Â  It was such a fun game that it inspired me to write a review – anyone heard of the gameÂ *Number Quest* (or sometimes known as *Nubble*) by DK Publishing Inc.?

The game board consists ofÂ aÂ color-coded grid with numbers on it.Â  The game is simple to learn, yet complex to play.Â Â *Number Quest*Â combines chance (dice), stratagy, and traditional board game elements such asÂ paper money and tokens.Â  To begin, a player rolls 4 dice which each display the numbers 1-6.Â  The player then uses these numbers to create any whole number 1-100 with any combination of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.Â  The player then placesÂ their color chip on the corresponding number on the game board.Â  The color of the number’s space on the board determines how much money a player receives for creating that number.Â  There are also Nubble Bonuses and Double-Nubbles, but if you want to find out what those are you should play the game.Â  Even with the Nubbles (double-nubbles involve prime numbers – but don’t worry, you don’t have to know anything about prime numbers), it’s a very easy game to learn.Â  Also, you don’t have to be great at math since there are ‘cheat charts’ provided.

*Number Quest* is like a two-player strategy game combined with favorite elements of other types of board games,Â except the best thing is, you can have up toÂ four players.

Here is a picture of the game board; evidently the game used to be called Nubble.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/number-quest.jpg)

And another fun thing about Number Quest isÂ how the game ends: it is over when there are tokens on numbers connecting the 1 and the 100 all the way across the board, and the player with the most money at that time wins.Â  Also, there are LOTS of variations to the game; there’s a kid-friendly version, you can try playing with a timer, or you can even try ending the game based upon a previously agreed upon time limit or money amountÂ instead of when the tokens stretch across the board.Â  The game is educational for kids, and a great way for adults to exercise their brains, especially if you don’t use the cheat chart.Â  Upon first playing, I would give it a 9/10, but keep in mind that we didn’t even get in a full game due to time constraints.Â  But it seems like a really fun game and I’m looking forward to trying it with 4 players!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Kid friendly version, YEAH! BUT DOES SOUND LIKE FUN.  
**justj**Sounds like a fun game.  
**The Economy » Blog Archive » Ibm Resource Center Â» Blog Archive Â» Broadbad, Green Tech Get Love …**[...] Number Quest | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# Not Even A Snow Day!

Our first ground-sticking, hill-sledding, angel-making, sidewalk-shoveling snow of the year is here.Â  And why not – it’s already December 6th!

I slept in this morning, which is more than I can say for my poor husband.Â  Ironically, last night, he was all gung-ho about staying up late.Â  He’s like, “And we can stay up late because the kids have been sleeping in lately – nothing to do tomorrow until later…”Â  And he was right – the two littlest ones *have* been sleeping in lately –Â until today, of course.Â  We stayed up really late last night thinking the kids would sleep in, but WRONG!Â  They woke my poor husband at 7:20 in the morning today!Â  Myself, I didn’t stir until 9:30ish, and I was lolling out of bed when WHOOSH!Â  The door to our walk-in bedroom closet flies open, and it is **snowing** into the closet!Â  Turns out, the closet window was not locked, and so the winter storm had pushed it open, which pushed open the door to the bedroom, and all of a sudden, we had a winter storm *in our house*!Â  ‘I guess we’re getting some snow,”Â  I thought as I pushed the window shut, closed the door, noticed the baby was still sleepingÂ and climbed back into bed.Â  A few minutes later, and WHOOSH!Â  It happened again.Â  “Wow, we’re *really* getting snow!”Â  I said to myself as I noticed the ground was already blanketed when I shut the window the second time.Â  This time, I manipulated the frozen lock until it was shut so we wouldn’t have to experience the WHOOSH effect again.Â  Well, that’s a heck of a way to wake up, especially twice.Â  Besides, it was late enough and time for me to contribute to the daily household stuff.Â  Once downstairs, I checked weather.com, which informed me that we were forecasted to get 1-2 inches of snow during the day, and another possible inch at night.Â  Immediately we began making plans to go sledding, especially since our 4-year-old had been waiting for this all year.Â  Well, it took us all over an *hour* to get ready.Â  And that didn’t even include lunch.Â  We dressed everyone in 2-3 layers, and then we realized we should probably have lunch before we tackled the sled hill.Â  Seeing how difficult it was to unravel everyone from their winter clothes enough to find mouths to insert the lunch, we munched on a few pieces of lunchmeat before heading to the sled hill.

Well, the baby wasn’t happy on the sled hill – and before I get all kinds of nasty comments, YES he was bundled intensely!Â  2-3 layers, then a snowsuit, then a fleece bag-like thingie, then a few blankets, and my husband and I built a little tent-like thing around his carrier…Â  But he IS a July baby, and I have a theory that people are best suited for the season in which they were born, so…Â  no sledding for the little guy.Â  Or for mom, for that matter.Â  I got down the hill once though, and it was lots of fun – much easier climbing the hill this time than last year being a few months pregnant!Â  Although I was disappointed about only getting to go down the hill once, after that I got to sit in the warm car and catch up on my newspaper reading in peace and quiet after the baby fell asleep, so that was nice.Â  And after sledding, since we had kind of cheated on lunch, we treated the kids to Pizza Hut because for some reason, they like to eat there.Â  And every time we’re set to go, I realize I don’t like it, but I think I’ll be able to find something – but I was wrong again!Â  I just don’t like Pizza Hut!Â  Well, their iced tea is pretty good…Â  but their buffet sucks, and so now I’m headed home with 4 exhausted kids and I’m all hepped up on iced tea…Â  But the rest of the afternoon went surprisingly smoothly and we even let our daughter have a friend over – providing her mom drove her here so we wouldn’t have to venture out in the snow again.Â  When the friend’s mom got here, we were chatting about the snow, and we were all dumbfounded about how much we were supposed to get.Â  Usually, the weather channel will over-forecast us.Â  If they say 1-3 inches, we usually get a ground dusting.Â  Today, they say 1-3 inches, and for most of us, it snowed from the time we woke until well after the sun set.Â  WeÂ waited until it was finished to go out and shovel, and by then it was dark and we had gotten a few inches.Â  Now I see on the news that we could get a few more inches…

But anyway,Â lots of fun today, and all without calling an officialÂ Snow Day!Â Â Can’t all major snow falls be on Saturdays?!?

### Comments

**Not Even A Snow Day! | catveranda.com**[...] View post [...]  
**jamiahsh**No... I don't think they all can be on Saturday. I remember wishing and hoping for snow days and now... not so much. Wish we had a decent snow hill around here. Pizza Hut IS no good. BLAH! At least you could find a shovel and it is STILL snowing. Don't hold your breath, but keep your fingers crossed for Monday ;)

# 4 Christmases

I shouldn’t have liked it.Â  It’s an 82 minute comedy farce co-starring Reese Witherspoon – what’s to like?Â  But I actually enjoyed the movie [4 Christmases](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0369436/) more than I thought.

So why did I see if I thought I’d hate it?Â  For one, it was the only thing playing at the matinee price and for two, I had a sort of curiosity about the acting abilities of two country music super-stars:Â  Dwight Yoakam and Tim McGraw.Â  Actually, having seenÂ DwightÂ YoakamÂ in [Sling Blade](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117666/), I’m well aware of hisÂ acting skills.Â Â It was such a great performance in Sling Blade thatÂ I thought it was Oscar-worthy.Â  He’s not given much to work with in this movie however, and his role as one of those [Leap of Faith](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104695/)-type preachers is not very well developed.Â  I don’t think it’s any fault of Yoakam, though, but moreÂ a testament to the lazy script.

Vince Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon star as a freewheeling couple who don’t see the need to marry since they’re already happy, and they don’t want kids.Â  The first scenes of the movie really emphasize how perfect this couple’s lives are, and it’s almost sickeningly sweet how well they get along.Â  Enter their extended families, and they become miserable people.Â  It begins when their flight to Fiji is cancelled on Christmas and they are featured on the news.Â  The couple (their names were not memorable) is now busted in their annual lieÂ about travelling to some exotic location for charity work.Â  They fib about this every year to their families so they can avoid seeing all 4 families (each set of parents is divorcd) for Christmas.Â  So now that they can’t go toÂ Fiji,Â they have to visit 4 sets of crazy relatives on one day and yada, yada, anticipated baby jokes and predictable chaos ensues, you get the picture.

For some reason, a lot of Hollywood stars agreed to be in this movie.Â  And just as I expected, Vince Vaughn was the same in this movie as the characters he always plays.Â  He can be funny, but he’s not very versatile.Â  I was surprised that Reese Witherspoon did not get under my skin because for some reason, she annoys the heck out of me, and it’s distracting when watching her in movies.Â  As far as the country music super-stars are concerned, I consider this movie a waste of Dwight Yoakam’s acting talent, and Tim McGraw was barely in the movie at all.Â  I read somewhere that he beefed up for the role, andÂ he *was* hard to recognize,Â although I don’t really know why he bothered gaining all the weight for a part that hardly has himÂ on camera and with barely any lines.Â  Other big name actors making cameos were Mary Steenburgen, Jon Voight, Robert Duvall, and Sissy Spacek – maybe it’s just me, but even though she’s almostÂ 60, I still look at her and see [Carrie](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0074285/) the fire-starting teen from the famous Stephen King horror movie of the ’70’s.

Overall, there was only one scene where I couldn’t even watch because of its ludicrousness, so instead IÂ turned to my husband andÂ whispered, “This is unbelievably dumb”.Â  Other than that, I was entertained, and mostly because it was a holiday movie, it was fun to sit, watch, and eat popcorn.Â  I wonder how [Christmas With The Kranks](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0388419/) will compare.Â  I’ve heard that one is just awful, yet I want to see it since I read the John Grisham novel upon which it was based.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**You forgot to mention Kevin's (from the Office) blink and you'll miss him cameo at the beginning in the bar. And NO WAY, the ticket agent at the airport was none other than Peter Billingsley, Ralphie from A Christmas Story... how cool.  
**Time In A Bottle, Time On My Hands, Time After Time | Morat's Blog**[...] and I went to seeÂ Four Christmases which was kind of cute.Â  You can read taylhis’ indepth review.Â  Some laughs, not the best movie ever made but it was worth seeing with a friend.Â  We then went [...]  
**Big Family Christmas » Blog Archive » 4 Christmases | My Food Chain Gang**[...] unknown wrote an interesting post today on4 Christmases | My Food Chain GangHere’s a quick excerptI wonder how Christmas With The Kranks will compare. Iâ€™ve heard that one is just awful, yet I want to see it since I read the John Grisham novel upon which it was based. Share and Enjoy: These icons link to social bookmarking sites … [...]  
**jamiahsh**My sister says she liked Christmas with the Kranks, but I've never had the pleasure.

# A-Z's of Me

I received another ‘getting to know you’ email forward, and this one promises to be ‘different’ so here goes…

*Here’s a new one & it’s much better than previous versions. Cut and paste and fill in the answers. Then, send to all your friends!*\*A – Age:Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â  30  
\*B – Bed size:Â Â Â Â Â  Queen  
\*C – Chore you hate:Â Â  drying dishes  
\* DÂ Â Â  Dessert you love:Â Â  depends upon my mood  
\*E – Essential start of your day item:Â Â Â  yogurt  
\*F – Favorite actor(s):Â Â Â Â Â  Steve Carell, Tom Hanks  
\*G – Gold or Silver:Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â  Gold  
\*H – Height:Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â  5 ft. 8 in.  
\*I – Instruments you play:Â Â  little bit of piano, various percussion instruments  
\*J – Job title:Â Â Â  Homemaker  
\*K – Kid(s):Â Â  3 girls and a boy  
\*L – Living arrangements:Â  Husband, 4 kids, 2 dogs, and a parrot  
\*M – Mom’s name:Â Â Â  Phyllis  
\*N – Nicknames:Â Â Â Â  Mom, Lis  
\*O – Overnight hospital stay other than birth:Â  other than MY birth or any birth?Â  Cuz I’ve had 4 kids…Â  Also some ear infections when I was a baby.  
\*P – Phobia or fear:Â Â  frogs  
\*Q – Favorite quote: Until I can think of a better one – “Abraham Lincoln said, if you are a racist, I will attack you with the North.”Â  – Michael ScottÂ   
\*R – Right or left handed:Â Â Â  Right  
\*S – Siblings:Â Â Â  1 older sister  
\*T-Â  Talent:Â  multi-tasking  
\*U – Unique skill:Â Â Â  I can hang a spoon off the end of my nose  
\*V – Vegetable you hate:Â Â Â  peas  
Â \*WÂ Â  Worst habit:Â Â  procrastination  
\*X – X ray:Â Â Â  dental  
\*Y – Yummy food you make:Â  I just made a California blend soup yesterday out of leftovers that everyone loved  
\*Z – Zodiac Sign:Â Â Â Â Â  Cancer, the crab!

### Comments

**derek**Hmm. A possible idea for a school activity, though some would have to be changed to make it more kid-friendly.  
**jamiahsh**i don't that the zodialogical (spell check is flawed... "zodialogical" is a correctly spelled word) sign of crab is very descriptive to either of us.

# Review Debut!

As you may know, we are heavily involved in our local community theater.Â  For each play in which we were involved, part of the fun was to see what the newspaperÂ critic would publish about it.Â  Well, the newspaper reviewer has been canned, and so my husband was asked to take over.Â  Not wanting the responsibility of the fallout that one might incur when writing about specific individuals in a small town (not to mention his extremely busy work schedule), he agreed to only do the review about the most recent play because he and I produced it.Â  The following is my husband’s review debut that was (supposed to be) published in the newspaper, and I’ll go ahead and give myself a secondary byline for editing.Â  I must note however, that those of you who have seen this particular edition of the paper might notice more than a few differences between the two reviews.Â  And my husband did not write the paragraph about his credentials that appears at the end of the print version – the newspaper wrote it with info my husband supplied when asked how he was qualified to do the review.Â  It’s just funny that for the past few years, we’ve been assuming the quirks of our play reviews were the fault of the reviewer when in actuality, the newspaper changes much and does lots of editing!

***Don’t Hug Me* is a Winter Treat**

This past Wednesday evening my wife and I had the privilege of attending a preview of *Donâ€™t Hug Me*, a comedy by Paul Olson.

As we took our seats, my eyes were immediately drawn to the brilliantly detailed set.Â  Just a quick glance at the rustic wood paneling, Paul Bunyan style restroom sign, and moose head beer tap and I was instantly transported to a northern Minnesota bar.

Â The show opens with owners of â€œThe Bunyanâ€ bar Gunner Johnson (played to near perfection by Mike Roberts) and his wife and co-owner Clara (played byÂ stage veteran Mary Beth Snider) caught outside in the cold.Â  We see Clara fumbling through her purse for the keys as a freezing Gunner becomes increasingly impatient, declaring he will break down the door if they cannot get in soon.Â  This first little scene sets the stage for the show perfectly.Â  Minnesota gets cold in the winter, and Gunner is tired of it.Â  He wants to escape the frigid temperatures and move to Florida, but Claraâ€™s heart is in Minnesota .Â  This conflict is the basic central plot throughout *Donâ€™t Hug Me* and Roberts and Snider deliver it with a very nice chemistry together.Â  Their bantering back-and-forth comes across as genuine and is also very funny.

Â Ms. Snider does an excellent job portraying Clara with a wonderful balance between loving wife and strong-willed independent woman while Roberts is very effective in making the audience feel Gunnerâ€™s frustration, as well as the cold outside air.Â  In fact, even under the heat of the stage lights, the entire cast of *Donâ€™t Hug Me* does a great job of selling the cold wintery theme. Whenever one of *Don’t Hug Me*‘s colorful characters enters or exits the bar, you can almost feel the chilly Minnesota draft coming in from outside.

Â

Shelley Scantlen portrays Bernice Lundstrom, a waitress at â€œThe Bunyanâ€ and fiancÃ© of Kanute Gunderson, played by Keith Robinson.Â Â  Anyone who has seen Scantlen on stage before expects an outstanding performance, and she delivers.Â  Her accent is pure northern Minnesota, and she brings a naivety to Bernice that is delightful.Â  The sincerity in which she sings â€œI Wanna go to the Mall of Americaâ€ is downright hilarious.Â  Shelleyâ€™s voice is amazing as always, and her duets with Clara and Aarvid are a riot.Â  Opposite Scantlen, Robinson is very strong as Kanute, a man whose world unravels with astonishing speed, although heâ€™s quick to remind everyone â€œI played Nathan Detroit in Guys and Dollsâ€.Â  Robinson takes us through Kanuteâ€™s transformation from, egotistical jerk who has it all, to loveable loser who lost it all (*give or take five stores*) masterfully.Â  When he teamed up with Roberts (Gunner) for the duet â€œYou Dirty Piece ofâ€¦â€ it was difficult to hear parts of the song over the sound of my own laughter.Â

Enter Denver Henderson as traveling karaoke, err, â€œLife Style Systemâ€ salesman Aarvid Gisselsen and trouble starts to brew (pardon the pun).Â  Aarvid wants to sell the LSS-562, a state-of-the-art karaoke system, to the Johnsons and claims it will save their bar which has been suffering in the customer department.Â  From the moment he enters, Henderson takes command of the stage.Â  He does an exceptional job, playing the role of a modern day â€œMusic Manâ€ with charm and panache.Â Â  Henderson is able to make Aarvid very likeable without compromising the characterâ€™s door-to-door salesman savvy.Â  He also gives a tenderness to the character that makes you root for him to get the girl; the girl being Bernice.Â  The moment Aarvid first meets Bernice is very well staged.Â  One look at each other and the ice begins to melt and the sparks start to fly.Â  Like Roberts and Snider, Scantlen and Henderson have great chemistry, and their duet, the Sven Yorgensen classic â€œTake a Chanceâ€, is a hoot thanks in part to some hilarious choreography by co-director Crystal Bowers.

Â

Complete with witty one-liners like â€œOh, for spankinâ€™ the neighborâ€™s babyâ€, hilarious songs like â€œVictim of My Y Chromosomeâ€, and even a love triangle, *Donâ€™t Hug Me* is fun from start to finish.Â  My wife and I had a great time, and so will you. Bravo to directors Zach McAfee and Crystal Bowers along with the cast and crew of *Donâ€™t Hug Me* for putting together a real gem.Â  They take to you to Minnesota in the dead of winter and warm your heart.Â

*Donâ€™t Hug Me* is performing at the Little Theatre December 5 â€“ 14.Â  Tickets are $12 for adults with a discount for students and seniors.Â  Reservations are recommended.

### Comments

**derek**Congrats to C on being wanted as a reviewer even if he didn't take the job. Nice review, BTW.  
**jamiahsh**And to think that the signature line at the bottom past reviews was provided by the author solely. Excellent review. They will have a hard time finding someone to follow that up. ;)

# Baby Diary

The first year of life for children is full of constant development and changes – babies do new things every single day.Â  Realizing this, I decided to make a diary for each of my kids about their first year.Â  I would write in it from time to time to summarize all of their many changes, hoping some dayÂ they’ll enjoy reading them.Â  I was writing in my son’s Baby Diary the other day when it occurred to me that I should share it on my blog; especially since he’s been very crabby lately and it’s been really difficult for me to writeÂ blog posts with him in my arms.Â Â He was born on July 11, 2008.

Christopher’s Diary:

7/16/08 – went to dr. checkupÂ for yourÂ slight jaundice.Â  dr. said everything looked good and you weigh 7 lbs. 11 oz.  
7/17/08 – Actually, since it was the 12:01 showing, it’s actually the 18th…Â  but yourÂ  first movie in the theater was the Dark Knight.Â  You barely stirred and did drink a bottle during the movie.Â  You didn’t make a peep.  
7/19/08 – You attended your first stage play, the Music Man.Â  You were very good, except you pooped early in the show and were crabby and had to be taken out, but only for a few mins. so you could get your diaper changed  
7/20/08 – umbilical cord stump falls off – you are 9 days old.  
8/11/08 – You had your one month check-up today!Â  Everything looks good; you weigh 9 lbs. 14 oz. and are 22 in. long.Â  Your head circumference is 38.3 cm.Â  You didn’t cry at all while getting weighed and measured.  
8/13/08 – You smiled at Mommy!  
9/3/08 – In the past week, you’ve started “talking” back to me!Â  You smile really big when I smile at you and give you a big HI, and you smile at me every time you see me when you wake up.Â  When you were born, you could hardly see any lashes, but now your eyelashes are getting long and beautiful!Â  Your eyes are still a bright beautiful blue!  
9/5/08 – You laughed for the first time – long and loud.Â  And it was during Daddy’s funny play, The Nerd.Â  You laughed at the part where they’re playing the ‘I’m going on a trip’ game.Â  I don’t know if you heard the other people laughing or it was just a coincidence, but it was SO cute!  
9/12/08 – Today you had your 2 month dr appt.Â  You are 12 lbs 9 oz and 23.25 inches long.Â  Your head circumference is 44.5 cm.Â  You fussed a little as they were examining you, but you didn’t cry.Â  The dr said you have dry skin and we have to watch your ears to make sure formula isn’t going in there.  
9/22/08 – For about a week now, you seem to recognize your bottle.Â  You’ll get extra excited when you see it and open your mouth.Â  Your big sister Disney calls you “Beeber”.Â  Your big sister Sammie loves to hold you and is always asking questions about newborn babies.Â  She calls them “born” babies.  
10/16/08 – You are 3 months old, and you are starting to play with toys.Â  The other day I saw you “discovering” your hands, and ever since you’ve been grabbing things.Â  You know how to put your fist in your mouth.Â  You’re still spitting up a lot.Â  Not as much at a time as Disney did when she was a baby, but many times throughout the day.  
11/5/08 – You’ve been playing with toys for awhile now; you can grab things and you try to draw them into your mouth.Â  You love making g sounds – ga, goo, ggg.Â  You are still a very happy little guy and smile at everyone, making their days!  
12/4/08 – Time flies and you are almost 5 months old!Â  Disney used to call you Beeber, and the name stuck, so we call you that sometimes.Â  Disney now calls you Kipper.Â  You’ve had some crabby days, but most of the time, you’re still very smiley.Â  You’ve been experimenting with vocalizations and you LOVE to stand!Â  You do not bend at the waist!Â  We tried the tot wheels (walker)Â for the first time the other day, and you like it for short periods of time since you just hang in there – your feet don’t touch the floor yet.Â  Most of the time, you’re pretty good about sleeping at night, usually waking up only once.Â  But you also have bad nights where you won’t let Daddy sleep!Â  You like baths, and you’re really starting to like toys.Â  You play with the busybox on your crib, and try to eat EVERYTHING!Â  You might be teething because you try to knaw on everything.Â  You’ve been trying cereal and if your gums seem really sore, Mommy and Daddy have been giving you a treat – a dab of peanut butter on your pacifier.Â  You LOVE it!Â  You found your feet a few weeks ago, and you were trying to get your toes in your mouth.Â  We are excited to take you to see Santa pretty soon!

### Comments

**Blog-weary | Sub-sistence**[...] a story a little bit at a time.Â  Maybe write a choose-your-own-adventure like I brought up in Taylhis’s blog .Â  For now, just an idea.Â  We’ll see if it goes anywhere. Share and Enjoy: These icons [...]  
**derek**This could make for an interesting "choose your own adventure" book: "It is 12:15 AM. You are in a dark place but there is a light flickering. You hear something about a 'dark night.' Suddenly you feel scared. Do you: Start screaming? Turn to page 10 Poop your diapers and hope the big person holding you notices and takes you away? Turn to page 18 Show your fear on your face in hopes of being noticed and taken away? Turn to page 22 Fall asleep? Turn to page 93  
**taylhis**I wish. The diaries for the older two were done on a comp I had previously, so they're backed up to a disc somewhere. I won't find them until years from now when I do the major re-organizing I'm planning when I'm bored cuz they're all off at school.  
**justj**Very nice indeed. Are there going to be editions of the older children?  
**jamiahsh**Very cool. Not only will he love it later on; your readers will know the joy (mainly) of raising a sweet baby boy :)

# Here We Go Again!

Everyone who hasÂ been reading my blog since I started it in the beginning of 2008 knows my disdain for the 2-hour delay so frequently used at my daughter’s school.Â  Well, it’s that time of year again –Â Tuesday was our first 2-hour delay of the school year.Â  It’s not like I want the buses to go out on the slippery country roads and endanger kids and drivers; it’s just that the delay throws off the entire family for the whole day!Â  If there was some way to effectively implement the delay for those who would have trouble getting to the school in poor weather conditions, I think that would be a good solution.Â  However, it’s obvious that would lead to kids falling behind other kids and such, so it’s obvious why they don’t do that.Â  But 2-hour delays frustrate me nonetheless.

My 2-year-old gets frightened or crabby if we do things differently from our normal routine.Â  So when there’s a 2-hour-delay, she sleeps in until after 10 and wakes up disoriented, hungryÂ and crabby.Â  I guess I could wake her, but I figure if she’s sleeping in then she needs the sleep – and it will pay off for me later in the day because her daily pre-naptime intensity won’t be quite as demanding as usual.Â  So Tuesday’s delay was caused byÂ snow, which meant that my 4-year-old wanted to play in it all day (no preschool today).Â  But of course she wants someone to play with, and I’m not comfortable letting my 2 and 4-year-olds play outside by themselves of course.Â  And on Tuesday it was too cold to take the baby out with us…Â  So we wereÂ all stuck inside and my middle two have a rivalry going on, which means that they fight over everything and constantly; Tuesday being no exception because why would it be?Â  Hopefully the salt shortage there is for the roads this winter won’t lead to more school delays – our first one did not go smoothly!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Mom does a bus route. The morning "wasn't the greatest." Last Monday I believe we had some weather move in AFTER the buses were already out and when they got back in it was worse than yesterday. But I feel your pain when it comes to schedules. Mom prays that there are not delays Thursdays and Fridays since she works in the beauty shop those days and has to totally rearrange her schedule whenever that happens.  
**justj**Well since I was on the roads early in the day, I think the delay had more to do with the bit of ice under the snow. The back roads were nasty first thing in the morning. 34 into Bryan wasn't much better.

# Call Of Cthulu, The Post-Script

Since it’s something I had never before tried, I’ve been dabbling in role playing games for a few months.Â  We’ve met with a small group twice to play “Call of Cthulu”, and it was a fun experience.Â  [Here is a link to my blog postÂ](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2008/11/19/call-of-cthulu/)about the game – it reads like a novel, but keep in mind that all the action took place during two afternoons.Â  You begin a game by deciding characteristics you will attribute to your character, and rolling the dice to determine others.Â  There was a host, and he guided us through the game; telling us when to roll what dice andÂ what events were occurring as a result of our decisions.Â  We are going to meet another time this Saturday for another scenario in this same game – hopefully we’ll get to keep our same characters since I got a lot of lucky rolls – so my character had lots of strong areas.Â  Here is the post-game wrap-up for the two sessions we already played.Â  My character is named Grace O’Conner, and she is a zookeeper at The Franklin ParkÂ Zoo in Boston.Â  The year is 1925.

*(Wrap up from the original Call of Câ€™thulhu scenario “Haunter in the Hills.”)*

*Within days of returning to Boston, Jason Carthage and Grace Oâ€™Conner had contacted each other and Ms. Dorothy Morgan and borrowed the diary theyâ€™d found in the Adams place. Each of the two had read it and both later wished they hadnâ€™t.*

*The very meticulous diary had very little written in it towards the beginning and the earliest dates were from 1910. Most were about mundane things such as Dr. Adamsâ€™ move to the home in the Vermont Mountains and dealing with the folk in the area, including Dr. Haylett. There were some entries about Dr. Adamsâ€™ research but little until 1919, when he noted that he had suddenly found more and more proof that there are things in the hills that simply SHOULD NOT BE.*

*He made some notes about the research he was doing, including mentioning a certain book in the Moretown Memorial Library called â€œLegends of New Englandâ€ by Eli Davenport and noting â€œsome of the answers are there.â€ The journal alleged that he kept the main bulk of his research elsewhere.*

*Entries continued to get more disturbing and weird until May of 1922 when they took a change for the macabre. Without going into detail, Adams noted that he purchased several large dogs and hastily had a kennel constructed for them. He wrote â€œThe dogs seem to hate the things. I hope they can warn me of their approach. I fear that they will not be able to protect me.â€*

*He wrote more and more that the â€œthingsâ€ were watching all the time and he feared he may have unintentionally gotten their notice with his investigations. He noted that they could easily conquer the earth but had not tried so far because he felt they had not needed to. They didnâ€™t want to bother and could get what they wanted without it.*

*He also wrote that the town of Moretown was within the thingsâ€™ grip and noted that he learned that some of the people in the town, and even elsewhere in Washington County, worked with these things, these â€œfungi,â€ either willfully or against their will.*

*By June, he noted that the house was now constantly watched and the that things were growing more bold, though they seemed to prefer the darkest of nights: those that were overcast or without a large moon. By the end of that month, he wrote that he saw the thingsâ€™ prints around the house nightly and that he must often replace the dogs that were killed fighting them.*

*In July, he wrote that an attempt to stop him on his way to Moretown almost worked. A sign on Moretown Mountain Road detoured him to a dead end and the barking of the large dogs he had with him alerted him to the presence of the things. He noted on the 10th of July that the dogs again alerted him to something near the road as he drove.*

*In August, others seemed to have joined the mix. Adams noted continually getting new dogs and wrote that on Aug. 3, a bullet crashed through a window of his house, narrowly missing him.*

*The following week, there were more shots outside of the house on darkened nights and he found several of the dogs dead the following morning. He noted that he found more of the claw prints in the road as well as the footprints of men. He wrote that the phone lines had been cut and were dead.*

*The following day, he reported going to Montpelier and purchasing several more large dogs and a large-caliber rifle as well as supplies.*

*The next several entries noted the numerous cloudy nights and the exchange of gunfire that happened nightly. He wrote that there were at least three men in the group against him along with the numerous claw prints. He feared that he was trapped in the house and wrote that he is loathe to leave his home to the things.*

*On Aug. 20, he noted that the things called to him the night before in horrible buzzing voices, telling him things he dared not put down and making promises he feared they would keep. He mentions that the things want to take him to Yuggoth and beyond, something he dreaded. He wrote that he recognized one of the men that who was with the things: Erik Bartlett was among them.*

*The entries continued with the horrors of the night, of buzzing noises that made him feel lethargic, and sparks of light that burst against the house when he looked out the windows and left blackened burned marks.*

*The last entry, dated Sept. 6, noted:*

*â€œI will try to leave this place tomorrow. With the full moon, perhaps I can get as far as Northfield or even Montpelier, where I might take a train east to Boston or even Dover though I wish to leave these haunted hills. I only hope they let me go. I will leave this journal hidden here in the event of my demise. I fear that if the fungi do not get me, their human servants will.*

*â€œThe thingsâ€™ lair must be on the west face of Chase Mountain. There is a large cave there, covered with a great boulder too heavy for anyone to move. However, erosion has left a place where a man might wiggle though. That must be where they are.â€*

*Both of them remembered the Montpelier newspaper article from the next day. Dr. Adams had attacked a man in Montpelier but had been stopped by police and returned home.*

### Comments

**A different type of game | Random Thoughts**[...] of my friends and blogging buddy posted some notes on a game we played (click to read). These were written by they guy running the game, so they were an overall view, as if someone was [...]

# My Thanksgiving Curse :)

I think I wasÂ somehow cursedÂ last Thanksgiving.Â  I fell ill the day after Thanksgiving, and just as I was starting to feel better a few days later, I felt another virus coming on.Â  This cycle continued until just before Christmas, and because I was pregnant and exhausted, I tried to rest a lot and get well during that time, but it was stressful because I had a 1Â½-year-old to chase after.Â Â And while I was sick, I was unable to eat any Thanksgiving leftovers.Â  So then all during the year, foods like turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and even creamed onions (which I used to love) just haven’t seemed very appealing to me.Â  I think I subconsciously associate the Thanksgiving fare with being sick, but I thought I’d be over it by now – wrong.Â  Thanksgiving dinner was great and everything, but I’m just not as enthused about those leftovers as I want to be.Â  On Thanksgiving day, the turkey was delicious.Â  That leftover sandwich I had on Friday was pretty good.Â  The cold turkey snack on Friday night was ok.Â  I didn’t finish the turkey snack on Saturday night, and today for dinner, I will have *anything* but turkey or Thanksgiving leftovers.Â  And I am blue in the face from reassuring my husband that it was ***absolutely nothing*** he did wrong with the cooking or the fault of any of the guests who brought delicious side dishes.Â  It’s just my Thanksgiving curse, and I hope it’s gone by next year.Â  But even if it’s not, no biggie because my Thanksgiving will be made moreÂ special than foodÂ by the wonderful people in my life.Â  Maybe I should “train” my body to accept the Thanksgiving food by making turkey and creamed onions more often…

At any rate, the helpers in the kitchen on Thanksgiving day were adorable – check them out:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/making-thanksgiving-dinner-11-27-08-0013.jpg)

And below are my two oldest daughters waving to Santa atÂ the Welcome Santa Parade from the day after Thanksgiving:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/welcome-santa-parade-11-28-08-007.jpg)

And if their names were numbers that ordered them by birth, below is a cute picture of #2 and #4:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/christopher-1st-totwheels-11-26-08-002.jpg)

### Comments

**justj**Very cute. Hope you're feeling better.  
**jamiahsh**Cute.

# Sleep With The Angels

The title of this blog post is based on a book called *To Sleep With the Angels*, which details the horrible tragedy of the Our Lady of Angels school fire in Chicago, Illinois.Â  Ninety-two children andÂ three nuns perished on December 1, 1958 – 50 years ago tomorrow.Â  The incident became theÂ precedent and the inspiration for sweeping changes inÂ laws and regulations regarding fire safety; such as the installment of sprinkler systems in public buildings, automatic fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire drills, and the end of grandfather clauses which eliminated older buildings from having to comply to fire regulations.Â Â Our Lady of the Angels had undergone a fire inspection just a few weeks before the fire, but because it was an older building, it did not have to comply toÂ all the fire codes because ofÂ grandfather clauses.Â  I came across [this website](http://www.olafire.com/Home.asp) about the tragedy, and it’s full of fascinating info related to the inferno – photos, news articles, maps, models, survivor lists and stories, and more.Â  Here is a little excerpt from the website olafire.com about the cause of the fire:

|  |
| --- |
| **Was It Arson?** |
| Although the cause has never been *officially* determined, all indications point to arson. A boy (age 10 at the time, and a fifth grader in room 206) later confessed to setting the blaze, but subsequently recanted his confession. He was more afraid of confessing to his mother and step-father than to the police.The boy confessed to setting numerous other fires in the neighborhood, mostly in apartment buildings. In his confession, he related details of the fire’s origin that had not been made public and that he should therefore not have known. While there was strong evidence that he was indeed the culprit, neither he nor anyone else was ever prosecuted, at least in part because the catholic judge in the case felt he should protect the Church.Officially, the cause of the fire remains unknown. |

I’m curious if the boy who confessed is listed in the survivor lists.Â  Somewhere else I read that another reason the judge didn’t convict the boy is because it would have meant a sure death sentence for him.Â  One thing remains true – this was a tragedy of great proportion, and the damage is still being felt by those who witnessed the atrocity and those whoÂ survived and their families.Â  This is evident when you read some of the survivors’ stories on the website listed above.Â  Many of them have not spoken much about that day, and it seems that almost all of them remember it like it was yesterday.Â  My husband and I both grew up in the Chicago area, and we agree thatÂ most people we knewÂ were associated with the tragedy inÂ one way or another – whether they witnessed it, survived it, or watched it unfold on television.Â  It’s been 50 long years, and there are still raw wounds.Â  It was agreed upon by all those that knew Michele McBride, a survivor of the Our Lady of Angels fire, that she died of her wounds sustained in the fire, and that was as recent as 2001.Â  From olafire.com:

*Michele was burned over 60% of her body and hospitalized for four and a half months. She underwent numerous operations which continued for years afterwards. The fire that ravaged her body left her in continuous, lifelong pain. Her pain finally ended in July 2001 when she died of multiple organ failure, no doubt a result of damage inflicted by fire so many years before. In 1979 Michele wrote a book (“The Fire That Will Not Die”) about her experience the day of the fire, and her life thereafter. Michele’s sister, Dae Hanna: “Michele died on July 4th 2001, from long term physical problems suffered from the fire many years ago. May she rest in peace. She never had a day without pain in her legs and joints. May she rest in peace. She disagreed vehemently with many of the theories in the ‘To sleep with the angels book’. Her book THE FIRE THAT WILL NOT DIE was certainly well titled, and the only first hand account of that day. May she rest in peace.”*

I was reminded of the 50th anniversary of the Our Lady of Angels school fire by an article in the dailyherald.com, prompting me to do some research into the tragedy and to share with others the olafire.com website which contains so much helpful information.Â  My thoughts and prayers are with all of the families involved in this horrible chapter of Chicago’s history.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/olafire.jpg)

### Comments

**history of television news | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Sleep With The Angels [...]  
**derek**I must have missed this article, unless it is today's news which I haven't gotten to yet. Definitely a tragedy. The devastation in those photos- incredible. 95 lives lost, many more lives changed...  
**» Sleep With The Angels | My Food Chain Gang**[...] The title of this blog post is based on a book called To Sleep With the Angels, which details the horrible tragedy of the Our Lady of Angels school fire in. Original post [...]  
**The Economy » Blog Archive » Aldis Robertsâ€™S Homepage Â» Blog Archive Â» Hoover Dam**[...] Sleep With The Angels | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**jamiahsh**WOW... to live that long with that extent of damage sustained must have taken a great deal of strength and support.

# Walmart Saves The Day

What?!? Believe it or not, the title of my post does not have the slightest hint of sarcasm!Â  Walmart really DID save the day for us yesterday!Â  It almost makes me sorry for my many rants against Walmart and their shady practices designed to put small companies out of business…Â  almost sorry, but not quite there.

It all started when we decided to take the kids over to Fort Wayne, Indiana, which is about an hour away.Â  We pulled into a stall at the Sonic drive-thru for a light lunch and some slushies (Sonic has awesome slushies and drinks), when we realized we had forgotten my husband’s wallet, which left us without money orÂ credit cards.Â  Luckily, we had picked up the mail before we left the house and brought it in the car with us.Â  And luckilyÂ², we had gotten a commission check in the mail.Â  So we braved the ‘big city’ Walmart customer service line onÂ the Saturday after Thanksgiving to see ifÂ they would take pity on us and cash the check even without my husband’s ID.Â  We wereÂ gifted with even more luck when they accepted my driver’s license to cash my husband’s check, and we were able to eat lunch.Â  Except now it had gotten really late and we were all really hungry, so we decided to skip Sonic and go to the Golden Corral that was in the Walmart outlot instead.Â  If you braved my posts about our vacation diary, then you knowÂ how much we like Golden Corral.Â  And I’d say that the one in Fort Wayne isÂ of the best quality out of any of the others we’ve been to.Â  After lunch, we took the kids to a McDonald’sÂ Playland,Â but it had only one little tunnel and one small slide; prompting our 4-year-old to proclaim, “Dad, this is *boring*!”Â  But our 2-year-old loved it, and soon there were more kids to play with and everybody had lots of fun – including mom and dad since there was also a foosball table.Â  When we left the McDonald’s, we noticed there was a Burger King across the street (when isn’t there?), and that Burger King had a 3-story play area!Â  Oh, well, we had fun where we went and we can remember the BK for next time.Â  We quenched our thirst with drinks from Sonic, and there was a cool looking car wash next door, so we treated the kids to a car wash also -they love watching the soap, brushes, and water cascading off the car.Â  The second we pulled out of the wash –*ding ding* – our low fuel bell rang – uhoh.Â  My husband and I just looked at each other because it wasn’t like we had unlimited money with us.Â  In fact, we had spent the last of the check money at the car wash.Â  Thank goodness gas prices are decent these days because with theÂ change we were ableÂ to scrape together from my wallet and the car, we had enough to get us gas to get home…Â  whew!Â  Perhaps it can even be considered a blessing in disguise.Â  When you compareÂ the variety of shopping Fort Wayne offers to our hometown choice of Super Walmart and…Â  well, just the Super Walmart, unleashing us in a larger city with all those shoppingÂ varieties could have been disasterous to our bank account!

And by the way, the Walmart customer service line wasn’t too bad, all things considered.Â  Most of the line consisted of a family who had 6 kids and one on the way -wow.Â  And I thought I had a lot of kids!

### Comments

**worldofwarcraft org | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Walmart Saves The Day [...]  
**worldofwarcraft accounts | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Walmart Saves The Day [...]  
**jamiahsh**I always liked the local Wash n Fill's Car Wash with the long straps that look like spaghetti strands that engulf your vehicle, smothering you... always got a thrill out of the little sister. AND NO... the wallet was not in my car HA!!

# Happy Thanksgiving!

Another Thanksgiving weekend is upon us, and so far it’s been wonderful for us.Â  Thanksgiving dinner was deliciously cooked by my husband and our guests who were kind enough to bring yummy dishes to share.Â  We played some games afterwards and watched the movie “21” -not very Thanksgiving-y, but a good movie nonetheless.Â  The night before Thanksgiving, my husband and I watched some Thanksgiving episodes of Friends – I think I had forgotten how funny that show was.Â  It’s strange because now when we watch Friends episodes, we are older than the Friends, whereas when the show was still running new in prime time, the friends were older than us…Â  oh well, yet another example of how time flies.Â  Over the turkey last night, we also did our tradition where we go around the table and say what we’re thankful for – and my ever-generic answerÂ was the same asÂ some of my friends, “I am most thankful for my family and friends.”Â  It may be a generic response, but it’s very true, and I am very blessed to have such a wonderful family (my husband and kids and our relatives who live far away – we hope everyone had a wonderful day) and such great friends.

SoÂ now, Black Friday is upon us, and I was able to convince my husband to not go shopping.Â  Every year, he wants to get up at the crack of dawn, if not before, and go wait in the lines to see the best sales stores have to offer.Â  But I’m never very enthused, mostly because we have 4 children under the age of 9.Â  I keep telling him to put it on his “when our kids aren’t so little” list, although I haveÂ one that’s lengthy enough for the both of us.Â  It’d be nice if one year we could get a babysitter for Black FridayÂ so we wouldn’t have to wake all the kids up, but until that happens, I’m not willing to lose the sleep myself or have the kids lose it either.Â  So today for Black Friday, I’ve already had my first turkey-and-leftover sandwich, and we’re going to take the kids toÂ see Bolt (ourÂ two oldest girls are excited to hear the voicework of Miley Cyrus)Â at the movie theaterÂ with a friend and her grandkids.Â  We haven’t been to a movieÂ in forever.Â  I just hope our 2-year-old can behave.Â  After the movie, we’ll walk across the street for dinner, and then we’ll go see if Santa’s reindeer have arrived on the square before we get our spotsÂ to watchÂ the parade.Â  Every year on the day after Thanksgiving, our town has a parade celebrating Santa’s arrival.Â  They bring real reindeer to the square, and everyone lines the streets in anticipation of seeing Santa Claus come to town.Â  His sleigh is pulled by huge beautiful horses, and last year, Santa called out hello to us and knew us by name!Â  When Santa reaches the town square, a few lucky children get to push the big button that turns on the Christmas lights on the square, and everyone cheers as they sip their complimentary cups ofÂ hot chocolate.Â  It’s like something out of a cheesy holiday movie, and I relish every minute of it.Â  I don’t know who is more excited today -me or the kids!Â  I love small town life!Â  And right now, as I’m writing this, I just saw Santa’s sleigh (covered of course) get pulled down our street with a golf cart!Â  I excitedly yelled out, but thank goodness the kids didn’t come down here in time to see it – I think it’d be better for them to see it for the first timeÂ in the parade.Â  It was exciting for me to see though!

I’m not sure what the rest of the weekend holds, but I do know that I get twice as much time with my husband and kids as a normal weekend, and for that I’m also very thankful.Â  I hope everyone else had a wonderful holiday!

### Comments

**Who Wants To Open The Door On Black Friday? | Morat's Blog**[...] who was knocked down and taken to be examined; however, she and the baby were uninjured.Â  Perhaps taylhis was right in not venturing out into the battlefield? Share and Enjoy: These icons link to social [...]  
**derek**Ah, you get your own parade over there I see. No need to see the Macy's thing then, though you probably did anyway. :)  
**justj**The Bargain Hunter didn't go shopping??? What is happening in the world? ;) I'm very glad you had a good Thanksgiving. I forgot about the reindeer. Missed them again.

# Rides Jamiahsh Broke

This is the long-awaited post (by some anyway) that details the uncanny coincidencesÂ of ride break-downsÂ we encountered while in Orlando, Florida.Â  Here is a list of the following rides that stalled or broke down while fellow blogger jamiahsh was along.Â  Not to blame him, but…Â Â  ðŸ˜‰

Epcot:Â  Spaceship Earth, the boat ride in Mexico, the boat ride in Norway – not only did the boat stall during the ride, but also, after we exited the boat, the doors at the end of the ride failed to open, trapping us and the 4-5 boat-fulls afterÂ us!

Universal Studios – The Mummy – got stuck where the ride gets “hot”, the Simpsons ride, Cat in the Hat ride

Magic Kingdom – Carousel of Progress glitched, Peter Pan’s Flight, Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean (multiple times), Snow White

Â We’ve been to Disney World lots of times, and although we’ve been involved in rides stalling and getting backed up, it’s never happened with the frequency of this year when jamiahsh was with us.Â  Therefore,Â the phenomonon of him “breaking the rides”Â is a running joke of sorts, and that’s why I had to make a post of it.Â  Break-downs aside, a fun trip was had by all, and the uncanny ride luck jamiahsh had is now merely blog fodder – and that’s always fun.

### Comments

**derek**As posted on [this Youtube link](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKz6qdexetY)? :D It looks like someone on the ride recorded the whole Carousel of Progress and posted it for our enjoyment. There was also a frightening video of some people's legs moving up and down to their singing of the song as they lay in bed, but let's keep that one in the nether regions of that site...  
**jamiahsh**It's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow  
**derek**So... Any songs torturing your minds now? I remember the It's a Small World ride in CA. I didn't experience a breakdown there, but some of my group did one year...  
**jamiahsh**No fair... You DID NOT ride Peter Pan :) Yes, getting stuck in the "hot" room was a bit uncomfortable. The Norway experience was hilarious. You will have to elaborate on Jungle Cruise... Yo, Ho, Yo, Ho... A Pirate's Life For Me!

# Seinfeld And The Man Of Steel

Here’s a fun game for the holidays, providing you like Superman and the show Seinfeld, for that matter.Â  I read an interesting little blurb in the paper the other day about how Jerry Seinfeld is a huge fan of Superman.Â  So much so that there is a reference or an image of the “Man of Steel” in *every* episode of Seinfeld.Â  So this holiday season, while your turkey is cooking, digesting, or being cleaned up for youÂ by your guests (how do you think I found the time to write this post on Thanksgiving Day?), pop in a few old episodes of Seinfeld and try toÂ pinpoint the Superman allusion.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**YEP... now please don't quiz me on them. I do remember the commercials with Jerry and the Big Blue Boy Scout.

# Vacation Diary - Chapter Six

*NOTE:Â  This is the final part of a 6 part series about a family vacation to Florida*

Friday, October 24, 2008 – We slept in (at least I did – my husband got up with the kids) and packed up and decided to depart early.Â  We were toying with the idea of renting an air boat to take into the swamp, but it was overcast again, and we weren’t sure how the kids would fare in the swamp.Â  So we headed out of the Orlando area, and we stopped at two beaches.Â  The first one was not memorable, and I don’t remember where it was – somewhere south of Flagler beach because we stopped there next after heading north up the coast.Â  The first beach had crushed shells for sand and it was still overcast and windy which made it a little chilly.Â  It was really cool to see two different moods of the ocean this trip; especially since we’re used to landlocked Ohio.Â  Well, we have Lake Erie, but that’s not the same as the ocean.Â  On the way there, it was a beautiful blue/green with soft, rolling waves.Â  On the way home, it was gray, and the waves had white caps and sometimes a large one would sneak up and catch us off guard and soak us.Â  At Flagler Beach, we found a coconut and a log, which we took with us – only after asking the park ranger on duty, of course.Â  He was friendly, and he said that coconut must have come a long way – and now it calls Ohio home!Â  Flagler Beach is a Florida State Park, and it was very nice.Â  There was a ramp leading down to the beach for the wheelchair-bound or strollers.Â  And the bathrooms were very nice for being outdoor state park bathrooms – they should have been a step away from port-a-potties, but these were really nice and clean too.

Since we were ahead of schedule, we decided to spend the night in a hotel, so we stopped outside of Savannah, Georgia at a Comfort Suites in Pooler.Â  It was a nice place, and we went swimming in the morning.Â  I think their chlorine content in the pool was way high because my husband’s eyes were burning and for weeks my girls and I had problems with our hair.Â  It was getting tangled really easily, and it wasn’t smooth or soft anymore.Â  My husband held my ponytail up to the hair closer to my head and there was a huge color difference – the ends of my hair were shades lighter than the top!Â  I have long hair, so I think the bottom part of my hairÂ which was in the pool the longest got bleached by the chlorine.Â  I actually haven’t had the time to go and get it chopped off, but it seems to be getting back to normal now, thank goodness.

Saturday, October 25, 2008 – The hotel had a breakfast, which was actually kind of crowded, but we enjoyed bagels and cereal before our morning swim.Â  Got on the road about noon, stopped around 1:30 for lunch in the car.Â  I had an avocado sandwich (good!) from Atlanta Bread, and the kids had Bojangles Chicken, which has really good fries.Â  Chicken is pretty good too.Â  Stopped at a Shell gas station around Spartanburg, South Carolina, where we were approached by a man who had “run out of gas”.Â  Luckily, he had plenty of jewelry on display inside his coat to sell, so hopefully he wouldn’t be stuck at the gas station for long.Â  Traffic got a little backed up near Asheville, and it was bumper-to-bumper, but for only about 10Â or 15 mins.Â  We decided to get off of I-40 to enjoy the mountainous scenery since we’re not usually in the mountains when there’s daylight on our trips down south.Â  In the peak of autumn color-changing season at sunset, the mountains were nothing short of gorgeous, and we pulled over at a fewÂ scenic overlooks for observation and picture-taking.Â  We stopped at a wonderful little restaurant in the mountains of Eastern Tennessee called “BBQ Garden Cafe”,Â and I can’t say enough great things about the place.Â  The ribs and corn were the best of each that both my husband and I have ***ever had****.Â* And that’s really saying a lot because we are tough critics when it comes to food at restaurants.Â  Unfortunately, as we chatted with the owner we learned that they were days away from closing – just not enough business in the mountains.Â  It’s a real shame too – best food I’ve had in a long time.Â  And it was a family owned place, so the owner got your order and went to grill it himself, and he even had his kids helping – a really nice family, and a really nice family atmosphere also.Â  I really hope that by some miracle the place doesn’t close – I was going to make sure we go back there every time we’re in Tennessee.Â  Here is the address, just in case you’re in the area; I can’t say enough how much I recommend the place.Â  You might want to call first though, since they did say they were closing down!Â  It’s located at: 3323 Cosby Hwy, Cosby, TN 37722

After the delicious dinner, we headed for home in Ohio, and we arrived at about 5 in the morning, a little early compared to usual.Â  But that’s ok, we needed the day for catch-up on sleep, laundry, unpacking, etc.Â  As you can see, I’ve been busy ever since which is why it took me a month to finish the trip diary.Â  But now I have, and all I have to do is cut and pasteÂ all 6 partsÂ into one diary for our family to read for years to come.Â  Thanks for letting me share it with you; here is a picture of the autumn Smokies at sunset:

Â [](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/10-25-08-mountains-of-nc-and-tenn-007.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Sounds like you had a good time. I'm glad you were able to take your family out on vacation. I'm also glad you returned so we could get together a few weeks ago. :)  
**jamiahsh**And I do believe that there is one more vacation related entry that I am on pins and needles to read.  
**jamiahsh**And you were worried that you would not be able to see the leaves change (locally, anyway). There are way too few family owned small businesses around. Way too much focus on the bigger and better, quicker, etc while sacrificing for atmosphere.

# Down And Out In The Magic Kingdom

I wasÂ doing a searchÂ in the library’s database, and I came across the title *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* by Cory Doctorow.Â  Further investigation showed it to beÂ a science fiction book about Walt Disney World in the future.Â  Not usually my type of novel (and I strongly prefer to read non-fiction anyway), but since we’re Disney affectionados, I couldn’t resist the read.Â  It took me over a month to read it, and that’s not even soley because I’m so busy.Â  The book is difficult to read – author Doctorow does a nice job at placing the reader in the characters’ futuristic universe, but it’s almost too much – he neglects to provide an explanation of certain things.Â  For instance, the characters all have “Whuffie” and “HUDs”, and theseÂ concepts are constantly revisited throughout the story, but it’s never explained exactly what these things are!Â  My interpretation is that Whuffie refers to a meter in one’sÂ body that measures a person’s positive characteristics, experiences, and emotions – and others can see your Whuffie level.Â  A person with low Whuffie is shunned in society, and sometimes even denied entrance to Disney World.Â  HUDs seem to be a person’s computer – it almost seems to be a part of their brain.Â  They can look up stuff and send things to each other instantly with their HUDs like directions to places.Â  It seems to be kind of like today’s internet, yet it’s built right into people’s brains.Â  So, yeah, you can see why it was slow reading as the reader had to get around all of these unfamiliar concepts.Â  But onto the story itself…

In the future when *Down and Out…*Â  is set – and I don’t know what year that is, he never specifically says – Disney World is now a retro-park; something that is preserved only because it’s an example of the great works of our current time.Â  The main character, Julius and his girlfriend Lil (who was raised in the Magic Kingdom) are on a mission to save the Magic Kingdom and keep theÂ attractions as they are: old-fashioned rides through vintage dioramas.Â  There is a group of people trying to “rehab” all the rides and give them a futuristic makeover, and they do get ahold of the Hall of Presidents – they make it so that the guests can actually see what it *feels* like to be Abraham Lincoln and the rest of the former Presidents.Â  It is the goal of Julius, Lil, and their friend Dan to keepÂ the rest of Liberty Square (a section of the Magic Kingdom), especially the Haunted Mansion,Â away from the “ad-hocs” as the rehabbing group isÂ called.Â  Throw in Julius’ murder (don’t worry, he’s been “backed up” and can reclaim his life in a clone)Â and the fact that he now has to find out who killed him and keep it from happening again, and that’s how the plot thickens.

Overall, it was a very interesting read, but probably not something I’d re-read.Â  It was worth stepping out of my usual non-fiction genreÂ for the experience to read a science-fiction tale, but it wasn’t anything stupendous.Â  The story was interesting, and the author did a great job of detailing life in the future, even if it was at times confusing to the reader.Â  I kept feeling like I was coming in onÂ a sequel having missed the first part.Â  I thought there’d be more details about the Magic Kingdom, and in that respect, I was disappointed.Â  But if you like sci-fi books and you’ve been to Disney World, I recommend this book only if you read a lot and have lots of spare time.Â  On a grading scale, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* gets a C- from me.Â  Up next for me is *My Lobotomy* by Howard Dully- a non-fiction book about a guy who was involuntarily given an “ice-pick” lobotomy as a 12-year old.

### Comments

**Heart Necklace**reading science fiction books is the stuff that i am always into. science fiction really widens my imagination `:~  
**taylhis**He IS a charming fellow ;) Stay tuned to my blog - I will write a review once I finish the book! It is a fascinating read so far (I'm on the "Lou" chapter), but it will take me a little bit to read it as I am very busy. I only read at bedtime and can only fit in a few pages before I fall asleep. It has NOTHING to do with how interesting or boring the book may be. I have 4 kids, and running after them all day requires all my energy. I WISH I had more time to read books like this!  
**Howard**Hey I kinda like that book "My Lobotomy" charming fellow and all that :)  
**derek**HUD is actually a real term. It stands for **H**ead **U**p **D**isplay. See [this Wikipedia link](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head-up_display). Sounds like a possibly interesting book as I am a sci-fi reader. I'll have to see if my library has it.

# The Scary Clown Sucessfully Sold Burgers

On another tangents.org blog, justj has been talking about cheeseburgers, namely White Castles and Burger Buddies (aka Burger Bundles), an ’80’s Burger King product.Â  I found an old Burger Bundles commercial on youtube and posted the link on his blog in the comments section of the [cheeseburger post](http://justj.tangents.org/archives/238).Â  While I was looking around on youtube, I foundÂ this old vintage McDonald’s commercial where Ronald looks like something out of a horror movie.Â  Regardless of what his early incarnation looked like, the clown worked for them in helping to create one of the most successful companies of all time.

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

**derek**Looks like you forgot a few: [WIKIPEDIA LINK](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McDonaldland) I don't remember most of them, but Uncle O'Grimacey sounds pretty funny. Officer Big Mac had to be a counter to the Hamburglar. I vaguely remember him.  
**jamiahsh**Now... that IS ONE SCARY CLOWN!. Did I hear correctly that Mayor McCheese was ejected from McDonald's cast of characters for some outrageous reason. I remember Grimace, Hamburglar, the Fry Guys, and Birdie the Early Bird. Am I forgetting any?

# Rectal Gas Policy

We’re all adults here, right?Â Â Then you’d think the following sign spotted in the band room at a local high school would be less amusing:

**Rectal Gas Policy**– Any student who releases audible rectal gas will receive one after school detention.  
– Any student who “reacts” to audible or inaudible rectal gas will also receiveÂ  one after school detention.  
*If you feel the need to relieve yourself of rectal gas you must stand in the hallway to pass it.*

Where do I start?Â  First, it must be said that I was visiting the school while attending a wonderful show choir performance starring (as far as I’m concerned) a good friend and my favorite teenager.Â  She did an awesome job!

After the concert, another friend gave us a brief tour of the new school where she works.Â  It’s a really nice school, but we were surprised to find that they apparently have an entire policy about a specific bodily function.Â  I wonder if students actually go into the hallway to abide by the policy.Â  And it really makes one wonder about the incident(s) that caused the policy to be drafted in the first place.Â  Asking my friend to make copies of the policy so I can post it on my blog is juvenile, I’ll admit…Â  but funny is funny, and I find it amusing.Â  I wonder if the teacher realizes that strangers come through her band room sometimes and read her rectal gas policy?Â  Did she have to submit it to the principalÂ for approval before posting it?Â  Hey, Derek, do any of the schools you sub at have a body function policy?

### Comments

**taylhis**Well, ok, probably not funny if you work with kids who aren't yours all day - that's probably where the teacher who wrote this was coming from. And I feel badly for the FL boy - he was obviously causing a disturbance but there really wasn't anything else to do with him than to give him a criminal record? Understandable that some don't appreciate the humor in silly slapstick comedy, but sometimes for some people, it's a fun way to lighten a mood. With all the talk about Blazing Saddles lately, I'll have to see that one again as I don't remember much. I just read yesterday about how Mel Brooks wanted John Wayne to play the part of the Waco Kid, but Wayne said, "I can't be in this picture; it's too dirty. But I'll be the first one in line to see it."  
**derek**I find these jokes in movies kind of sad actually- appealing to the lowest common denominator and all that. I have never seen such a policy myself, and rest assured if I did and was subbing in that room, the kids would get a free day from it as I have better things to do than waste my time taking the names of kids who pass gas. Those who fake it, however... I hate to top you on this Taylhis, but I just read about a student ***arrested*** for doing this in class. Okay, maybe it's not a topper as there was a little more to it, but here it is nonetheless: [Florida Boy Arrested For Gas Attack](http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/years/2008/1121083gas1.html)  
**jamiahsh**Juvenile or not... how many people of any age would not get a chuckle out of the rule. I definitely would fall victim to the second part of the rule. No matter what age you are... exaggerated flatulence is funny... How many of us have seen Blazing Saddles?

# Thanks To The Paper Fairy

It began yesterday – my daily newspaper arrived on my doorstep by 3:30 pm.Â  Were the kids off school today?Â  That was my first thought since our paper is never at our house before 4:30, even when the paper boy doesn’t have school.Â  But I’ve talked to some friends, and whenever their paper kids are off school, they get their paper much earlier than usual.Â  So once I determined the kids were not off school, I was excited to think that we might have a new paper kid, especially when today’s paper was here by **2:00pm** – unheard of.Â  So what is going on?

I’ve come to the conclusion that there must be a ‘paper fairy’ – someone who is delivering me a paper other than my regular delivery boy.Â  IÂ made this deductionÂ when I returned home this evening to find another newspaper on the doorstep, in addition to the one that arrived before 2 when I went out and discovered it.Â  So who is the kind soul who is doing this?Â  Where are they getting the extra paper?Â  Is the newspaper office making a mistake and they have me down for double delivery?Â  Are they charging me for two?Â  Did my delivery kid go off the deep end?Â  I have been extra vocal in my complaints about the delivery kid lately – maybe someone just wanted to shut me up.Â  The last straw was when the kid delivered my paper in a plastic bag on a rainy day last week, and the paper still got soaked somehow.Â  I hate to call the office and complain since he’s just a kid, but that day I thought about it.

So anyway, I thought if the paper fairy is reading my blog, at least I’d thank him or her – I do appreciate your efforts.Â  It’s been nice to participate in conversations about the paper since for the past two days, I’ve had time to glance at the headlines before I go out for the evening.Â  And if the double deliveryÂ continues, chances are between my *two* daily papers, on rainy days at least one will be dry!

### Comments

**justj**Paper, what is a paper? I'd like to say save a tree, read it online, but I'm not sure the local paper is on line.  
**jamiahsh**It seems strange that you got the paper at 2PM... is that not before school lets out? Kid's parents dropping them off when the kid has after school activity or is sick? But our delivery times can be sporadic also.