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# Thoughts From A Registered Ohio Voter

Swing state, political battleground, campaign focal point, election ground zero…Â  call it what you will.Â  As a Christian middle-class American, I call it Ohio, and Ohio is my home.Â  With regards to the 2012 Presidential election, like  
countless fellow Ohioans, I’ve grown weary of the seemingly endless parade of dinnertime (wakeup and bedtime) political phone calls.Â  I’m tired of receiving campaign postcards in the mail (between Thursday and Saturday last week, we got EIGHT political post cards in the mail – I don’t want to be wasteful; I’m thinking of incorporating them into a quilt).Â  And what if all that postcard mailing money were being spent on feeding and housing the homeless?Â  Or providing quality health care to the uninsured?Â  But I digress…).  
I do care about the governmental consequences at stake; I note opinions and where the candidates stand on such controversial issues as abortion, the definition of legal marriage, and the state of the economy.Â  However,Â  the Holy Bible is the law by which I try to live my life.Â  And there are no less than 17 Bible passages referring to false prophets.Â  While educating myself about the Presidential candidates, I did a bit of research into the Mormon religion where I determined that Mormonism does not follow the same Bible I believe to be God’s word.Â  Although my political and societal views are  
usually Republican-esque, in this election, I have feltÂ  unrepresented by a candidate, which is why I’ve begun telling the Romney people who call me that they cannot count on my support for their candidate.

We can faithfully pray about the election and how our lives will be affected afterward, and we can also have peace knowing that our wonderful God is sovereign.Â  I like the definition of God’s sovereignty I found on theopedia.com:Â  The Sovereignty of God is the biblicalteaching that all things are under God’s rule and control, and that nothing happens without His directionor permission.  
Have peace.Â  Your vote counts, it matters to people, but also know that God is in the cockpit – no one is going to pilot this plane we call the United States unless our Lord lets him into the cockpit.Â  Whether Americans will call Barrack Obama a 2-term President or if they get to know Mitt Romney as Commander-in-Chief, it happened because God allowed it to happen.  
“The Lord has established his throne in heaven,  
and his kingdom rules over all.” Psalm 103:19  
As a popular saying goes: may the best man win.Â  As far as I’m concerned, that man is Jesus.

### Comments

**Jamiah**AMEN! I have always said that I would not wish political office on anyone but continue to pray for His guidance for all! As for all the political literature, I know a certain community theatre company in need of a large amount of junk mail. Unfortunately, political ads are unusable. Now that would have generated a LOT of mail.

# Famine Games - Year One

Off my usual topic of my family this time…

The Famine Games.Â  Wow.

It was a weekend at a campground with 23 kids who aged from 12-17.Â  But it was so much more than that.Â  It was life-changing, at least for this “mentor” – me.

The idea began with my husband, who will be more than happy to let you know that the Famine Games was God’s idea.Â  So when God told my husband to gather a bunch of kids, make them work for the basics of needs,

But of course, my heart evolved.Â  A swear word, sometimes, among Christians is evolve.Â  Or evolution.Â  Or evolved.

So on Friday September 21, 2012, we converged on a campground in Northern Ohio – probably nearly thirty of us in all. The kids were told to not bring ANYTHING extra – the clothes on their backs and that was it.Â  Couldn’t bring tents, without hairbrushes, carrying no change of clothes, without hairbrushes, deoderant-less, IPODS, NO CELL PHONES.

But let me back up

### Comments

# End Of August 2012

How’s that for a creative title?Â  I don’t have much time to exercise my creativity these days; well, that’s not true…Â  In my daily adventures of running a household of 7 and caring for 5+ kids every day, I exercise creativity all the time.Â  I need to “fly by the seat of my pants” all day and find creative ways to combat boredom, disagreements and to provide a fun, stimulating and educational environment.Â  But as far as written creativity…Â  well, maybe someday I’ll have time to once again work on enhancing my writing skills.

Luke had his 9 month chekcup today.Â  He is actually 10Â¾ months old, but we had to reschedule his appointment twice because of an injury (he’s ok now but had to get stitches in his pinkie) and work.Â  He measured out perfectly for his age on all of their growth curve charts, and he was able to pass all of the physical tests with flying colors (picking up small objects, standing, clapping, etc).Â  He weighs 19 lbs, 11 oz and is 29″ long.Â  He likes all kinds of table food, especially fruits and pasta.Â  Nothing else really of note about the visit, except that he got his blood drawn and ate the band-aid after.Â  I was wondering about the effects of wearing a band-aid on a finger that spends 90% of its time in the baby’s mouth, but they’re the professionals – or so I thought.Â  I meant to take the band-aid off but alas, I didn’t get to it in time…

I was actually going to write more; I wanted to share the homeschool curriculum I wrote for the kids, but I was reminded why I don’t blog anymore.Â  In just the short time it took me to type this, I had to stop more than 5 times to get kids out of the bath, change diapers, and break up fights…Â  now I’ve been informed the baby is poopie and there is still a kid left in the bath, sounds like another one going back in…Â  more later ?

### Comments

**derek**Always good to hear from you, if only for a moment. Just a reminder of what I am missing in my (loveless) bachelor life... Have a great Labor Day weekend!  
**jamiahsh**always exciting... or never dull ;)

# I'm Thinking You Might Like This

[Kids of 1995 Predict the Future of the Internet – correctly!!](http://www.hlntv.com/article/2012/08/15/kids-predict-future-internet-1995-psa-video?hpt=hp_t2" \t "_blank)

### Comments

**derek**I enjoyed the video taylhis, thanks for posting. I wonder what these 5th graders are thinking now of these predictions, if they remember them at all?  
**jamiahsh**HAHA! How prophetic, I DO chat with friends from Australia. It's like they were talking to me personally!

# A Post About Nothing

This post is about nothing because I should be in bed.Â  I’m writing as a way to vent because I can’t sleep.Â  We’ve let our daughter have sleepovers pretty much constantly for the past 2 weeks.Â  We’ve run into some of her friends and figured what a better way to end summer in a fun way than with some sleepovers, especially with these friends we don’t see often.

Problem is, all these girls seem to lose track of the rest of the world when they’re together.Â  They run up and down the stairs like a herd of elephants (I am SO not going to mention this out loud – what could scar a sensitive pre-teen girl more than comparisons to the largest land mammal??), they giggle incessantly, and they BURST into our bedroom at midnight complaining of a scary noise.Â  And that’s what led me here.Â  Having a group of kids burst into my room as I’m trying to relax with some quiet reading time at midnight apparently set off my adrenal glands – big time.Â  It’s now almost 1 am, and I can’t even think of laying down again for fear of my quiet bubble being burst yet again.Â  My adrenaline is pumping so hard; I feel like I’ve just ridden a roller coaster or like I’m about to deliver a speech.Â  The kicker is, with little or no sleep, how I am going to be able to supervise 6 kids tomorrow – with one of them being a VERY exploratory 10-month-old??Â  I don’t know how it’s going to work.Â  All because of a scary noise.Â  Well, unfortunately for this group of self-absorbed ‘tweens, they’re about to find out that a long day with a very tired and grumpy Mom is ***infinitely*** more scary than any kind of noise or bump in the night.

Good luck, girls.

### Comments

**derek**Missed this post- sorry. Not just boys who run around incessantly during sleepovers I see. I do hope Mom wasn't too much of a grump on that next day. I am extremely tired myself right now and I'm not sure why. I do sleep, though not a full eight hours each night.  
**jamiahsh**JINKIES! Don't know if I'd want to be there today... ;)

# WHY Can't Babies Go To The Movies?

Gonna climb upon a soapbox for a moment…

The families in Colorado who were involved in the shooting need prayer.Â  Probably one of the very last things they need right now is a network of UNsupport – people using mass media to put down the people involved and some of their decisions.Â  Mainly, I’m bugged by those who say things like, “What was a 3-month-old doing at a movie theater anyway?Â  Especially a MIDNIGHT showing of a PG13 movie??”

What’s wrong with taking a baby to a movie?Â  As long as the parent(s) willingly leave before the baby causes a disruption, then I don’t understand what all the fuss is about.Â  I have 5 kids, none of whom have slept thru the night until they were over a year old (probably – my youngest is only 9 months old, but he’s the worst sleeper yet, so I’m guessing he won’t sleep thru the night until he’s a year).Â  So if I’m up at midnight anyway with the baby, I think it should be up to me if I want to spend my own money on a movie, knowing there is a chance that I won’t get to see the entire movie if I have to leave if the baby fusses.Â  Babies are not going to watch the movie; they’re not going to pick up any bad things from the screen at that age, and taking the baby to the movies late at night can actually be the ONLY time new parents can find to connect to each other while trying to balance the demands of parenthood and careers.

Or, take the situation of a big brother who REALLY wants to see the midnight showing of Batman.Â  Again, the parents feel they are going to be up anyway with the baby, so why not schedule in some family time at a most unusual, however more convenient, time.Â  Again, if kids (or babies) cause a disruption in the theater, they should be taken out immediately as a courtesy to others who have also paid to see a movie.

Well, that’s all I have time for now, just had to get that out – I just don’t see anything wrong with taking a baby to the movies, and it bugs me a tiny bit that people are so busy worrying about how others raise their children instead of getting out there themselves to improve our society’s crumbling family unit.Â  Please don’t attack the parents who are actually seeking to spend time with their children.

*Dear Lord, Thank you so much for the gift of children.Â  We pray to you to continue to guide us to love them, to nurture them, and to lead them to you.Â  We pray for the comfort and healing of those involved in the Colorado shooting.Â  May they grow ever closer to you, Lord.Â  Amen.*

### Comments

**derek**Laughing at my own mistakes in my post: ...complaints \*ABOUT\* said child. (not "of said child") ...long forgotten when \*THEIR KIDS WERE THAT YOUNG\* (replaces the ridiculously stated "when they were parents") Well, you stated why you hold your opinion, so if they read it I'm sure they understand now (whether or not they still agree).  
**taylhis**Two of my FB friends that were agreeing with it are parents. One has a kid who is a little older now, but the other one has a 3-mo-old and an almost 2 year old, so I was just surprised to see other parents didn't see eye-to-eye with me about the movie thing. Well, anyway... SO not what the tragedy is about... thanks for the comments :)  
**derek**I admit I have been avoiding watching the news on this so I was unaware of the 3-month-old or the complaints of said child. The media just latches onto tragedies like this and don't let go until everyone is sick of it, and feeling guilty for being sick of hearing of the tragedy as the news goes into every detail, every angle. The complainers are undoubtedly not parents of infants so they either don't understand or have long forgotten when they were parents. While not a parent myself (and likely never will be one) what you say does make sense. Thanks for prayer at the end- I fully agree with it and lift it up as well.  
**jamiahsh**Beautifully stated! Social media... or maybe society as a whole should definitely more focused on the healing of the others affected by the tragedy instead of pointing fingers at how a three-month old is raised.

Have you ever had such a happy moment that tears just stream from your eyes?Â  Not caused by sorrow nor pain, these tears could be

### Comments

# My Food Chain Gang - Restored!

I have a wonderful tale to tell – a God story, and I love those.

A few weeks ago now, I met a friend for lunch at McD’s.Â  Later that evening, as my hubby inquired about my day and asked how my lunch was, I talked about how much I enjoyed hearing my friend’s updates on her beloved cat, Mya.Â  I even lamented, “I wish I could have a kitten.”Â  I seem to be an animal person you say (I AM) – so why don’t I just get a kitten?Â  Well, I’m allergic to cats, otherwise I would probably have a cat (or two or three or…).Â  I actually had one for 10 years and loved her very much, but I was very allergic to her and that was tough for both of us.Â  But anyway – back to this Friday night a few weeks ago – I’m wanting a cat.Â  Saturday morning, the early risers in our family were alerted by an “alarming” sound in our backyard.Â  They found 2 cats fighting on the fence, and across the yard, 3 baby bunnies crying out in alarm.Â  Sammie was dispatched to alert me (still in bed, allowed to sleep-in, THANK YOU Hubby!), and in the now-calm backyard I found 3 exhausted baby bunnies resting while my kids were comforting one of the stray cats.Â  The stray was a friendly fellow; he had black and white fur, green eyes, and a few extra toes.Â  I couldn’t believe the obliging attitude – pleasure even – that this cat was deriving from the attention my kids were doting upon it.

I couldn’t resist petting this friendly kitty, and when I did, something strange happened.Â  Well, actually,Â  it was nothing at all that happened.Â  No sniffles, no itches, no hives – no allergy symptoms.Â  How could it be that I wasn’t allergic to this cat?Â  For the record, Hubby is also allergic to cats but didn’t react to this one either.Â  So anyway, we let the super friendly tuxedo cat in the house.Â  He walked right in and looked around, and it really did seem as if he had lived here for years – and he’s been here ever since!Â  Just fit right in with our entire family, and it’s not an easy feat to forge a seamless transition from outdoor feral cat to indoor family cat, especially when the new family =Â  5 kids (3 girls ages 12, 8, 5 and 2 boys ages 3 and 8 mos.), a dog, a parrot, a rabbit, and 2 rats.Â Â  But saying we’ve had a smooth transition would be an understatement!

What a gift he has been.Â  A gift from God for our family…Â  to bring us together as we welcome a new member for however long we’re allowed to take care of him.Â  A gift for us to cherish together while we play with him.Â  A gift for me to help ease the mounting stress I’ve felt lately.Â  Have you seen the medical research on how a purring cat relieves stress?Â  It exists, trust me!

So to acknowledge this gift for us and to honor our God, “Mittens” became “Moses” – and it is cute when the kids rhyme about “Moses with the extra toe-ses”.Â  Moses seems very adept at using his paws, and he acts very cat-like around the house, which I love – just why I wanted to have a cat around.Â  For now, we are enjoying Moses and his company.Â  He gets along with all of our other pets and is wonderfully tolerant of the kids – he fits in our family like the missing piece of a puzzle; not that any of us realized there was a piece missing before Moses came.Â  So could it be that “my food chain gang” has been restored?

Both an article I read and a devotional I heard recently happened to be about the same subject: knowing and having the faith and satisfaction that God sees you, even if you feel invisible to the world.Â  God uses many aspects of His creation to bring people closer to having meaningful relationships with Him and to help us receive His messages, even animals.Â  My family was getting burnt out from a busy schedule, and it really rejuvenated the kids’ spirits to get to have this cat.Â  And they aren’t the only ones ðŸ˜‰

“…You are the God who sees me…”Â  from Genesis 16:13

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2012/06/Taylor-and-Moses-6-3-12-1.jpg)This is a picture of our oldest daughter holding the cat.Â  No, my 12-year-old does not normally wear make-up; this was “spa night”Â  

God is so good!!

### Comments

**derek**No fair! two months since I made a blog post and you bounce mine from the top of new posts in mere minutes. :D Congrats on being picked to care for this cat. A gift indeed. I sometimes miss the days when we had cats. One day again. No dogs though- just another way I am so unlike the stereotypical male is that I am most definitely not a dog person. But then, in some ways it is good to \*not\* be that stereotype...  
**taylhis**Moses is playful like a kitten, but without the unnecessary trouble causing mischief of a kitten :)  
**jamiahsh**That's a kitten?! Strange how both of you were unaffected allergy-wise. But welcome to the family, Moses with the toes-es. And... NO MAKEUP! You are growing up too fast as it is ;)

# The Amazing Story

### Comments

# Checkin' In

Here it is mid-April already!Â  It’s funny that a few days ago I thought I had made the decision to not blog anymore, but here I am (part of this doing-less-for-me-more-for-others mentality I’m attempting).Â  I have a kid who wants to train to be a babysitter by watching her siblings, and I have a baby who decided he needed a nap – so I find myself with idle time.Â  Wait, idle time?!?Â  What’s that?Â  I’m not used to this; I don’t know what to do!Â  Usually I try to cram in some housework or laundry or food prep in my “down” time, but right now I just want to sit…Â  so writing I will do!

Nothing much to say, just a generic update on my family.Â  The kids are doing great!Â  There hasn’t been any sickness in our house lately, so we are thankful to God for that.Â  So a quick update on each of us if I can get it in before Luke’s nap is over…

Taylor is 12 and a half now, and she is a great kid.Â  She shows so much responsibility and genuinely cares for others.Â  She is challenged at times with patience with her siblings, but she does well.Â  I can’t imagine it would be easy to be the oldest in a house where there is always so much chaos and needy little kids!Â  Taylor leads the worship music for the kids at church, and she also enjoys using her artistic gifts to make posters for church events.

Sammie is almost 8 and is a pretty good babysitter.Â  She LOVES her baby brother, and if it’s the right day, she’s great with her 5 year old sister and 3 year old brother.Â  But Sammie has her off-days too, and if it’s one of those days, WATCH OUT!Â  Â  She will push buttons of all of her siblings, and she is quite good at getting them going.Â  She is watching the littles as I write though, so it feels wrong to say bad things about her behavior.Â  She is getting ready for her 8th bday party coming up in May!

Disney has been causing 90% of the trouble in our house lately.Â  Our sweet little Disney is going through a phase right now that is making all of us (her included!) crazy!Â  She had a good day today, but in the past few weeks, she’s been upset about EVERYTHING and also intentionally pushing the buttons that drive siblings over the edge.Â  She loves school, and she is excited to start Kindergarten in the fall (we do homeschool, but we don’t start homeschooling our kids until 2nd grade for a number of reasons; one is because we like the social skills that kids learn at school in the early ages).

Christopher has been acting like such a big boy lately!Â  He’s been potty-trained since New Year’s day, and he does well with that.Â  He’s stopped throwing so many tantrums and is really acting more like a kid these days instead of like a crabby tantrum-throwing toddler.Â  He does get into his fair share of messes, and he gets especially upset when he goes thru candy withdrawal.

Luke is 6 mos. already, and a handful as always – it’s only getting worse as he gets older.Â  Then again, he is getting even cuter as he grows, so that’s the plus side Â  But what a strong personality and eye for mischief he has for such a young age!Â  I try not to think about it, but I find myself tempted to worry about how I’m going to stay sane when he is actually moving!Â  Right now he’s just scooting and rolling around, but he puts EVERYTHING in his mouth and is quite demanding; wanting 100% of the available parent’s attention 100% of the time!Â  You can see why this is challenging when there are 4 other kids – it’s just one reason why I gave up my social life 

Hubby and I are doing well also.Â  His working 2 jobs keeps us busy, but in some ways, it’s actually not as stressful as I thought it would be.Â  It’s amazing how much easier things are when you truly trust the Lord to get you through.Â  By no means is life easy these days, but I am so much better equipped to handle the twists, turns and busyness now than I was a few years ago thanks to Him.Â  As I mentioned, we have given up our social lives.Â  I miss my friends, but luckily we live in a world where I can still keep up with their lives and know how to pray for them when they need it.Â  I’ve tried hanging out with adults a few times in the past few months, but unfortunately with all these kids running around and being so demanding, it seems better for everyone if I just focus on the kids and live a kid-oriented life.Â  So, with Hubby now working on the weekends, we’ve been having our family SaturdaysÂ  on Fridays when we can.Â  And we’ve been doing less of the expensive entertainment stuff and have been trying dedicating our hearts to serving more.Â  My husband has thought of some very creative ways to do this, and we’ve had many an opportunity to get out into the local communities and give and share God with others.Â  It’s been wonderful!

I was going to write more, but the baby has woken up, and he’s demanding my attention, of course.Â  I just can’t think straight when he cries and he knows it!Â  More next month…Â  haha!

### Comments

**carriealw78**I had to jump over and check your site out since you checked out mine. 5 kids? YIKES! I only have 2 myself, so I can't imagine the chaos that could create! My best friend in Florida has 5 though, so I've heard some of it first hand in the background at her place. I'm thinking about home schooling my youngest. I'm a bit more confident now that I've found the home school online thingy. You might wanna check out their website simply because they have links to so many learning programs, and a lot of those are either cheap, or have free sections to their site that your kids could check out (it has something for all age groups). You can just google Epic Charter Schools to find it. I personally am in love with Brain Pop. It's very animated, but it teaches them on all sorts of topics at the same time, and without the potty humor I try to avoid. I saw your next post mentioned teething - all I can do is pray a LOT for ya there. I remember THAT nightmare :( We went through tons of those teething biscuits, and Dani especially LOVED those frozen plastic thingies you put in the freezer for a bit then let them chew on them. Whatever works, right? I just didn't wanna start off having to give my kids tons of medications, so I was all about home remedies and teething rings of all shapes and sizes :P Thanks again for commenting on my page, and I wish you the best of luck on your site, and with your kids!  
**taylhis**I will save the picture for you, and I have a bag of stuff for you that you left in Florida still!! Keep forgetting to give it to you! Looking forward to that post :)  
**derek**Ha- I "quit" blogging a couple times too, yet I still make the occasional post. I was going to make an Easter post a couple days late, but now that it's a week gone, and I forgot what I was going to say anyway, the next post will be...something else. End of year coming up, end of AWANA in a couple of weeks, getting busted by taxes on top of my share of the 6 grand I just paid out... My problem isn't so much time though as will. I'm glad you were able to get some time to post about your life. PS- please save that photo I left behind (along with the bread, but don't try to save \*that\*- just enjoy it!) for me, or you can email it if you want. I can't print it right now but lucky for us Costco is having a $60 off sale on an HP printer/scanner/copier this month and I will pick one up soon.

# Throes Of Teething

I have a baby in the throes of teething.Â  And that’s pretty much all I have time to say – time to pick him up again to stop the endless screaming and biting.Â  Poor thing 

### Comments

**taylhis**It's been getting steadily worse for about 3 months now, and no teeth to show for it :( Some kids just have a rough time with teething unfortunately.  
**derek**Hey, he should man up and be done after one! :D  
**jamiahsh**Three days of teething and out?! Wow, Derek! ;)  
**derek**'been three days- hopefully he's done. Okay, I know it's not quite that quick... Getting much sleep?

# Blessings

We always knew that we were blessed with our 5 healthy babies, but the reality of how blessed we really were is beginning to sink in.Â  Our first 4 children were very easy, content, healthy babies, so our 5th child, Luke, has rocked our world a little bit.Â  He has always been an intense baby; very energetic, playful, sleepless, alert and specific about his wants and needs.Â  But during the past few months, he’s been sick as well, so the poor little guy is havingÂ  trouble being comforted.Â  We’ve taken him to the doctor a few times, and he’s been diagnosed with bronchitis and an ear infection.Â  As if these illnesses were not enough, his chest x-rays show he has an enlarged heart.Â  We are currently praying that this is not a symptom of something seriously wrong with little Luke’s health.Â  My husband made me promise not to google it since we’ve made a few medical scares in our family worse by scaring ourselves with random internet information.Â  We are currently waiting for our appointment with the pediatric cardiologist.Â  Scary stuff.

I will continue to update when I can.Â  In the meantime, prayers for Luke would be wonderful 

### Comments

**derek**Will do. I will bring this to my church kids as well- kids praying for a kiddo.  
**jamiahsh**I agree... sometimes googling things like this can be scarier than getting the word from the doctor. Continued love, hugs, and prayers to you all. Hope you don't have to wait too long.

# Willie The Pig

A few weeks ago, our family had a houseguest for a few days.

His name is Willie, and he is a 4-year-old pot bellied pig.Â  The pig-sitting saga began when during a visit to the local pet store, we overhead our friend who works there regretfully saying into the phone that she could no longer pig-sit. After a brief discussion, my husbadn and I unanimously agreed that watching Willie would be a fun and entertaining homeschool lesson for our kids on responsibility, animal care, and

Willie arrived at our house on a Wednesday afternoon – not much choice on our part but for the record, Wednesday is our busiest day of the week.Â  My husband works outside the home all day Wednesdays and then we have about an hour to rush through the dinner prep, eating, and cleanup before we are off to youth group..Â  needless to say that having a strange animal in the house did not help things go smoothly!Â  But back to our introduction to Willie..Â  His “mom” had told me that he weighs about 50 lbs., so I was prepared for his size, however he was a bit bigger than my kids and soem of their friends were thinking.

### Comments

# January 2012

My blogging style has changed – maybe temporarily, maybe permanently.Â  It’s evolved, if you will, to meet the growing needs of my family.Â  I no longer have time to sit down 5 times a week and write about my thoughts, my plans, my stories, my ideas, nor do I have the time to detail my agenda.Â  With 5 kids now and all of the new things we’re doing (new baby, homeschooling, new career for both Hubby and I, new ministries…), I rarely do find myself sitting down and when I am, it’s rare that a computer is in front of me.Â  So for awhile, I will just post updates on the members of my family and our lives.Â  This will still serve as a way to keep in touch with those who read my blog (those especially that I cannot find as much time as I’d like to talk on the phone with because of all the noise in my house – phone conversations are nearly impossible at certain times of the day!), and my blog will also continue to serve as a family diary for us to look back on someday and enjoy together.Â  Updates:

Family – we began homeschooling last fall, and we still like it.Â  We’ve had to make some adjustments to our planned curriculum since new little bro Luke (born Oct 7 2011) is quite a happy though demanding handful.Â  We began co-op on January 9, which is a local program they have here at a church for homeschoolers.Â  We go every Monday, and each grade level participates in 3 different classes taught by the moms of the group.Â  Since it’s our first year, I don’t have a class to teach yet – I pulled nursery duty.Â  Yep – 3 hours every week working in the nursery with my little Luke and about 5 other babies – Luke is the only boy.Â  My husband asked me how I managed that one (because I LOVE babies!), and I don’t know – lucky I guess!!Â  Apparently there are some ladies who don’t want to deal with diapers and fussy babies and all that, but for me, there couldn’t be a better job for me to serve at co-op.Â  My other kids really like co-op.Â  Beeber (age 3) is in Preschool, and he came home the first week with a “carrot project” – the top of a carrot in a cup of water.Â  It was supposed to grow some green out the top, but ours didn’t.Â  He didn’t seem to mind though.Â  It’s funny because when he handed me his carrot as I was picking him up, I thought it was the remainder of what he had done with his snack until the teacher explained it to me – haha!Â  Disney is in Kindergarten at co-op, and she really likes it.Â  Since we’ve decided to homeschool our kids beginning at 2nd grade, Disney is also in public school preschool, and she loves both of them!Â  The older girls enjoy co-op too; it gives some of the structure of school without all the unnecessary rules and drama, and the classes are taught from a Christian perspective.Â  I like that the kids are held accountable to other adults besides their parents for their assignments and quizzes.Â  The Sunday-Monday rush is taxing for our family since we have seven bags to pack Sunday night for co-op AFTER a big weekend spent getting ready for church service, but it’s worth it and we are settling into a routine.Â  Wednesday sees us leading groups at youth group, and we had a friend offer to take the 3 middle kids to AWANA and they really like that.Â  Thursday we have Bible study, and as I said, much of our weekends now consist of planning Sunday church service and TRYING to find time to rest and relax.Â  Overall, we’re busier than ever, but I feel happier than ever – God is so great!Â  I felt so run-down and was having a really hard time for a few months, but I had some checkups with the doctor and think I got the problem solved.Â  I feel better than I have in years and I can’t thank God enough!!Â  Now we just have to get Hubby some more sleep since he is waking with Luke all night, every night AND working 2 jobs, not to mention all of the help he gives me around the house.

The past few months, I’ve learned better to accept the circumstances of life as seasons that are constantly changing.Â  I’ve also learned to better accept that the way things are now are most definitely going to change in a few months.Â  I’ve learned to look forward to seeing what God has in store for my family rather than to let the ever-changing dynamics of our lives fill me with fear, dread or worry.Â  As far as things at the new church, we’ve set up a wonderful childrens ministry, and we have about 20 kids that come every weekend.Â  This is an AMAZING thing when you realize that the church had 0 kids attending only 4 months ago.Â  We have been contemplating ideas for a youth ministry (tweens and teens) as well as some other things, and only God knows where we will be with that in a month or two.Â  As I tried to say, things change so fast that it’s difficult to update it all on my blog, especially when this post alone has taken me a few weeks of having to put it aside and come back to add more later in order to finish it!

Before I stop writing for the day, I do want to share an amazing God story we got to witness this past Sunday.Â  My husband had been up late most of last week writing his sermon, and there was a pancake supper at church on Saturday night.Â  I ended up staying home with my boys because I was feeling run down and Luke was crabby and oozing things from places (you don’t really want more details, trust me…Â  baby stuff).Â  So late Saturday night, Hubby decided to start telling God in prayer that he needed rest, and I was doing the same.Â  Sunday morning, I was making my runs for church – I am the designated driver for the childrens ministry.Â  Many of the kids that come to our church need rides because their home situations are…Â  let’s say complicated.Â  Our church is located in the middle of the country about 6 miles from town, so I make 2-3 trips there in the morning to pick up the kids and to drive my own family.Â  Sunday we saw a man riding a bike on US Route 6; his bike was pulling a trailer that normally is used for pulling children, but his was loaded with supplies.Â  I wondered if he was homeless or someone who was making a long trek because it isn’t all that unusal to see someone journeying down US 6 – our little corner of the world seems to be on the way to everywhere!Â  So we see people journeying down 6 from time to time, but not usually in the winter.Â  On my last run, as I pulled into church, I noticed the man on the bike was also pulling into church.Â  I got the kids settled, then went out to welcome him.Â  Turns out, his name is Michealangelo, and he had been on his journey on his bike for FOUR MONTHS!Â  He’s from Los Angeles, and he began by biking north in California, and then coming out this way headed to New York – because God sent him on this journey.Â  He saw the sign for our little church on US 6 and decided to stop.Â  Michael has amazing faith, and he had amazing stories to tell!Â  My husband asked him if he would share some of these with our congregation, and Michael obliged, even after sharing his concerns about the way he was dressed.Â  I don’t have the time to go into all of the amazing details of the personal touches that God put on this story – I’ve already burnt the eggs that I was cooking and the house smells disgusting.Â  But I will sum it up briefly:Â  Michael’s unexpected visit meant that my husband’s sermon that he had carefully prepeared was not used last week because we were treated to the testimony of Michael instead.Â  So my husband can rest a little easier this week knowing that his sermon is already prepared.Â  Also, we’ve been talking in our own family and at church about really living a Godly life and what that looks like; we’ve been trying to make opportunities to GO OUT and serve God rather than just sitting around, doing the same old things for US.Â  Michael’s testimony reaffirmed these concepts – here is a man who has devoted his entire life to doing what God wants him to do.Â  He left the life that he knew and WENT OUT THERE and is sharing the Word…Â  And here I am frustrated because my words are failing to convey the story…Â  And I wish I could find the links to the info about this guy on the internet.Â  Hubby found them so maybe when he gets home from work I can ask him and add them to my blog.

But anyway, it was a magical Sunday, and I am thankful that I got to be a part of it!Â  I will leave you now with a little update about my little Luke – he tried his tot wheels for the first time in January.Â  He likes it, but only for short periods of time.Â  He is a grown up little guy in a baby’s body with a baby’s attention span.Â  He loves to stand, and practice walking ALREADY even though he is not yet 4 months old.Â  He also loves to watch other kids in action – his sisters and brother and also the kids at co-op and at youth group.Â  WOW – I really have to blog more often!Â  Once I got going, I had so much to say but not enough time to say it…Â  sorry that I was kind of all over the place, but that’s the price I pay for sitting down and trying to do this with all these kids running around and my many tasks to accomplish!Â  Until next time…

lukes first time in tot wheels.mov

### Comments

**taylhis**Mike's FB page: http://www.facebook.com/mike.mariona#!/mike.mariona?sk=wall  
**taylhis**Thanks Mysmichelle - good to hear from you!  
**Mysmichelle**Glad to know you are hanging in there, keep up the good work. Shesh just reading about your life is tiring!! Best wishes.  
**taylhis**There are 3 hours (classes) of co-op, and before regular co-op there is an optional creative arts hour where they do a year-end program. Since we joined co-op mid-year, we could not join creative arts, but I don't think I would have anyway since co-op itself is so intensive. I can't imagine getting all the kids ready even earlier in the morning and having more work for them to do.  
**jamiahsh**Me, too! Sounds great and inspiring. US 6 is a US route for a reason... it goes all the way from California to New York and we are just lucky enough to be a small stretch along it. That would be cool... entertainment from the co-op! ;) Glad that new endeavor is working out so well.  
**derek**Wow, you could have cheated and made a few blogs out of this one. :) It's great that homeschooling is going so well for you and I'm glad you got your preferred role this year in the co-op. Do they do plays together? I saw a Christmas play from a local co-op in December. It looks like you and C have an additional duty now with AWANA- helping your Cubbie, Sparky, and T in T'er (did I get that right?) memorize sections. :) I look forward to hearing more about this Michaelangelo. Thanks for sharing.

# Florida 2011 - Trip Diary - Part 4

*(NOTE – This is part 4/4 of our family’s trip diary detailing our vacation to Orlando, FL taken a year ago now.Â  This last installment is quite late, but better late than never, I think!)*

Friday, January 21 – Today our house seemed quite empty as our travel companions left and it was just Hubby, me and the kids.Â  We did enjoy a day of family time, beginning with breakfast at…Â  Sizzler.Â  Actually, I don’t remember where we ate breakfast.Â  To be honest, I put the Florida trip diary aside for the past few months and now I don’t remember where we ate breakfast.Â  I don’t remember all of the details of the day, but I have enough treasured vacation memories to know that it was an excellent day spent with my family.Â  We drove over to Downtown Disney to try something different for a change – we had never been there.Â  Downtown Disney has so much to see that we just walked around for a few hours and were entertained without having to spend money.Â  My personal favorite was the amazing Lego store where one can buy just about any type of Lego a heart desires.Â  You can buy the flat building platforms, bricks in any color of the rainbow, minifigs, and there was even a sort of Lego buffet – you can fill a container with all different types of pieces, any kinds you want: basic building blocks, doors, windows, steering wheels, joints, hinges, you name it.Â  There were stations with samples to play with, and I had to exercise some self-control to let the kids play instead of sitting there myself for hours on end.Â  Because this is Florida, there were Lego things to see outside too – little stations with ramps where you can build Lego vehicles and race them, as well as full scale Lego models of people, the London Bridge, and even a large Loch Ness monster in the lake:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2012/01/Florida-Jan-14-23-2011-040.jpg)

It’s really a good thing for my family’s budget that there is not a Lego store within 100 miles of our house; I could go nuts in there!

We also went to the Rainforest Cafe and a few other stores and restaurants where they had really cool decor for the kids to see.Â  There was a restaurant with huge dinosaurs where we stopped to use the bathroom, and the kids even enjoyed the Little Miss Match shop (a company that sells socks in sets of 3 and none of them match.Â  The store has socks and lots of other stuff that little girls love to accessorize with).Â  It began to rain, so we got on a boat to cross the lagoon to get to the bus.Â  If you are on vacation in the Orlando area and you find yourself with an extra day or some downtime, then I recommend taking a spin on the Disney transportation – especially if you are over-budget on your trip because it’s all free.Â  A fair warning that Disney property is so large that riding the buses, boats and monorails can take up a significant part of your day, but it is a fun and FREE way to see the sights of Disney.Â  So we took a bus to the Grand Floridian hotel to catch the monorail, just for fun.Â  Parking at Downtown Disney is free, so we got on Disney grounds without even having to pay parking!Â  We did have to spend a good 45 minutes on the bus though, but by now it was pouring, so we didn’t mind too much.Â  Besides, Hubby surprised me on the bus when he presented me with a Severus Snape minifig that he had picked up as a surprise without me seeing when we were at the Lego store!!Â  I could not even tell him that Snape is my favorite Harry Potter character because he would have wanted to know why – I didn’t want to spoil the last Harry Potter movie for him when it wasn’t out yet at that time.

At the Grand Floridian, I had to take some kids to the bathroom, and while I was in there, Hubby got a last minute great deal on a character dinner for us!Â  So we enjoyed dinner with Cinderella, her prince, her step-sisters and her step-mother.Â  The food was wonderful, and the kids loved meeting the characters as they walked around to greet tables.Â  After that, we made our way back to our car, and we were exhausted…Â  I think we called it a night – I’m not really sure; it’s taken me so long to finish this trip diary that my memory has faded.Â  All I know is it was a really great day, and a super way to end a wonderful vacation – SO WISH we could go back this year!

Saturday, January 22, 2011 – On this day I know we began to make our way back to Ohio, but I don’t remember the details.Â  I think we had told the kids we were going to do some souvenir shopping, but we ran out of time and just wanted to hit the road.Â  Then we had an idea – there are Cracker Barrel restaurants lined up along the expressway all the way home, so we found one on the GPS and got there just before it closed.Â  Cracker Barrels have little stores in them, and the one we stopped at (in Georgia) had a great sale going on.Â  The kids were able to shop and had fun getting some great deals – it was a nice way to add a little more fun to our trip.Â  We arrived home very early Sunday morning, if I’m not mistaken, and probably slept all day and unpacked.Â  SUPER trip that made awesome memories – can’t wait to do it again someday, I hope!!

### Comments

**taylhis**Yup - first year in awhile not going to FL. It's the new job(s), financial limitations, the fact that we wouldn't really be able to fit all of us + luggage in the car for a 20+ hour trip... just not in the cards for this year.  
**derek**Is this your first year not going to Florida in awhile? New career and all would prevent it I would gather. In the two or three times I went down there I don't think I ever went to downtown disney. Hmm. I think next time I go I will have to do that and maybe some of the non-disney/universal sites as well.  
**jamiahsh**Downtown Disney is VERY cool! I went for an open casting call there about 6 (or maybe 7) years ago! Legoland was there, Planet Hollywood, Rainforest Cafe ("VOLCANO!"), and the Christmas Shop that I had to stop and get a surprise for Ma2 who always decorated her entire house year after year. A GREAT trip once again!

# Harvey, You Were Awesome

I was thinking that I should get in one more blog post before the New Year.Â  I was going to write a general update about my beautiful family, but before I got to writing it, I found myself thinking of Harvey.

Let’s begin at December 26, 2011.Â  My husband and the kids surprised me with a wonderful Christmas gift:Â  they had **all** saved and planned for months to buy us a zoo membership.Â  Our family loves zoos and has had a membership to the local zoo (whichever zoo happened to be local at the time)Â  for as long as Hubby and I have been married.Â  I remember that our most recent zoo membership expired on April 1st of last year – I remember this because I made sure to visit on April 1st for what would be our last visit to the zoo for many months.Â  For budget reasons, it didn’t make a lot of sense for us to renew the membership because I was expecting our 5th child in October – what pregnant lady wants to take her 4 kids to the zoo in the summer?Â  Not this one.Â  So we let the membership lapse.Â  I missed our visits to the zoo, but at the same time, plagued by pregnancy related nausea and fatigue, followed by post-cesarean surgery recovery and the joys (and trials) of caring for a new baby brother to 4 other kids, I didn’t *really* miss our visits to the zoo…

But then my family surprised me with that membership.Â  Now that I’m healed from the surgery.Â  Now that the baby has stayed with the babysitter a few times and actually liked it.Â  Now that I can take my home-schooled kids to the zoo any time I feel like taking a field trip!

This past week was a great one!Â  Hubby was able to flex his work schedule to spend a lot of time with the family, and we all enjoyed the break, which included visiting the Toledo Zoo.Â  In our travels to zoos over the years, we saw many amazing things and learned many amazing things.Â  Among them:Â  zoos are GREAT to visit in the winter!Â  Many animals are so much more active in the cold weather, and there are many less people, allowing visiting families opportunities not normally offered (Example: my kids made bird feeders as a craft at the zoo and *loved* it!!).

Being winter, some of the exhibits were closed.Â  Other animal environments were rearranged from the last time we had been there, so we couldn’t quite keep tabs on our familiar favorites.Â  We did notice that the Great Apes area was rearranged.Â  There was a sign saying that the Great Apes area was going to be closed for the Lights Before Christmas event, but we saw the gorillas and orangutans, so we didn’t think much of it.Â  Until we didn’t see Harvey the Chimp.Â Â  When I got home, I looked in the Toledo Zoo’s newsroom onlineÂ  and saw that Harvey had passed away in August.Â  It was sad for me; Harvey’s exhibit was one of my favorite stops at the zoo.Â  He was an elderly chimp who loved little kids, and here is a video I have of him playing with my kids.Â  I can’t be too sad though; Harvey died in his sleep, at the healthy chimp age of 52 – DOUBLE the average life expectancy of a chimp in captivity.

My other favorite exhibit at the zoo, the orangutan family, was also rearranged – during our visit we saw only the mom and daughter – what happened to Boomer (my favorite zoo animal until Harvey stole the title), the patriarch of the orangs?Â  Such things are commonplace in zoos, and I’m thankful that I once again have a membership that gives me insight to studying the wonderful creatures inhabiting the zoo.Â  As much as I mourn my old favorites, I will be looking forward to watching the new additions as well:Â  baby Lucas the elephant, the new baby tigers soon to be exhibited, and the new addition soon to be announced to the public due any day!Â  Yes, I have inside info!Â  One thing I love doing while visiting the zoo is talking to the volunteers, and one was beside herself with the awesome news of an impending birth!Â  So much so that she couldn’t keep it to herself, even if she was supposed to!Â  Would I do the same if I was a zoo volunteer?Â  Dunno…Â  but in the meantime, a HUGE THANK YOU GOES OUT TO HUBBY AND THE KIDS!!!Â  I’ve already enjoyed my zoo membership more than you would have ever hoped for when you planned and saved!!Â  LOVE YOU GUYS!!!

I wish everyone reading this a very happy and safe New Year!

Here are tribute videos to Harvey the chimp – watch how he played with my kids!Â  We will miss him!

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.

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### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**What a wonderful gift from your family. I know how much you all love the zoo. I remember when you and I used to go to Brookfield. Enjoy your gift.  
**jamiahsh**Happy New Year! I remember hearing of Harvey's passing but must have inadvertently forgot to mention it to you. Sorry. Your family is the best... WHAT A SURPRISE!  
**derek**Happy new year. Here I thought tangents was down again and it turns out it's just my blog. Expired from inactivity? ;)

# Monday, Monday

Don’t you just hate when you run out of certain household staples and a trip to the store becomes imminent whether you planned it for that day or not?Â  Happened to me today, and wouldn’t you know, it was a cold December rainy day.Â  Complicating what should have been a simple run to the store were my 5 kids and the fact that the rain decided to change over into sleet and ice during the trip.

As always, it took us almost an hour to get ready to go.Â  It takes forever for the kids to listen well enough and to stop playing long enough to pull on socks, shoes, and coats.Â  Since 2 of my kids are in diapers and one is being bottle fed, my diaper bag these days is huge and takes some time to pack every time I leave the house; especially when I have to take breaks from packing it to tend to the baby and the various needs of various kids.Â  Finally, we were ready to leave the house, but somewhere in the melee I decided to leave my 2 oldest kids home.Â  Contributing to my decision, Sammie was having a rough and crabby day, so I decided it would be most productive for the family if she and her brother were separated since that’s where today’s fights were centered.Â  Except that meant that I had to come up with a home-schooling project for the girls to do while the rest of us were out, which meant further delay.

I get most of our family’s staples at Walmart because they are usually cheapest and it’s the whole one-stop shopping thing.Â  Except that their milk prices are horrible, so today I found it worth the savings to unload all 3 kids (ages 2 mos., 3 years and 5 years) to make an extra stop at Rite Aid.Â  Besides, I’ve had a hankering for some Combos and Rite Aid often has them on sale.Â  But wouldn’t you know it, today was a Monday and there wasn’t a sale on Combos, nor was there any milk on the shelves at all!Â  “The truck is usually here by now,” said the clerk when I asked about the absence of milk, but his musing didn’t help me any.Â  So I re-loaded all the little kids and headed to Walmart – by now the rain was turning to sleet and the driving visibility was compromised.Â  We made it across town safely with a quick pitstop at the gas station because it was coffee Monday, which meant all sizes of coffee are just $.89.Â  But they were out of 24 oz. cups.Â  Which meant that I had to have a 20 ounce cup for the same price as a 24 ounce cup would have cost – the kind of stuff that normally gets my goat.Â  No matter, I shouldn’t have coffee greed anyway, but now I was cold, wet, and slightly irritated…Â  and I had all these KIDS with which to deal…Â  that extra 4 ounces of coffee could have served me well!

On to Walmart where I had to circle the lot 3 times to find a decent parking spot.Â  Not that I’m lazy, but it makes me nervous to walk through the parking lot with so many little kids, at least one of whom doesn’t listen well and tends to run off whenever he pleases.Â  I got a break because my parking spot was next to a cart return, so I loaded all 3 kids into a cart – though it was a bit of a feat to fit them all in along with my huge diaper bag.Â  We had plans to switch into a more kid-friendly cart once we got inside, but the kid-rider carts were all buried behind other carts, leaving me no choice but to leave my kid-filled cart in the path of every other shopper who entered the Walmart in that particular 5 minute span.Â  The shopping itself was uneventful, unless you count the fact that my son tumbled out of the cart (did it have to be while he was explaining to me how he likes Justin Beiber’s songs just not Justin Beiber himself?Â  And one wonders what that all even means when coming from a 3-year-old…)Â  We had to stop a few times to nurse his wounds and to feed his brother, but then we were on our way.Â  I didn’t realize until my groceries were all bagged up that I forgot my wallet, meaning that I had to drag all the kids back out to the car in the now freezing rain (it actually made noises as it bounced against our cheeks) to get my wallet and thenÂ  to return to the store to buy our groceries…Â Â  not to mention maneuvering BACK to the car to load up all the kids and the groceries…

Following that, my intentions were good; I was going to bring Hubby a special half-price fountain drink from Sonic for Happy Hour, but I ran out of gas.Â  Well, I didn’t run out of gas and get stranded in the cold, so for that I’m thankful.Â  But after all of the illustrations of Murphy’s Law I witnessed on this Monday, I decided not to risk stopping at the gas station again for gas – coffee Monday or not.

In case you had the same sort of Monday and need a theme 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

**Mysmichelle**Hang in there girl, 5 kids is no small undertaking!! Winter + Monday+ shopping can not end up good. Glad you made it through.  
**jamiahsh**WOW! Now THAT IS a Monday! UGH!

# Little Luke Likes Lights

Thought I would post a quick little update about our youngest child who is growing so quickly that I don’t know if we can call him our “new addition” any longer!Â  Luke James is almost 2 months old, and among his likes are being held, listening to music, and looking at lights.Â  He’s been especially impressed by the colorful lights on the Christmas tree.Â  These things are common favorites among many almost-2-month-olds, but Luke is a very special baby – he has been able to hold his head up for a few weeks and is extremely alert for a baby his age.Â  His VERY FAVORITE thing to do in the whole world is to be held like this while his little hands open and close and his eyes bulge as he takes in the world around him:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/12/Lukes-fav-position-11-26-11-1.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/12/chuck-e-chzl-12-3-11-13.jpg)Luke doesn’t sleep well at night, but we aren’t really surprised because none of our 5 kids were very good sleepers as babies.Â  But Luke doesn’t sleep much during the day, either – he takes about one good nap per day about 3-4 days per week.Â  And by “good nap” I mean him sleeping for over an hour without waking up.Â  Actually, I thought of the perfect way to describe Luke the other day: he is an *intense* baby.Â  He wants **what** he wants **when** he wants it, and he’s not shy about asking.Â  Don’t get me wrong; it’s not that he is a disagreeable baby, and he is very smiley.Â  He’s just very demanding, and since he is always awake…Â  well, you can understand why my free time is down to almost none and the blog posts from me remain infrequent.Â  Especially because he demands to have 100% of the available attention, whether it’s eye contact while playing with him or using both hands to feed him – he is not a fan of a multi-tasking parent.

He’s already able to play – he loves looking into the eyes of people who play with him, and he especially likes to exchange baby talk with “goo” being his favorite word.Â  He loves when his sisters and brother play with him, but it’s hard to tell if he has a favorite yet.Â  Christopher is 3 and Luke’s only brother, but he doesn’t play with him often – it seems like Christopher is afraid of hurting Luke, and he also seems shy about talking to him or playing with him.Â  Disney likes to hold Luke (she’s 5), but she loses interest in a matter of minutes.Â  Taylor is almost 12, and she enjoys Luke’s cuteness, but she is too busy with a life of her own to spend a lot of time with her baby brother.Â  Sammie stands out as the remarkable sibling.Â  7-year-old Sammie just adores her baby brother; she’s always asking to hold him, and she doesn’t soon grow tired of it.Â  She plays with Luke, asks how he’s doing, expresses interest in his activities, misses him when she’s gone, and loves seeing cute pictures of him.Â  I’m looking forward to watching their special bond strengthen even further as they grow up together.Â  His brother and sisters love their baby brother in their own ways, and any time Luke does something new, he is crowded by an admiring entourage that can rival that of most celebrities.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/12/Sammie-and-Luke-12-4-11-3.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/12/Sammie-and-Luke-12-4-11-2.jpg)

Luke also really likes baths.Â  He smiles like crazy the whole time he’s in the bath; he’ll even throw out a couple of “goo”s and “gaa”s and doesn’t seem to notice that he sounds different when his ears are under water.

Luke is also the tie-breaker in our family – we have 3 brown-eyed people and 3 blue-eyed people.Â  Two months old is too early to tell what color a baby’s eyes will be, so right now we don’t know which “side” will win.Â  It’s interesting also that our 2 blue-eyed kids are left-handed while our 2 brown-eyed kids are right-handed.Â  Will Luke be a tie-breaker in only the eye color category or will he break the mold and be a blue-eyed righty or a brown-eyed lefty?

Even with his intensity, Luke is a wonderful baby and it’s been nothing but a pleasure so far to get to know him as his personality develops – I wouldn’t change any part of him or anything about him, no matter how far behind on stay-at-home-mommy-work I am!Â  Here he is wearing the adorable camouflage hoodie someone got him – it’s so cute!Â  And here’s an interesting bit of culture clash for you – where I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, Luke would wear this and we’d be trendy.Â  Here in the woods of rural Northwest Ohio, I put the camo hoodie on Luke, and we heard no fewer than FIVE comments about hunting and him being a little woodsmanÂ  

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/11/Luke-likes-his-camo-hoodie-11-30-11-2.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**What a wonderful blog. It seems like forever since I have seen him. I can't wait to hold him in a couple of weeks. And don't worry about being behind on the "stay at home mommy work". You see how fast your children grow up. You MUST enjoy them while they are little.  
**jamiahsh**And nice use of alliteration!  
**jamiahsh**Well.. we ARE in the throngs of deer hunting season, so no surprise there! I can't believe how much he has grown! Look at that precious face :D

# King Praising King

Our new addition, Luke James, is almost 2 months old (already!), and he loves music.Â  While I sit cuddling, feeding, and playing with him, I’ve been perusing youtube.com looking for music for us to enjoy together.Â  Being the time of year that it is, we’ve really been appreciating Christmas tunes, especially Martina McBride and Celine Dion’s versions of O Holy Night.Â  How I love to sit with my little Luke and think about what the lyrics of these songs REALLY mean!Â  I’ve also been especially appreciative of Elvis’ gospel songs and praise music lately.Â  My favorites are “How Great Thou Art” and “Put Your Hand in the Hand”.Â  Today it came to my attention that my friend’s dad composed a praise song for Elvis and sang backup for the track with his music group, The Imperials!Â  How cool is that!Â  Thanks to Amanda who shared her dad’s talent on this song, “If the Lord Wasn’t Walking by My Side”:

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**Pun intended in the title of the movie.  
**jamiahsh**HOW FUN IS THAT! To know someone who has a connection to E! I think I have come to appreciate Elvis' gospel music more than his mainstream. I like Put Your Hand in the Hand. Did you know that he played a doctor (almost said a priest but I knew that was wrong) in his last movie "Change of Habit" Mary Tyler Moore played a nun. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2mxa1iZZHc&feature=related Still think it is awesome that the only Grammys he received were for his gospel music.

# Getting Old... Er, Growing Up

Wednesday November 9 is the 2011 Country Music Awards – an event once so important to me that I would put my schedule on hold so I could enjoy watching this annual awards show on tv.Â  For a few years now, I have committed my Wednesday nights to leading a small group for church’s student ministries.Â  The past 2 years, one of my kids happened to be sick on the same Wednesday nights as the awards show, so I volunteered to be the parent to stay home with the sick kid and I didn’t have to miss the show nor play hooky from youth group – I had a legitimate reason for calling in sick.Â  This year, there is again a virus circulating through our family, and I think I have a mild case…Â  but things have changed.Â  Even if one of my kids was ill tonight, I would be the one to go to youth group and let Hubby stay home with the sick kid(s).Â  Luckily, I think we’ll both be able to make it to youth group tonight, and I am so excited!Â  The new series we started last week is about demons, and it gave me a great connecting point with my girls – we had a great group time last week!Â  Now that I’m back from maternity leave and free from the distractions of pregnancy, I am stoked to build relationships with my youth group girls and help them build their spiritual relationships with Jesus Christ.Â  I am so excited about youth group tonight that the country awards show hardly matters to me – I might try to set up a recording device so I can watch it later, but watching it live doesn’t matter to me at all when once it was dire for my entertainment.

Maybe I’m getting old…Â  no, I think I’m growing up!Â  It’s so cool to me that God is teaching me about prioritizing and also about using my free time and leading me toward hobbies that glorify Him.Â  How amazing is it that I can be entertained, relaxed, refreshed, and feel fulfilled, not by doing something that only **I** enjoy but by doing something that affects others in a positive way as well?

### Comments

**taylhis**Here it is a week later and there is more virus... think there are 3-4 running through our house right now. Well anyway, thanks for the well wishes! Mysmichlle - good to hear from you again! I had that feeling a few years ago when I started to drift away from the country music scene. I hardly listen to country radio anymore, so I wonder if I will recognize the music, singers or jokes? Still haven't watched it yet...  
**Mysmichelle**I'm proud of you for your new priorities, and if it makes it any easier, they made me feel old because I hardly recognized any of the people participating. It didn't seem very "country music" to me this year. I'm so glad you are doing so well and happy with your new additions!  
**derek**Hope you're feeling better, soon if not now. Yeah, I've taken time off from reading the blogs- sorry.  
**taylhis**I think it's just a slow virus - slow to come on, slow to leave. I felt increasingly awful as the day wore on, but there was no way I was going to miss tonight, especially after writing this post ;) I must admit, meds helped me get thru the night. We'll see what tomorrow brings.  
**jamiahsh**Growing in wisdom, perhaps? But glad that the virus is hopefully running its course?

# How Hubby Saved Halloween

October is normally one of the busiest months for our family, and that was true before October 2011 – the month that saw us being blessed with a new baby, starting homeschooling, and Hubby starting a new job/career all at the same time.Â  There are so many fun fall and Halloween events and activities that we like to do this time of year; we didn’t even realize exactly how many until this year when we had to scale it back a bit.Â  We skipped the corn mazes, the pumpkin farms, and all the haunted attractions this year.Â  We did take the kids to the mall for the trick-or-treating there, and it was lots of fun even if there were 50 times more people than last year – there was a line circling the perimeter of the entire mall!Â  Not a problem, seeing as how we live near the smallest mall I’ve ever seen and the line was continuously moving – as I said, lots of fun!

I heard about a congressman on the news who wants to pass legislation to move Halloween to the 4th Saturday in October because it’s safer for kids and easier to work around school if trick-or-treating is always on a Saturday and earlier in the day.Â  Some lady they interviewed for her opinion on the street was against it; she said that would be like moving Christmas to make it more convenient.Â  Umm, not even close in my opinion, but I won’t go there.Â  My point is that the area in which I live always schedules the Halloween stuff on Saturdays anyway – I guess we’re ahead of our time here in rural Ohio, haha.Â  This year we had 2 Halloween parties and our trick-or-treat on Saturday October 29.Â  Except we found out during the mall trick or treat (which was on Tuesday night) that baby Luke is a homebody – he gets really fussy when we try to take him places, especially if it’s outdoor places, and yes, we do bundle him up.Â  Saturday was a very big day for all of us because Hubby’s and my lack of sleep finally caught up to us.Â  We began the day on a very grumpy note, and everything was very hectic as we tried to get our work done at the church and ready the kids for the Halloween festivities.Â  We made it to the first party – the community Halloween party they have at the ice rink (no ice of course).Â  We had tons of fun as usual, and we even got on the hayride before the rain came and before the line got too long.Â  But Luke decided he was finished with the Halloween party before we were.Â  No sticking this baby in a stroller and feeding him on the go like we did with the other 4 kids; he just won’t have it and voices his complaints loudly.Â  Luke is our fussiest baby; the others were all very adaptable babies – in retrospect, I guess we were spoiled.Â  We are a very busy family, so either us scaling things back for Luke or trying to get him to adapt to our busyness will be interesting.Â  He can go from what I call ‘zero to screaming’ in a matter of seconds, but don’t get me wrong – he’s oh-so-incredibly cute and lovable.Â  It’s just that his idea of a good time is being held and cuddled – constantly.Â  Which also explains my lack of blogging lately – while I am feeling better after being sick most of the pregnancy and am recovering well after the surgery, I am not a very successful one-handed typist.Â  There really isn’t a choice between cuddling a cute baby or blogging, now is there?Â  So anyway, I took Luke to the car while Hubby finished up at the party with the other kids, and we decided to put off trick-or-treating until another day and do it in a nearby community that had scheduled it on Sunday.Â  We also decided that Hubby would stay home with Luke that evening while I took the other kids to our other planned Halloween party.Â  We went home and tossed a couple of frozen pizzas in the oven for a quick dinner, but wouldn’t you know by the way that Saturday was going – we burnt a pizza and only the kids got fed.Â  At least our evening plan worked out – I went to the party with the 4 older kids, and we all had a blast.Â  Luke actually let Hubby catch a nap while we were gone too!

Sunday we drove the 10 miles to the town where we were going to trick-or-treat, but we quickly became confused – no one was out; it was like a ghost town.Â  Hubby stopped at a gas station and found out that the trick-or-treating was from 3:30-5.Â  We had readied ourselves and arrived there ready to trick-or-treat from 5:30-7.Â  Apparently my lack of sleep had impaired my ability to read the time correctly in the newspaper.Â  I can’t beleive I did that – I had checked the paper probably about FIVE times throughout the week to make sure I had the right time, day, and place.Â  And I had misread the information each of those FIVE times.Â  So my genius Hubby made us a plan.Â  He stopped at Walmart and picked up 2 huge bags of candy – at full price I might add, which was hard for him.Â  He loves store clearances and sales, and it’s a testament to how much he loves his family that he bought all that candy at full price knowing that it would be half off in just a day or two.Â  But anyway, we got the candy and stopped at the dollar store and bought each kid a flashlight.Â  We drove over to the park, and Hubby hid the candy all around the park and then we let the kids loose with their flashlights and trick-or-treat bags to find it.Â  They loved it!Â  They said they liked it even more than trick-or-treating, and we even got an unprompted handmade thank you card later that evening from 7-year-old Sammie – and I quote, “I love wat we did today”.Â  I should add how great the kids were in the car as we tried to figure out what was going on with the trick-or-treating.Â  They were all in their costumes and ready to go, and then mom and dad starting driving around aimlessly.Â  When they found out they wouldn’t be trick-or-treating after all, there was not a tear, not even a protest.Â  Just a few questions and much patience as they waited to see what we would do instead – they are AMAZING!

I think I have some video of the kids at the mall, but other than that, things were way too hectic during our Halloween celebrations to take many pictures or video.Â  We have our wonderful memories though, and those of course are priceless.

Here’s a picture of my kids dressed in their Halloween costumes on the day they arrived in the mail from Grammie.Â  11-year-old Taylor was a pirate, 7-year-old Sammie and 5-year-old Disney were princesses, and 3-year-old Christopher was Superman:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/11/9-5-11-kids-halloween-costumes-002.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Better than Easter Egg hunting I dare say! Way to go pal! I don't think you can "change" the official October 31st but it is good when the community adapts to make the festivities relatively accessible for the most people. I was CK/Superman one year when I worked at Wally World in 3rd. The surprise was on me as I did not have to work that night, but it was still fun. Glad you had a fun holiday, sleep deprived that it was ;)  
**justj**Great thinking! I always wondered about moving halloween to a 'more' convenient time. I like it best when it is on the 31st.  
**Phyllis Beyer**What a wonderful blog, Lisa. Chris is a genius. I can only imagine how much fun the kids had at the park - great idea! I wish I lived closer. I would cuddle Luke all the time while you went with the other kids.

# Warning About Potty Training At Walmart

My little boy Christopher is 3 years old, and we’ve been working on potty training for a while now.Â  He gets it, but he just doesn’t remember to make it to the potty every time he has to go.Â  The other day we were in Walmart, and he wanted to use the potty.Â  Because he was with mom, he had to go in the ladies’ room, and because he is an independent little guy, he wanted to go into the stall by himself.Â  Next thing I know, there was a huge CRASH!

It seems that Christopher had taken off his diaper and tried to throw it away in the little “garbage can” that they have in each stall of a ladies bathroom.Â  The receptacle somehow fell off the wall, clattered to the floor, and now used tampon applicators were rolling everywhere.Â  Beyond disgusting, right?Â  How are those things not a bio-hazard?Â  Being the considerate little boy that he is, Christopher tried to pick up the garbage, but thankfully I was right there and shouted NOOO just in time before he touched anything.Â  After that happened, my sensitive little guy was trying to finish going potty with his hands on his ears.Â  He wouldn’t let go, not only because of the loud noise the “garbage can” made when it fell but also because the automatic flushing toilets really scare him too.Â  After we got all that sorted out, he did pry his hands off his ears long enough to wash them, but then those darn automatic energy-saver hand dryers got the best of him – those things are loud!Â  In the end, potty mission accomplished, but in the future, it might just be easier for us to stay home until we’re done with this potty training business!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/10/blog-pic.jpg)

### Comments

**Jamiahsh**Poor little buddy. Hope he wasn't too traumatized ;) but keep up the good work Beebs!  
**taylhis**Yes - exactly the variety I was talking about. SO LOUD! And those are so powerful that they actually blow the skin on your hand around. Ok, that just sounds weird...  
**derek**Yikes! Lot's of noise in today's public restrooms. One dealer I have been to has a newer type of blow dryer, vortex is the name I think. It is high speed, and as you can imagine as the air speed increases, so does the noise. A mini jet-engine...

# So How'd It Go?

Overall, so much better than my fears were telling me it would go.Â  I had my second cesarean section on Friday, October 7.Â  Boy was I nervous beforehand!Â  I figured I would write out the details, just in case we decide to do this again I can look back at it and know what to expect.Â  So I warn you, if you’re squeamish about medical procedures or just plain not interested, then skip the post.Â  But if I can make just one person feel more at ease about their impending cesarean, even if it’s future me, then it’s worth writing this all out and sharing the details.

The day of my scheduled cesarean, the hospital told me to arrive at 5:30 AM.Â  Hubby and I set the alarm for 4:30 and got there a little early so we could visit the hospital chapel and pray together.Â  Thankfully, Grandma had arrived in town the night before and had our 4 kids at her hotel.Â  The first nurse we asked did not know where the chapel was in the hospital, which I found strange, but then again, our local hospital is undergoing major expansion and renovation, so I guess that’s the excuse I’ll let them have for the fact that their chapel (when we finally found someone who knew where it was) was just an empty room.Â  No matter because God listens where ever you are, so we prayed together and went back to the maternity ward where they began to prep me for my surgery.Â  They put an IV in, which didn’t go very well.Â  Seems I have great veins in my arms for drawing blood (theÂ  blood techs always ooh and ahh over me and my veins, which makes them weird in my book), but in my hands, not so much.Â  Getting IVs is always very painful for me, and it bruises up my whole hand.Â  This day was no exception.Â  It hurt a lot, and they had to give me 2 holes before they got it right.Â  Then the nurse comes and tells me that because of the combination of it being my 5th baby and the fact that I had to have a blood transfusion last time that they were going to have to give me a back-up port in my other hand just in case.Â  So they start doing that, and that one hurts even more.Â  Next thing I know, I have a golf ball sized lump in my hand – “The vein blew” the nurse told me.Â  I don’t ever want to hear anyone tell me that something carrying blood throughout my body “blew”, and I still haven’t googled that one to see what it is because it sounds so nasty.Â  And at this point, I’m near tears thinking that if things are going wrong already, what will happen when they cut me open?Â  But they finally got my second IV port in, and then after the insertion of the catheter (not a big deal and I will spare the details), I was ready to be wheeled off to the surgery room in a wheelchair.

Luckily I had taken the c-section class at the hospital, so the cold sterility of the operating room did not alarm me, and I also knew that my Hubby had to wait outside until certain preparations were made.Â  On our way into the operating room, I saw the backup doctor, and he was talking to himself in the hallway in kind of a strange way.Â  He is known for being a bit different, so it didn’t really worry me, especially since I knew my regular doctor would be there also.Â  Besides, Dr. Strange delivered my 3rd child, and she was the easiest delivery I had.Â  I will spare details for what happened next; it’s a bit personal – if you really need to know how they prep a patient for a c-section then take a class at your local hospital.Â  Then the anesthesiologist came in, and my heart sank when I realized it was the same lady who gave me my epidural during the birth of baby #4 – the epidural that never worked.Â  She gave me my spinal, and it pinched a little, but much less than an epidural, not really a big deal at all.Â  My legs started to get tingly, and I was really starting to panic big time.Â  I kept asking the anesthesiologist if everything I was feeling was normal, and she was so nice and reassuring. Â  They had a blood pressure cuff on my arm which kept going off every few minutes, and they also gave me oxygen in my nose – I felt very well cared for.Â  They let Hubby in, and he and the anesthesiologist (so tired of typing that word, think I’ll just call her Dr. Drug from now on) sat by my head the whole time.Â  Dr. Drug said that they would test me to make sure that I was numb before they did anything, but guess what – they didn’t.Â  I brought this up to someone after it was over, and they had a good point – they probably tested my numbness but didn’t even tell me about it.Â  Since it was working, I didn’t feel the test, so they proceeded.Â  Duh.Â  It’s just that I was so nervous about the numbing not working after what happened with my epidural; you can’t blame me for being concerned.

The next thing I remember is the tugging and pulling, which is also something for which the c-section class prepared me.Â  But it was actually much less unpleasant than I had panicked it would be.Â  It’s just that it seemed to take forever.Â  They said it would take about 1-2 minutes and according to Hubby, it took 4 minutes.Â  If you ask me, I would say it took 15 minutes.Â  The whole time I could hear the doctors talking and I kept asking Hubby what they were saying because I was panicking about the health of the baby and the fact that I was lying there sliced open on the table.Â  He said they were just discussing their techniques.Â  My Hubby kept looking down there, past the curtain, and I kept wondering how he could do that – if it were him lying on a table sliced open, I don’t know that I could look.Â  But then again, I don’t think it was like surgery looks on tv – I was picturing a completely open body cavity, but that’s a different kind of surgery.Â  I guess that’s why there was all that tugging and pulling.Â  So anyway, finally Hubby says that the baby is out, but I don’t hear crying, so I begin to panic even more (notice a trend here?Â  I am a worrywart, in case you haven’t noticed).Â  But both people seated at my head tell me everything is fine, and then I hear the baby (Luke James) cry.Â  I feel so relieved, and I can’t believe it’s over.Â  Except it’s not.Â  They clean up the baby, and they hold him up in front of my face for about a millisecond, and then they take him out of the room along with my husband and probably about half the staff that was on hand.Â  At some point, I don’t remember when, but I’m pretty sure it was after the baby was born, Dr. Drug held up a little vial and says, “I’m going to give you this.”Â  She puts it in my IV, and I find out later that it was Duramorph, a form of morphine.Â  I’m wondering now if this is something they give all their c-section patients (those who are not opposed to medications), or if I got the “panicking patient” special.Â  At any rate, after the morphine, my memory gets fuzzy, but I do remember lying there getting sewed up (still not feeling a thing below my chest).Â  My complaint was that it seemed to take FOREVER because I had nothing to do but lie there, and all I could think about was seeing my baby.Â  I even got envious of my poor husband, because here I had just gone through this surgery and now HE was getting to spend all this time with the baby and I hadn’t even barely gotten a look at him.Â  They should really think about putting a tv in there or something…Â  or would that distract the doctors?Â  Best not to think about it, I guess.Â  I had to keep talking myself out of looking at the ceiling because it was reflective, and I could see a little of me and a lot of red there – they ought to fix that too; I would bet that no one wants to see themselves getting surgery.Â  But finally they were finished, and a few of the staff people worked together to lift my helpless body onto theÂ  gurney for the transport back to my room.

When I got there, there was Hubby with the baby, all excited to see me, and then I finally got to hold our new son.Â  And he was (is) so incredibly beautiful.Â  The rest of the day was wonderful.Â  Slowly my legs began to work again, and I could not believe it that I had absolutely no pain!Â  It did not resonate with me that I was on drugs.Â  I did feel kind of loopy, but I didn’t really think much of it and enjoyed the euphoria of having a new healthy baby and the relief that the worst part was over.Â  Weather-wise it ended up being a terrible weekend to be stuck in the hospital – it was 80 degrees out and sunny, and the grandmas took my kids to the zoo on Saturday, so I had to miss that, but at least they got to go.Â  When I was released from the hospital on Monday, it was still very nice out for a few days, but I didn’t feel up to going outside and by the time I did, Northern Ohio fall weather was in full swing and I’ve been cold ever since.Â  Oh well, such is life, and my Hubby had perfect advice when I was bummed about missing the beautiful fall colors (it was amazing how different our neighborhood looked with all the leaves on the ground after just 3 days!).Â  He said, “There will be plenty more color-changing seasons, but there are only so many baby seasons.”Â  What a wise, wonderful man!

Back to my recovery in the hospital, it went fairly smoothly, although I did have a lot of pain starting Saturday once the morphine wore off.Â  The baby was up all night on Friday, but I didn’t mind at all because I just wanted to be with him.Â  I haven’t watched tv in years, but over the weekend, I watched countless episodes of 3’s Company, Roseanne (forgot about the one where Becky gets into the liquor cabinet, haha!), and Everybody Loves Raymond – you know, shows from when tv was actually good.Â  I learned about the Prohibition era from PBS, and I also learned that there are conspiracy theorists who believe that there really isn’t gold in Fort Knox – hmm, that’s something to think about I guess.Â  Luke slept a full 5 hours on Saturday night from 1:30-6:30, and so did I since no one came for my blood until 6:30.Â  Last time I was in the hospital, I seem to remember them coming for blood every hour on the hour which made it really hard to sleep, but then again I had a lot of complications last time including the need for an emergency cesarean and a blood transfusion.Â  Sunday night, little Luke decided he wasn’t going to sleep again, and I woke up from my 45 minute nap that night feeling terrible – achy and lots of other pain, and chills because of a fever I was running.Â  Not only that, but there was a mean nurse who informed me in a not-so-nice way that I was over my limit of acetaminophen, which meant I was not allowed any pain medicine.Â  That really ticked me off; partly because of the way she said it, and partly because no one had given me any indication that this was a problem.Â  Had they warned me that I was getting near the limit, I would have declined some of the meds offered to me to avoid this.Â  Actually, all of the other nurses had been telling me that I should stay ahead of the pain.Â  They specifically said not to wait until the pain was really bad to take the meds otherwise they wouldn’t work.Â  The staff must have known I was upset because at 11pm Sunday night, my doctor called my bedside phone personally and reassured me.Â  And my doctor is the one I credit with my smooth delivery and quick recovery – she has been 1000% better than my previous doctors in every way throughout this process, and for that, I am so thankful.

Since I’ve been home, I’ve been resting (probably not as much as I should have, but I have 5 kids now, who can rest with 5 kids in the house??).Â  Hubby has been *amazing* at taking care of me AND things around the house, but he also started a new job 2 days after the baby was born, which leaves him with 2 jobs, taking care of the 4 kids and me AND waking with the new baby at night as he likes to do.Â  My mother did a ton of laundry while she was here, and I’m just now starting to do laundry again a week and a half later, so that helped a lot too.Â  People from church have been wonderful about sending meals for our family, and that has been incredible.Â  Not only that, but we also have frozen meals that people sent and that my husband’s mother made while she was visiting for when our meal delivery runs out.Â  It’s been crazy, but we are managing, and a week and half later, I’ve been out and about and back in the real world.Â  I still have pain, but nothing extreme, and my 600mg ibuprofen works pretty well for that.Â  There are 2 complications I had that I was not expecting; one is worthy of a blog post all its own and I’ll get to it next time.Â  The other is the return of my backaches.Â  I’ve had a sore back since high school; I worked fast food and had to pop a Doan’s before every shift to make it through.Â  There are various things that I think caused it, but what does that matter now.Â  The strange thing is that during my pregnancy, my backaches disappeared.Â  Most women find new backaches during pregnancy, and mine disappeared.Â  I didn’t think much of it until I get home from the hospital and experience my back pain again.Â  This is discouraging because I know the incision pain will go away with time, but the backaches seem to be getting worse, and I have no guarantee that my back will ever feel better.Â  I guess it’s something to talk to my wonder doc about in my 6-week follow-up.Â  I already had my 1 week follow-up with the doctor, and she said my incision looks really great and my body is healing well – for that I am thankful.

Baby’s healthy, 4 big sisters and brother are healthy, I’m getting healthy, and Hubby is healthy (even if he needs much more sleep – praying for that to come soon) – what more can we ask for!Â  Life is good; God is great!

And oh yeah…Â  everywhere little Luke goes, he has a constant crowd of admirers.Â  If it wasn’t so sweet, it would be annoying because hey, when is it MY turn to hold the baby?!?Â  ðŸ˜‰

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/10/10-12-11-Avell-5.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Wonderful post. Pretty much what I remember from my c-section when you were born. I did not recover nearly as fast as you did - you must be part Wonder Woman.  
**taylhis**WOW! Didn't notice that before. I thought it was such a cute picture, but now I want to take it off the internet! LOL! You're right by the way - it really IS just his thumb, I promise!!!  
**derek**I took the cowardly way out and only read the first, then last three paragraphs. I am glad to hear you are getting such support from your community and family on this. Five kids now- wow. I pray the doc finds something in regards to your back. That pic- at first I thought something was...off with little C's pose, but looking closer I see his hand is behind T so only his thumb shows.  
**taylhis**Probably more sleep in 6 mos or so, but alas, we have not yet had a baby sleep through the night before reaching the age of 1 year. But thanks for the kind words :)  
**Jamiahsh**Love your post! Even when relating serious topics, you still manage to bring a light touch! So glad that all are well (tired, but well) and I do know how much C likes to try to balance work, wife, kids, and sleep (that will come in 6 months or so , right?)

# Luke James

Our 5th bundle of joy arrived on October 7, 2011.Â  His name is Luke James, and he was born at exactly 8 am, weighed 7 lbs 11 oz and was 19.5 inches long.Â  He is healthy and a very happy easy-going baby.Â  He seems to have his days and nights mixed up though, which I suspected based on his movements when he was still in the womb.Â  We are enjoying him immensely, and so are his 3 sisters and his brother.Â  I am recovering from the c-section pretty well, and I will write more about Luke’s first days at home when it doesn’t hurt to sit in a chair for longer than 10 minutes.Â  I would love to put up a hundred pictures of gorgeous little Luke, but my bunny chewed my camera cord, and I can’t get any pictures off my camera.Â  I hope to have this situation remedied soon, but I depend on Hubby for all my tech-related needs, and Hubby is exhausted staying up with the baby at night, taking care of me and the kids during the day while also keeping up with his responsibilities at both of his jobs.Â  It just seems mean and commanding of me to place more demands on him now, so I will have to somehow be patient about the picture taking and sharing.Â  I wonder how long I can last; Luke is one of the cutest babies I’ve ever seen!!!

\*\*UPDATE\*\*

Hubby devised a way to transfer my pictures using my ebook reader – genius!Â  So anyway, here is a picture of swaddled Luke at 1 day old:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/10/Baby-bundle-of-Luke-10-8-11-1.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**I already spoke to C, but not to you- congrats on #5. I am sure he will be the blessing to you a gift from above is meant to be. Funny thing, my pastor's name is James and his first son is Luke... Use the fo... Just kidding. :D  
**Jamiahsh**Last one, I promise. Couldn't resist ;)  
**taylhis**Bible references ok, Star Wars, not so much :)  
**jamiahsh**He is adorable! I am sure that we have an abundance of pictures to gaze upon soon! Many wishes and congratulations on number 5. WELCOME MASTER LUKE!

# Running Out Of Steam

To quote a funny movie, Drop Dead Gorgeous, “I’m like, due or something.”Â  That’s the response that’s been popping into my head whenever my husband wants to make plans for our family.Â  I am 38 weeks pregnant, and I don’t feel like doing anything.Â  I just want to lay in bed, get up to eat, then lay in bed some more.Â  And I do sleep when I’m laying down, so I must be tired and needing the sleep.Â  But this is weird for me.Â  I haven’t been bored in years, and now I feel bored, not because I have nothing to do but because I don’t feel like doing anything.Â  It’s so annoying!Â  There is so much to do around the house to get ready for the baby, and I don’t feel like doing any of it.Â  On top of that, I feel badly not having the desire to entertain my 4 kids, but luckily they’re very good at self-entertaining and their oldest sister has been amazing with spending fun time with them every day while I rest.Â  But I don’t remember feeling like this with my other pregnancies.Â  I do feel tired, but this lack-of-motivation-to-do-*anything* thing is getting old!Â  Then again, this is the first pregnancy I’ve had being in my 30’s.Â  Maybe that has something to do with it?

### Comments

**taylhis**I think I know someone who has a special day every day in October: birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Luke's birthday is up to God, but I think he would like his own special day every year, not a reminder about who else shares his bday :)  
**derek**@Phyllis: yes and thanks! Happy early anniversary! Another vote for the 5th, L- make it happen. ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Age definitely has something to do with it. I noticed a difference between my 2 pregnancies. You're almost there so enjoy the rest. Christine and I can clean your house when we get there. Just leave us a list. Think of the end result. Soon you will be holding an adorable little boy in your arms. Derek, our anniversary is the 5th. I assume that is your birthday. Happy Birthday early!  
**jamiahsh**I said something similar for the last pregnancy but alas, he arrived a day later ;) Not to worry, though, tay. I'm sure that you will be back to your normal routine in no time!  
**derek**Maybe he will be born Oct. 5, never mind the plans? :) Aren't some other birthdays among your family and friends around this time too? Any one will do, but especially the 5th. 8)

# teens

## My preteen daughter has a very bad attitude. Whenever I ask her any questions, even casual fun ones, she responds with rolling her eyes or a smug look and then answers very rudely. A simple yes or no would get her no trouble but she has to answer with a cocky attitude like I asked a dumb question.We have had several arguments about her attitude and that she needs to show respect to others. (It’s not just me that she acts like this to.) Nothing seems to work. She hurts my feelings as well as embarrasses me when she gets this attitude with other adults or her friends.

She is well into puberty, but I don’t feel that is an excuse. I understand and am more lenient on her when she is going through PMS but she has this attitude about 25 days a month. Please tell me what I am doing wrong or what I can do to help her change. Is it too late to change her?

I love her and try to have a fun relationship with her. I joke around with my kids and try to talk to them and their friends. She is not setting a good example for her younger siblings. My 4-year-old is very aware of her older sister’s behavior, and I fear that she will see this as acceptable. Please help me.

Welcome to the wonderful world of raising a teen. Since we humans aren’t very good at pushing our babies out of the nest, they help us by being totally obnoxious. Your daughter loves you but has to act hateful to begin to let go and, likewise, she is helping you let go. If she is rude to other adults, she is probably busy bonding with her peers. What appears to be rude behavior between young people is often normal to them. The under 30 crowd talks with a very sarcastic edge that is quite different from when we were growing up.

This does not mean you have to tolerate her behavior, but do not be dead set on changing her either. Just let her know how you feel when she makes her comments. DO NOT tell her she is rude or has a bad attitude. Simply say what you feel (not think) inside using the word “I.” “I feel sad (mad, like Jell-O, chopped liver) when you talk like that,” and then walk away, hopefully before she has a comeback.

When you’re in the mood for it, join the “fun” and imitate her with an eye roll of your own or pretend you are her and say, “Parents ask the stupidest questions.” It is good to have a variety of responses. However, there are times when she will get “on your last nerve,” and you’ll blow up and that is fine, too.

As much as possible, do not initiate contact. Allow her to come to you. This will be very hard. Teens think almost any parental question is intrusive. As a parent, I’ve been able to manage this myself a few times, and it is surprising how it helps.

Talk to other mothers with daughters. I think you will find that many are going through the same thing, and if they are not yet, they most likely will be soon. I personally think Webster should add a new word to the dictionary: “shutthedoor â€“ an adolescent word used to draw a boundary between children and parents.” My daughter is 17, and I’ve been hearing that since the preteen years when I pop my head in her room to ask necessary questions.

It sounds like you’re a great mom and take an interest in your kids. I wouldn’t worry too much about the younger ones. I remember before my daughter turned 12 she thought teens were terrible people. It is not too late for your daughter. You don’t have to change her; you are not doing anything wrong, and not all of your children will be so difficult. Once she moves out of the house, she will, most likely, be very devoted and likeable.

### Comments

# A Most Blessed Day

Tuesday September 27 2011 was an amazing day.Â  Our entire family was up before the crack of dawn because it was my husband’s big day in Findlay Ohio – his meeting and official interview with the church conference that was going to decide if they agreed with the local church board’s recommendation that my husband be their new pastor.Â  We allowed plenty of extra time that morning because we weren’t sure what bumps we might encounter while rousing 4 kids out of bed while it was still dark outside.Â  But it went perfectly – all the kids were agreeable and all were ready before it was time to leave, unprecedented!Â  No one complained about going to the babysitter’s; actually, they seemed excited about it.Â  My husband and I dropped off the kids, and as we turned onto the long country road that would take us most of the way there, I noticed a stunning effect of the sunrise.Â  A beam of orange light was coming down from the clouds – not in the east where the rest of the sunrise was visible, but off to the west.Â  It was really more like a column of soft orange light – an orange rainbow.Â  It was beautiful, unlike anything either of us had ever seen, and we enjoyed it together until it faded into the dawning of the new day.

The almost 2 hour drive was most pleasant; my husband and I always enjoy each other’s company.Â  Plus our spirits were buoyed by the kids’ great behavior that morning and the blessing of the orange rainbow.

My husband’s meeting went well while I explored Findlay by myself a bit.Â  I found an African Grey Parrot (my favorite kind of bird!) at the pet store, so I played with her for a while and checked out some other stores.Â  We ate a wonderful lunch, and then my husband got the call – the conference approved him; he is the new pastor of Union Chapel!Â  Now the waiting is over, and we know for sure the direction that God has been pointing us.Â  We finished out our day in Findlay with a movie and another peaceful long drive, just the two of us.Â  As we left the town of Findlay and headed out into the Ohio countryside, there was a full-size, full-color rainbow in all its glory.Â  Two rainbows in one day (occurring almost 12 hours and dozens of miles apart)?Â  They seemed to perfectly epitomize God’s blessings on this day for us, beginning with the kids being so great, followed by our long drives going safely and smoothly, and finally, the good news about my husband’s new calling.Â  Does God speak to people using rainbows?Â  For sure, He used a rainbow to illustrate his promise that He will never destroy the earth with flood again in Genesis 9:11-15:

*Â “11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.â€ 12 And God said, â€œThis is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: 13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.”*

And, God loves it when we notice His works of art in nature and offer praise to Him – there are more than a few examples of this in the Bible as well.Â  My husband and I saw the rainbows as messages to us from God; reassurance to us as we embark on yet another new journey at this stage in our lives, stamps of approval for a very blessed day and extra nods of encouragement from Our Heavenly Father as we might be tempted to be distracted by our uncertainties.

It was a very blessed day spent with my favorite person in the whole world.Â  I am so proud of him for everything that he is, everything he is becoming, and for his being hand-picked by God to take on this incredibly awesome responsibility.Â  And to say that I am honored to realize that I am the one who gets to experience this life by his side is a gross understatement.Â  For these reasons and others, I thank God every day.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/09/rainbow.jpg)*Unfortunately, this isn’t either of the rainbows we saw the other day because I didn’t have my camera with me to take pictures.Â  But I figured that I needed a picture of a beautiful rainbow on this post!Â  *

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Beautifully written blog Lisa. You have such a way with words. Congratulations Chris. Dad and I are so proud of you. I am extremely grateful that I will be there to hear your first serman. You both are so special - it's no wonder God chose you.  
**derek**I just tried to call C back and no voicemail? In any event, congratulations to both of you on this new direction you have begun to undertake. This is not just C's journey but yours as well. You have but to keep in the faith and I know it will take you to incredible places. God bless.  
**jamiahsh**Wonder if anyone found the pot of gold at the end of that rainbow! But WOW... how special was that day? Kids getting around before the crack of dawn without grumbling, TWO rainbows, a wonderful day just the two of you, and THE CALL! He truly does work in mysterious and wonderful ways. Love, best wishes, and prayers to you all as you embark on a new, exciting adventure. Hope you and the little one about to make his appearance are doing well.

# A Lesson In Forgiveness

It was one of those hectic mornings.Â  You know the type – little things go wrong, several small crimps in the daily schedule add up to both slow and threaten to steer the entire day off course.Â  My husband was running late for a meeting, so he left abruptly, and that’s when I realized that the younger kids were being very quiet.Â Â  I was chatting with our oldest (Taylor, she’s 11) when I our 7-year-old took the kids’ pet rats outside along with their whole play setup: a play enclosure, cardboard box, etc.Â  The kids had been doing this frequently, so there was nothing out of the ordinary, except that in the chaos

### Comments

# One Foot Out The Door...

Changes abound!Â  So many things happening that I can’t keep up writing about them on my blog.Â  It seems like every time I sit down to relax, I’m doing something with the kids – playing board games, homeschooling, doing puzzles, cuddling while we watch home videos together…Â  Mommy and kid time is so much more important than blogging, of course, so I’m not losing sleep over it…Â  but I do miss blogging, and I know I will miss having a chronicle of these days for future reading.Â  I was just looking back at my blogs from the past; looking to see how I felt after my cesarean 3 years ago, hoping to maybe find some tips for recovery this time around.Â  It was so nice to read about what was going on in our lives at that point, the challenges we were enduring, how the kids were growing, what they were doing, that kind of thing.Â  But these days, if I have a kid in my lap, there is NO extra room to have a laptop nearby!Â  As of Friday September 16, I am 36 weeks pregnant – home stretch for sure!Â  While my belly is not bulging nearly as much as it did with my previous 4 pregnancies (I’ve actually LOST weight since July, but dr said baby is growing fine and that’s what matters), I am looming large these days, and the seemingly most mundane of tasks is an effort on my part and seems to take me forever.Â  I am blessed with an awesome Hubby who has really stepped up around the house to keep us running despite the craziness and challenges that a 4-kid household brings.Â  Very Honorable Mention goes to my oldest daughter who has also been amazing lately with her willingness to help.Â  She has gone above and beyond, not only doing everything that is asked of her but also coming up with her own ideas to pamper pregnant mom, following through with these ideas, and also excelling in our newly designed homeschooling program.Â  A few weeks ago, Taylor surprised me with a manicure/pedicure, and she even kept going outside to check on the little ones while Mom’s nails were drying.Â  The other day, she came up with the idea and made me breakfast in bed.Â  Her emotional and spiritual growth lately has been amazing to see, and hopefully I will have the time to blog about the lesson in forgiveness that she taught our whole family.

So how is the homeschooling going for us?Â  If you remember, we began homeschooling our two eldest this year – 6th and 2nd grades.Â  Many people have asked how it’s going, so it’s time for a formal update on the blog…Â  It’s going GREAT!Â  Thanks for asking!Â  We began with a very planned out schedule, but we’ve found it necessary to be more flexible.Â  We’ve also tweaked our planned curriculum here and there and attended our first homeschooling book sale and picked up some things to supplement our curriculum.Â  All normal and necessary parts of the process, and we’ve seen the kids become closer with each other and us their parents, all while getting to watch them learn new things up close.Â  I can’t wait to jump in as a full time homeschool teacher, but my patience is being tested since I have to wait until I recover from my planned cesarean in October.

Now for the big news: a few blog posts ago, I wrote about many doors opening for our family.Â  We were still determining at that time which paths to explore, and our prayers have been answered; the paths whittled down to an almost definite road.Â  Loonnngg story made very short is this: my husband was offered a job as a pastor at a local church, and he accepted.Â  This means that we will be, in effect, switching churches.Â  Talk about something that came out of the blue!Â  There is nothing about our current church that I don’t like, and I had planned on going there for years to come and raising our kids among our church community.Â  But, as we all too often learn, God has plans for us.Â  And who am I to argue?Â  I KNOW His plans are so much better than any road map I could have drafted for myself and my family.Â  So now comes the transition to the new church.Â  It’s a much smaller church, so among my husband’s and my first duties will be to acclimate ourselves into the new church environment and create a children’s ministry.Â  It will be challenging but also extremely exciting.Â  My husband has one final meeting with the regional governing board of the church to finish out the interview process, but everything we’ve been told by the elders of the church is that this is just procedure.Â  So, last Tuesday, I sadly gave my notice to my friend and mentor that oversees my 2nd/3rd grade girls Sunday school class.Â  Oh, how I will miss those kids!Â  I’ve known them and watched them grow for a year and a half now, ever since I had them as 1st grade students last year.Â  But as I said, who am I to challenge God’s plan?Â  While this all happened so suddenly in our lives, the chain of events and circumstances that led up to my husband being chosen to lead this church was so obviously orchestrated by God that there is no need to doubt whether it was meant to be, nor is there need to go into detail about exactly how it happened.Â  I will just say how much we KNOW that it was meant to happen, and that will guide me in the future if I ever begin to have fears or doubts in my own abilities to fulfill His work for me.

October 7 is when I am scheduled to have the baby, and 2 days later (while I’m still in the hospital) is when my husband is to spend his first Sunday at our new church.Â  As soon as I feel up to it, I will join him there, and our kids will follow as soon as we set up our children’s ministry.Â  That leaves me 2 Sundays to teach my current Sunday school students, or possibly just one if I decide to go and meet more of the congregation at the new church before I go into the hospital.Â  I may have one foot out the door, but I’m walking into a whole new world.Â  Because it is the world that God has designed for me at this point in my life, I could not be more excited!!!

### Comments

**derek**So, are you going to be the head of the new children's ministry? :) From what C told me it sounds like your family will \*be\* the kid's ministry for the most part. With a younger pastor though, other families will come. I expect C to do no less than preach God's Truth, and where God's Truth is taught He will send people there to hear it. A very large endeavor this is, but I know you two are up to it. God has brought both of you there, so you can bet that besides the great plans He has for you and the new church, He will also make sure the kids you are leaving behind at the other church are well taken care of. It's great to hear of T as well. She is another step closer to the mature adult she will be one day.  
**jamiahsh**Love reading about your families adventures! I am so excited to hear of your oldest's maturation... What a remarkable young lady! I adore each of them... all with their own unique personalities... can't wait to see what Luke brings. I pray that the craziness that you are going through and that which is approaching will be met with the same determination and strength I have come to adore about you all!

# DW secrets

I’ve had this draft sitting on the backend of my blog site for a long time – I guess you could say that my blog needs its backend trimmed, haha.Â  However you want to say it, I would like to blog more and I have some drafts that can be published.

So while this might seem random, here are some highlights from articles that I came across about Disney World – each offers fresh insiders’ insight that

**1.Â  [Disney World from the past on WaltDatedWorld.com](http://waltdatedworld.bravepages.com/index.htm" \t "_blank)**This site memorializes changes that have been made in the parks, from slight tweaks on well known rides to entire attractions that no longer exist.Â  The site is well organized and contains easily identifiable links to each park.Â  Haven’t you ever wondered what became of the submarines from the 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea attraction?Â  Turns out you can explore a sunken sub while scuba diving at Disney’s Castaway Cay, a port of call for the Disney Cruise Line.

**2.**

http://www.cnn.com/2011/LIVING/07/01/ten.secrets.disney.mf/index.html?iref=obnetwork

http://www.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/36855

http://www.theneverlandfiles.com/disneyworld/westernriverexpedition.php

http://waltdatedworld.bravepages.com/id207.htm

http://glbscoasterzone.tripod.com/themepks.html

### Comments

# Disney's First Day

Disney had her first day at her new preschool last week, and she had a great time!Â  She really likes going to preschool every day!Â  Here are some pictures of her on her first day.Â  One picture features her little brother who wanted to go to preschool too, but he’s such a cool dude that he got right over it and is happy going to pick her up every day (despite his parents making him wear the Chicago Cubs shirt):

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/8-26-11-Disneys-first-day-of-Bryan-preschool-001.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/8-26-11-Disneys-first-day-of-Bryan-preschool-004.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/8-26-11-Disneys-first-day-of-Bryan-preschool-002.jpg)

### Comments

**justj**It looked like a lovely day for a new student. They are growing so quickly.  
**taylhis**He doesn't have a taste in teams. He wouldn't know if he likes to watch baseball yet or not since it hasn't been on in the house all summer - nothing to watch and no time to watch it. It was a comment about how embarrassing it is for ANYONE to walk around wearing a Cubs shirt these days. Nuff said about that.  
**jamiahsh**"dispite his parents making him wear his Chicago Cubs shirt"? Is that a reflection on his taste of teams or your feelings on the season? Well.. back to the topic at hand... YAY for Disney! How cute!  
**derek**Dora? Is that show still on? I'm glad to hear of a child who actually \*likes\* school! I suppose when tests and projects happen things will change, but for now just enjoy it, D. 8)

# I Saw The Saws, But They Weren't My Final Destination

Recently for date night we viewed Final Destination 5 in 3D at the movie theater.Â Â  We had seen the previews for Final Destination 5, and it looked good, so we decided to watch the rest of the movies 1-4 in preparation to see 5 in the theaters when it came out.Â  The Final Destination movies are just fun, gross

### Comments

# And The Journey Begins...

Even before we were married and had kids, my husband and I have always liked the idea of homeschooling our children, but the time just hadn’t been right in the past so we put the idea on the back burner.Â  The idea resurfaced last spring, and we began to pray and meditate on it and to do some planning.Â  Over the summer we were able to visit with some of the families we know who homeschool, spending hours learning about resources, comparing curriculum, and getting to know their families better.Â  My worry-prone mind tells me it’s completely insane to take something like this on while expecting a new baby, but on the other hand, time keeps passing us by and our oldest is in 6th grade already.Â  Never being exactly sure about God’s plan for us ahead of time – how many children we will be blessed with or paths of service my husband might be called to in his career, etc – now seemed like as a good a time as any to try homeschooling our two oldest children.Â  Besides, I’ve been told that it’s easier to teach when there is a baby in the family rather than a troublesome toddler, which is all the more reason to start now instead of next year or the year after.Â  So in addition to “Mom of 5″, another new hat I will be trying on this fall is “Homeschool Teacher”.

I am 90-95% ecstatic and 5-10% terrified, depending on the day you ask me – but only because I’m worried about taking on all these responsibilities while enduring the lack of sleep that accompanies a new baby.Â  Other than that, I know we can do it – after all, we believe this is God’s plan for our family, so we can always appeal to Him through prayer for strength, endurance, and patience.Â  Also, I have tons of ideas; actually one of the main problems I came across when designing my daughters’ curricula was finding a way to include all of the subjects and ideas that I was so excited about.Â  I didn’t come close, but there are always future years.

Our 6th grade curriculum is complete: it’s designed and outlined, and we have the materials.Â  Our 6th grader is extremely excited about our adventure, and it helps to have an amazing support system through friends who homeschool – a good percentage of my daughter’s friends are homeschooled, and they are amazing kids.Â  Actually, ALL of the kids I know that are homeschooled are amazing kids, and the vast differences between the emotional maturity and the moral integrity of the homeschool kids and the public school kids in our church youth group was one of the leading contributors that led us to this decision.Â  As youth group leaders, my husband and I have gotten to know many of the kids in our small town.Â  They are all great kids, but seeing how distracted many of them are by all of the emotional dramas that are manufactured in the public school setting was both eye-opening and heart-breaking – another factor aiding our decision.

Tangent over – back to curriculum.Â  We are using [A Beka curriculum](http://www.abeka.com/" \t "_blank) for our 6th grader, and we found a complete set of workbooks and teacher guides on ebay for a great price – barely more than our school fees would have cost.Â  Taylor is extremely excited about her books; especially the art book which looks REALLY cool!!Â  And the great thing about A Beka curriculum is that it is Christian-based curriculum, which is very important to us and another key factor in our homeschool decision.Â  We also found a whole bunch of workbooks and textbooks the other day at Goodwill in mint condition and at a great price!Â  It’s incredible how many resources there are out there, and also surprising how fun it is to hunt, shop, and piece them together to make curricula!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/our-homeschooling-room-005.jpg)

Most of Taylor's A Beka Curriculum

I know it’s going to be a lot of work.Â  I know I’m prolonging indefinitely the things I might want to do for myself once my kids are old enough to take care of themselves – any hobby, job or career path I might have wanted to pursue when the time came to put all of my kids on the bus for the day is moot.Â  But I’m accepting that my career is Mom + Homeschool Mom, and right now, I can’t think of any better use of my time than the investment I’m making in our family and the futures of my children.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/our-homeschooling-room-001.jpg)

This summer we worked so hard on getting this homeschooling room ready!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/our-homeschooling-room-002.jpg)

Taylor's books are on the table

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/our-homeschooling-room-004.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Hey, congrats on choosing the brave new world (for all of you that is) of homeschooling. As a witness to some of the craziness in middle school as a sub a few years ago, I would say yo- err, God, picked a great moment to start. Okay, some of the decision was yours of course, to say yes or no, but it is such a blessing to say yes to Him. Bast wishes from me on this!  
**justj**Likewise, best of luck in thi endevor. We never had the courage to try this with our girls.  
**jamiahsh**Best of luck on your new journey. I know that with HIS guidance you will do a great job!

# In General...

Here we are in the middle of August already, how did that happen?Â  I know how July flew by for me since most of it was spent traveling, but where the heck has the beginning of August gone?

I am 30 weeks + a few days pregnant.Â  I talked to the doctor yesterday and am most likely going to have the baby at 39 weeks (planned cesarean), so there is not too much time left of this pregnancy – for that, I am mostly glad!Â  I cannot wait to meet little Luke!Â  Plus I’m sick of the soreness, the nausea, the moodiness, and all that good stuff.Â  I just hope that I turn back into a normal person again because right now it seems like an impossibility.Â  I can’t remember my life before I was pregnant – did I really have enough energy to function every day?Â  Sure don’t now, but most days, I can fake it but that is exhausting in itself.

I wrote a few posts ago about making important decisions and about doors of opportunity opening for us.Â  For certain things, we are still praying, being patient, and waiting to see what God’s plan is for us right now.Â  In the meantime, we did reach one decision about a lifestyle change for our family, and we are very excited to get started.Â  Close family already knows what this is about, but do I want to reveal it to others for the first time in a blog?Â  I’m not sure…Â  But either way, we are very excited about it, and it’s been a lot of fun already to begin this journey.Â  Just another thing to look forward to this fall!

Tonight is the last night of our Wednesday night Bible study, and it’s been great to make new friends and to get to know these families.Â  I am looking forward to having 3 (THREE!!) free Wednesday nights for our family once the class is over and before youth group starts again.Â  And how is this for irony?Â  I wrote the preceding paragraphs, saved it as a draft, then did lunch with the kids before coming back to it.Â  During lunch, I checked the mail and I found postcards notifying us of youth group leader training meetings on TWO of my THREE free Wednesdays.Â  Sigh.Â  I need to be happy with that one free evening, but my human nature disappoints me because I almost had 3 free Wednesdays instead of one…Â  oh well, such is life.Â  Wednesday nights are fun anyway; I just wish I had more energy to enjoy them.

My Monday morning Bible study is drawing to a close also – that one I will really miss.Â  I’ve become close with the other ladies in my class, and it’s been so great to get to know them and learn about the similarities and the differences in our lives and journeys in our relationships with Christ.Â  I will even miss the 5 hours a week of homework – it was SO incredibly valuable and eye-opening for me to spend this time with God’s word.Â  If I weren’t taking on so much this fall, I would definitely sign up for another one.Â  Maybe in the spring or next summer…

Seen some movies lately, as usual – I think it’s probably mine and Hubby’s favorite thing to do together, snuggle and watch movies after long days of work and tending the kids.Â  I had heard that the new Planet of the Apes movie was supposed to be good, so we saw that, but I was disapointed.Â  It was okay, but I was hoping for less ape, more planet – meaning, the movie ended just as the apes were about to take over.Â  I would have liked to see their rise to power as they actually take over the planet.Â  Maybe that’s going to be saved for the next movie?Â  The movie was entertaining, but there was a little too much animal cruelty and not enough payoff – seeing the apes take over the planet – for having to watch all that animal cruelty.Â  Of course the creatures were CGI so you know none of them were hurt during filming and it was just a movie, but that doesn’t mean in my spare time I want to sit and watch that and think about what goes on in animal testing labs.

We haven’t visited the Redbox in a while, mostly because we had seen many of the movies they had (we watch a lot of movies!).Â  But Hubby ventured out last night and picked out Cedar Rapids, a fun (a bit more vulgar than I usually like, but interesting just the same) movie about insurance salesmen starring Ed Helms (Andy Bernard from The Office; he’s also in the Hangover movies).Â  It was a different kind of movie, and we both enjoyed it.

That’s about it for now…Â  I just had the opportunity to sit and blog for awhile – I MADE the opportunity, actually – because I just HAD to today.Â  I’ve had this awful headache that’s been lodged behind my left eye for a few days now, and running around chasing kids again was just too much for today.Â  And I do need to sit more.Â  For someone in my condition, I really thinkÂ  I should be resting more, but the nature of the busyness in our household makes it an impossibility.Â  I’m finding it quite a challenge to take good care of myself, finding time to eat right to take care of my anemia and gestational diabetes and all that stuff.Â  It’s just too hard to put myself first when I have 4 little ones to take care of and Hubby has his own full plate with work as well.Â  I hate to complain about physical stuff, but I really need to feel better soon.

### Comments

**taylhis**Thank you Mysmichelle, good to hear from you. Hope you've had a great summer!  
**Mysmichelle**Best wishes taylhis, I hope you feel better soon but having been pregnant it might be the 9 weeks :-) you will make it though. Congrats to you and to little Luke, he's being born into a wonderful family!  
**derek**I believe that line is reserved for Chris. ;)  
**taylhis**Yes Derek - Luke James, as in Dr. Luke, the only gentile to have written a Gospel and also the book of James. Especially fitting that Chris' grandfather's name was Luke, and my grandfather's name was James. As far as my health, I just keep feeling worse these days, but a few weeks ago, I thought I was over the hump cuz I felt so much better - so there is always room for hope, right? I keep praying, and the bottom line is, I just want little Luke to be healthy. And I was happy you didn't make the already tiresome "Luke, I am your father" joke... it's already very old!! :)  
**derek**Ah, some information has been revealed (at least in this blog) about #5. Luke, as in Dr. Luke from the Bible, writer of one of the three Synoptic Gospels. I have known many Lukes in my church, including one in my men's small group, one a son of our pastor, and several over the years in kid's ministry. It will be a pleasure to add one more to my list. Seeing as it has been a few days since your post I hope you are feeling better.  
**Jamiahsh**Here's to feeling better SOON! I forgot to mention that I walked to and from church today (something I have not been able to do for it seems like ages). But if you ever need an escape for an hour or two some afternoon AND I am off give me a shout. Sounds like your August is just as busy as July. I can't wait to meet Luke, either. Take care and enjoy those cuddle times with your hubby ;)

# A Smurfin' Good Time

I was so pleasantly surprised by how much my family liked the new Smurf movie that I was inspired to write a short review.Â  Going in, I thought I would hate the movie because it didn’t look funny.Â  And I was a fan of the Smurfs as a kid, so not only did the movie look stupid, but I couldn’t figure out why it took place in our realm rather than the Smurf’s realm – wouldn’t fans of the little blue mystical creatures, kids, and everyone else want to see Smurf village on the big screen?

Don’t worry, we get to see Smurf village, and it’s pretty cool.Â  Especially the scene where Gargamel breaks in!!Â  Ok, so I guess that’s kind of a spoiler, sorry about that…Â  but this is a kid’s movie we’re talking about.Â  And kid’s movie it is – my kids all really liked it (ages 11, 7, 4 and 3).Â  The Smurfs have screen time for pretty much 100% of the movie, and there aren’t any boring scenes with a lot of dialogue – these tend to lose the attention of kids.Â  There are some Smurfy jokes – in this case I’m using “Smurfy” to describe inside jokes written for fans of the Smurfs from decades ago.Â  Much like the Brady Bunch movies are actually enjoyable parodies of the hit tv show and poke fun at it,Â  The Smurfs movie has gags about such shout-outs to the 80s cartoon as their names reflecting their personalities (a hilarious joke in the movie that I’m still chuckling about), cracks about how Smurfette always wears the same dress (although more than one joke about this was overdoing it and took the humor away), and multiple references to creator Peyo.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/smurfs.jpg)*(the Smurfs as I knew and loved them)*

From the previews, I thought Gargamel was going to be a bumbling bafoon, one of these over-the-top characters who might be ruined by the actor portraying him as he flailed around aimlessly in a ridiculous looking costume.Â  But Gargamel as a live person in today’s New York City was actually quite entertaining and even hilarious at times (If you grew up watching the Smurf cartoon like I did, watch for the way Hank Azaria runs as he portrays Gargamel – he imitates the cartoon character so well that it made me laugh out loud!).Â  I especially liked the inclusion of the little details from the cartoon – like seeing the Smurf cages that Gargamel always had lying in wait for when he finally caught the little guys.Â  There was backstory explained; everyone knows by now that Smurfette was actually created by Gargamel as Smurf bait, right?Â  The story line was cheesy but not unbearable even while it made several futile attempts at teaching positive life lessons to kids in the audience.Â  I could have done without the Katy Perry song reference (is “I Kissed a Girl really a song for kids?Â  I’ve never heard the song and don’t want to know), and Katy Perry as Smurfette’s voice didn’t really give any personality to the character anyhow – she was just a girl Smurf and nothing like her character in the cartoon.Â  Clumsy Smurf on the other hand, was a perfect 3d replica of his cartoon counterpart – both in voice and graphics.Â  I did stop watching the Smurfs sometime after the Smurf cousins (Smurflings) came in, so I have no idea where Gutsy Smurf came from (seems to be a brave Scottish Smurf complete with red sideburns and a kilt?).Â  I would have liked to see my personal favorite Smurf, Jokey, get more screen time in the movie.Â  On that subject, I don’t understand why the group of 6 Smurfs with the most screen time (the ones who get to go to NY) did not include such series regulars as Jokey, Greedy, Handy, Vanity or Hefty.Â  Actually, I didn’t see those Smurfs at all, but then again, we arrived late to the movie so maybe I missed their appearances.Â  The production staff also did an excellent job of utilizing aspects of modern technology to make funny jokes involving the Smurfs.Â  Case in point: see the wikipedia reference.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/jokey-smurf.jpg)*(My favorite Smurf, Jokey)*

Overall, Smurfs was an entertaining film for the entire family – and there was a huge gap between my low expectations and my high level of enjoyment of this cute movie!Â  A must-see for anyone who has kids to take to a movie – bonus if you are a Smurf fan!

One more note – here is a list of characters I would like to see in the sequel:  
Hogatha, Johan and Peewit, Clockwork Smurf, and Baby Smurf.Â  But please, NO SMURFLINGS!!

And oh yeah…Â Â  I did a search on my own blog to see if I had written about the I’m a Pink Toothbrush song from the Smurf’s 1979 album.Â  Turns out, I did include it in a [blog post that I had written in March 2010](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/03/12/smurfingly-insider-info/" \t "_blank), and my kids (and me still!) are big fans of this adorable tune.Â  It was really fun to read about my speculations on the Smurf movie in this blog post given the limited info I had that time on this “in production” project!Â  (if you read it, you should know that Quentin Tarentino was oringally cast as Brainy Smurf, but both actor and studio are quiet on why the pairing did not work out…)Â  So apparently I HAD heard of Gutsy Smurf – and wrote about it in my own blog a year and a half ago!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/08/smurfs1.jpg)*(modern Smurfs from the 2011 movie)*

### Comments

**derek**I used to watch it now and again. I remember the full-length feature Smurfs and the Magic Flute. I also remember the somewhat smurfy term a camp gave for their blue moon ice cream when I was a high school freshman (naked smurf). A less obnoxious memory is the Smurfs game for Colecovision. This sounds like one to watch when it is released on DVD.  
**Jamiahsh**Yes of course they used it as every part of speech. How Clumsy of me ;)  
**justj**Never been a smurf fan, so I guess I'm glad you enjoyed a movie I will never see.  
**taylhis**How many times was the word "smurf" used as a desciptive word? You mean in the movie? By descriptive, do you mean adjective only? Cuz they used it as every part of speech of course - noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc. But either way, it doesn't matter - not like I could count something like that with 4 kids in the movie; 2 of them squirmy, all of them constantly demanding popcorn and pop :)  
**jamiahsh**BTW, how many times was the word "smurf" used as a descriptive word?  
**jamiahsh**HEHE. the more I see the ads and such now bombarding the airwaves, the more I am willing to go see it. I don't remember Gutsy Smurf, either. Of course, there were at least 100 of the critters in the original series. I always liked Feathers (my cousin had a parakeet named after him), Big Mouth the ogre, Harmony Smurf, and of course Jokey. Yes, indeed Smurfette was created by Gargamel... she was originally brunette.

# July 2011 (part 1)

The July 2011 page on my calendar has been filled since spring, so I knew we had a busy month ahead.Â  Organizing everything I had jammed into those little squares on the calender was going to be challenging enough, but then we were even able to add a few family mini-vacations to the mix!Â  It’s been a great summer so far despite the challenges of sometimes trying to be in 2 places at once, and I wanted to chronicle everything to enhance the wonderful memories we made as a family this summer – but be prepared; this will be quite the manifest when I’m finished!

June 30 and July 1 – We began the month with a last-minute trip to an indoor water park that’s an hour away.Â  After a sudden burst of cabin fever, my husband found a super internet deal that afforded us some much-loved family time.Â  The kids loved the indoor water park, and Christopher was old enough this time to go on some water slides which he found to be a blast!

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.

Best of all, the constant lower back pain that had been making me short of patience, irritable and tired all the time seemed to be remedied by my getting to sit in water for 2 days.Â  I should note for future reference also how interesting it was to pack different people for 3 different trips at the same time.Â  Simultaneously, I was packing 6 people for an overnight stay (with a separate bag for changing into street clothes from bathing suits, I might add), 1 little girl for a 4 day stay at camp, and also for a 3 day trip for 6 people.Â  It felt hectic at the time, but not unmanageable – due to the fact that my wonderful family did much of the work for and with me.Â  And you know what?Â  I don’t think we forgot anything!!

July 2, 3 – After the water park, we got a day of rest (and unpacking, re-packing, laundry) before we set out Sunday for the 4-hour drive to Nashville Indiana – with one small glitch:Â  Hubby had food poisoning.Â  He had to miss church to rejuvenate, and then we were off – well, after packing up the car and some other in-town odds n ends.

July 3-6 – We spent the 4th of July in Nashville – a yearly trip Hubby and I take with our 4 kids, my parents, my uncle, and my sister, her husband and their 2 kids – there were 13 of us staying in a large house in the middle of the Brown County woods.Â  It was a beautiful place, and we’re torn on where to choose to have next year’s gathering.Â  Last year, we had a beautiful house where each family had their own bedroom and bathroom.Â  The few downsides to this house (called The Oaks) was the large steep hill that led down to the pond and fire pit – it proved to be dangerous last year when someone took a nasty spill (but was uninjured), so we didn’t want to gamble with it this year when we have an adult who is practically incapacitated (me being 5.5 mos. pregnant).Â  Also, the kids have to be watched constantly down by that pond, so it was a nice break for the adults this year to not have to worry about who was going to take them down there.Â  Also, there wasn’t really any yard for the kids to play in at The Oaks.Â  There was a swingset, but really only the two 3-year-old boys were of the age to enjoy a swing set this year, and that leaves 4 other kids with no yard to run around in.Â  Both houses had pool tables inside and hot tubs outside (which became little swimming pools for the kids since we didn’t want to turn on the heat in 90Â° weather), and The Oaks had tons of dvds,Â  board games, and a foosball table, but then again, this year we brought our own dvds and games and the kids had TONS to do and were never bored.Â  Another plus to this year’s cabin vs. The Oaks: the large dining room table that fit almost everyone at the same time so we could enjoy meals together.Â  The Oaks had only a small breakfast nook that seated 4 people or about 6 kids, so the adults had to eat elsewhere.Â  Given these pros and cons of each cabin, it’s going to be a tough decision next year on where to stay!!  
The kids’ favorite thing to do this year was to go down to the creek that ran around the property (this cabin was called “Ginley’s Gulch” for future reference).Â  There they would walk the creek, hunting for crawdads, geodes, and minnows, and they found quite a few of all of the above.Â  As I said, this property had a larger yard, and also 85 acres of forest, and in the future I would like to explore the gorgeous property more since I wasn’t quite feeling up to that this year.Â  I did enjoy walking down the cleared path into the forest though – there were many beautifiul butterflies, cool looking insects, and birds to see and hear.Â  And oh yeah!Â  I forgot to mention another huge plus of Ginley’s Gulch – the screened-in porch!Â  It had a ceiling fan, so it was a wonderful, mosquito-free place to spend our Brown County evenings together.Â  A great trip!!

July 6 – We arose at the crack of dawn to pack up the car and get the kids roused for the 4+ hour drive to Michigan to drop daughter #2 at camp.Â  We were all exhausted, and the kids slept much of the way.Â  We did stop in Fort Wayne for something to eat, and we finally tried a little cafe where we had always wanted to try their eggs benedict since reading an ad for them years ago.Â  The eggs benedict was a bust – sauce from a packet, don’t you know, but they did have one of my seasonal favorites that’s very hard to find in the northern part of the country where I live: fried green tomatoes.Â  And they were yummy!Â  We dropped Sammie off at camp just a little late, and we were excited for her after seeing what a great place [Camp Selah](http://campselah.org/" \t "_blank) is (Camp Selah is a Christian camp in Reading Michigan, and both of our kids who went had a SUPER time!)

July 7-9 – These next few days were a bit quiet without the whole brood together, and we fit in another family min-vacation: since Sammie had to be picked up in the morning in Michigan, we took the other 3 kids to the drive-in in Coldwater Michigan and spent the night there – lots of fun!Â  Saturday the 9th we picked up Sammie, and she said she had a good week during her first ever time at camp.

July 11 was the 3rd birthday of a very special little guy, and we took him out to dinner at the local Mexican restaurant where they sang to him, put a sombrero on him, and dabbed his nose with dessert.Â  I of course forgot my camera Â  but he liked it all the same.Â  It reminded me of last year when the staff at Bob Evans sang to him, and he dove into my shirt to hide – the year of experience helped him to enjoy the attention more this year.Â  And in the morning of little dude’s birthday, I had to drive Taylor to camp in one of the nastiest storms of the year.Â  We made it there without a problem, but the ride home was dicey with driving rain and wind.Â  I was glad I didn’t have any kids with me which would have made me nervous, and as you can tell I made it just fine – even if I did arrive sopping wet and very late to Bible study.Â  In the newspaper the next day, I saw a picture of a power line that fell into the road which turned out to be the same road I had been driving down during that storm.Â  Just goes to show you what kinds of things to look out for when driving during inclement weather in the middle of desolate farm country, and I feel blessed to have made it safely.

July 11-14 – So with our eldest away at camp, the week flew by…Â  even though we missed her (I especially missed having someone old enough to have a normal conversation with me during the day).Â  We had 3 days of doctor appointments (me and our youngest-for-now had his 3-year-checkup) and meetings, and then… freedom!

July 15 – Hubby and I met my mom in South Bend, and she took “the littles” (our family name for the younger kids in our family; in this case it meant our 3-year-old, 4-year-old, and 7-year-olds) to Grandma’s for a vacation – which left Hubby and I kidless for a whole day!Â  So Hubby took me to the Potawatomi Zoo in South Bend, and the amount of walking and the weather was perfect for me even while pregnant since it was just the two of us.Â  What a great idea as I was just starting to get zoo withdrawl!Â  After the zoo, we decided to take the scenic route home from South Bend and fell upon a perfect date purely by accident:Â  in Middlebury Indiana, there is an excellent Amish-style restaurant called [Das Dutchman Essenhaus](http://www.essenhaus.com/index" \t "_blank).Â  We were driving by on a day when they had a buffet, so we could sample many varieties of their very delicious food.Â  Even better, there were some Amish men offering carriage rides in the parking lot, so we took one!Â  It was so romantic, the grounds of the mini-resort were beautiful, the weather was perfect, and hearing the history of the grounds as told my our Amish guide was wonderful – best date day ever!!

*(below is a picture of a horse and buggy like the one we drove in (ours was more of a carriage than a buggy).Â  I had to take the picture on the way home since I had forgotten my camera and couldn’t take any pictures while on the buggy ride!)*

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/07/our-horse-and-buggy-7-15-11.jpg)July 16 – This was the day we picked up our oldest from camp, and we got to hear every detail about her awesome week while driving from Michigan to Fort Wayne to see…Â  the new Harry Potter movie ON IMAX IN 3D!!Â  Yes, it was as cool as it sounds, and it was fun to take Taylor out for a fun day with only parents and no younger siblings – dinner was at Golden Corral, one of her favorite places since she loves steak.Â  I’m thankful that the awful nausea I felt earlier in the day did not persist through the movie, and the cause of it that day still perplexes me…Â  such is a mystery of pregnancy, I guess.

July 17-18 – The 3 of us tackled the huge project of cleaning out our spare room – what a mess!Â  I wish we had taken some “before” pictures, but the most important thing is that it got done, even if I felt like I was going to fall over in exhaustion by the end of it.Â  I’m so proud of Hubby for all the hard work he did for this project, and especially that it was his idea to tackle it earlier than we had scheduled – we began Saturday night after Fort Wayne rather than Sunday after church as we had planned.Â  But it looks GREAT, and as I’m writing this at the end of July, our family has gotten so much use out of it already.Â  We made it into a craft / hobby / school room, and it has a computer, Taylor’s new sewing machine (a present from Grandma), all kinds of paper, crayons, glue, etc, and all the many, many arts and crafts kits and supplies we had been saving (and losing) for the past 5 years.

*(July manifest to be continued – need to give your eyes a break!Â  But first, here is a pic of a creative, cute fire hydrant in downtown South Bend Indiana I snapped while sitting at a stoplight – look for it near the silver van’s rear bumper)*

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/07/cute-fire-hydrant-in-S.-Bend-IN-7-15-11.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**What a fun July you had - so glad Dad and I could be a part of it. As for next year's Nashville trip - I vote for McGinley's Gulch. I just loved the screened in porch - did I ever sit anywhere else in the house. I had so much fun having the kids here in Illinois. It is such a special time for Papa and I.  
**taylhis**Derek, sorry to hear that! I didn't know your mom sews. From what I hear, sewers love new sewing machines, so it sounds like a great gift - I would see what I could do to get her a new one.  
**derek**Well, you've been all over the place this month, in more than one way I might add. I look forward to the next part. Something random that caught my eye- you mentioned a new sewing machine for T. I just bought a new sewing machine to give to my mother for her next birthday. Unfortunately I put it in the basement to store it, which got flooded last weekend when the sewer system backed up into the homes of us and our neighbors. I wonder if they'll exchange a slightly damp, yet unopened, product...  
**justj**Sounds like a good summer so far. I hope the rest of it goes well for you.  
**Jamiahsh**HAHA! Cute hydrant... But WOW what a month! And still more?!

# I'm Thinking... I'm Thinking...

Some comic relief in the title of this post to distract me from quite an overwhelming day today:

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.

Received some devastating news (for us, but don’t worry – it’s great news for some friends of ours) prayed about it, and examined the possibilities that may arise from it.Â  There’s also been several intriguing and excitingÂ  doors being revealed to us lately, and we are praying on, thinking about, and waiting to see which ones will open and where they might lead.Â  We’ve been contemplating a huge decision in the past few months regarding our family, and it’s time to finalize that decision.Â  We spent some time with friends today gathering information and establishing a support system for this possible lifestyle change.Â  I’m excited but for the lack of sleep wearing me down and making me feel overwhelmed – it’s all a lot to process.Â  I will write more in a bit – as you can see, I have a new keyboard.Â  I have a whole July manifest half-written that’s kept me busy – I want the kids to be able to read about our family’s stellar July 2011 on my blog someday, so I’d better get around to it.Â  Same thing with my chronicle of the Florida trip we took in January that still has the last part missing 6 months later – oops.Â Â  I don’t know what my problem is – the only thing that distracts me from blogging is doing homework for my Bible study class – and the fact that I found my Zoo Tycoon game; that’s really distracting from productivity.Â  And oh yeah – the 4 kids running around the house because it’s been too hot to play outside; that can make blogging a bit difficult.

### Comments

**derek**Just getting back to reading blogs again after a really busy week at work following the sewage upheaval of 2011 (into ours and several of our neighbors' basements). The house still stinks of must... Big changes? Sorry to hear about the closed door, but I am glad you are looking at other exciting ones that are still open. I patiently await further news of this when you are ready and able to post.  
**jamiahsh**Best of luck to you no matter which doors you may choose to open.  
**justj**Devastating news that is good for friends? Exciting doors? Sounds like you have a few irons in the fire. Always with the best for you my friends.

# Random Destructon

was n te mddle of wrtng a blog post on my laptop wen my keyboard’s buttons started fallng off.Â  You migt be able to guess te letters tat ‘m now mssng, and t’s really ard to type lke ts.Â Â  ope to get t fxed ASAP, tenÂ Â  wll blog more.Â  Computers, ug .

### Comments

**derek**@Taylhis: You know, your comment just made me think of [this Monty Python sketch](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcCuBWXd-hc" \l "t=01m13s)... @Jamaihsh: Yes, that would sound a bit \*ahem- Lumberjack sketch\* without that letter, wouldn't it... :D  
**Jamiahsh**Good thing you weren't trying to type my name ;)  
**Taylhis**The creative input was amusing - thanks! I have a new portable keyboard now that I have to get used to using - my hands keep going to my laptop keyboard instinctively. You can't tell by the sentences I was writing, but the other 2 letters I was missing was "c" (had a replacement key for that one though) and "j". :)  
**derek**I lk frward t it. I hpe it is sn. The ther brken key I wuld like t mimic is . :D Until later then!  
**jamiahsh**Hope your HI gets fixed soon ;)

# Cool Summer

The kids are growing by leaps and bounds before my eyes, and it’s unbelievable because I’m used to seeing them most of the day, every day – and I can still see the changes.Â  They are growing up literally before my eyes!

So far this summer, the kids and I have carried a normal daily schedule that finds our time divided between fun activities and miscellaneous appointments (like Bible study class, violin lessons, doctor’s and dental appointments, etc).Â  I think we’ve done a good job of making the days fun, and we’ve also had some great family weekends since school has let out.Â  Father’s Day weekend saw us heading out to the [African Wildlife Safari Park](http://www.africansafariwildlifepark.com/" \t "_blank) in Port Clinton Ohio.Â  We love that place, but it’s almost 2 hours away so we hadn’t made it out there in a few years.Â  But there was a Groupon a few months ago, and we got a great price on admission, so Hubby planned a trip there.Â  Can’t go to Port Clinton Ohio and not stop at [Cheesehaven](http://cheesehaven.com/) – 88 types of cheese, meats, sauces… yummy stuff.Â  They have free samples so you can try before you buy.Â  Should you find yourself in this little Lake Erie town (which is near the more well known tourist attraction: roller-coaster filled Cedar Point), stop by Cheesehaven and get a fresh corned beef sandwich – YUM!!

The Safari Park is great –Â  you drive around the animals’ huge enclosure, and herds of all types of different animals approach your car looking for food!Â  There are alpacas, llamas, white-tailed deer, elk, elands, bison, reindeer (I never found this one in the guidebook, but it looked like a reindeer to me!), even giraffes and zebras at the end (while you can still feed them, the giraffes and zebras are behind a fence whereas the other animals are not).Â  It’s so cool to feed all these guys!Â  Some are dainty, skittish eaters (the smaller deer), while the huge animals like the bison will fill your car with this hot, half-digested hay breath.Â  It’s delightfully disgusting, and only animal lovers should attempt to stomach this!Â  Here is the best video I could record while getting accosted by a thousand-pound bison (the kids were frustrating us adults since they would freak out and drop the carrot before the bison could grab it – we felt bad for the hungry fella!)

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

And what is the poor thing in the picture below?Â  A llama, I think?Â  He had a funny lip, which coupled with his flat ear gave him a whimsical look – he was a favorite to feed.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/06/safari-park-6-18-11-020.jpg)

And next is a video of the giraffeÂ  – sorry for the shakiness, but he was too tall to get in one shot!Â  You can see his curly toungueÂ  that came out and helped him grab his carrot.Â  The car in front of us had the right ideaÂ  – they were feeding the giraffe out of their sunroof – it was a sight to see and I should have taken 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.

The Safari Park also has pig races, an animal show, a small walk-thru zoo, and pony and camelÂ  rides for the kids.Â  It was a SUPER day, followed by a special day to celebrate Dads after 

### Comments

**derek**I didn't expect the giraffe's head to be quite so large- but then it is so far away when the giraffe is standing. Sounds like it was a good day indeed. Oh, was the cheese shop anything like this one? :lol: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3KBuQHHKx0>  
**jamiah**Looks like fun as always... but where's Ludo?!. Cool giraffe. A fun, slobbery time.  
**Mysmichelle**Looks like you're up to ever interesting things as usual. My computer went kaput and lost link to your site. Always enjoy reading you're posts. Hope all is well with your gang.

# Pet Balance

We have a dog fence AND a regular fence, and they have been digging under both fences to get out.Â  So a friend put in a border of concrete blocks, and it looked great – we were sure it would work.Â  But today we found out that the dogs were able to get past that, and also past the concrete brick we put in the hole they had dug in the big yard.Â  My husband went out looking for them, but we had an appointment that could not be rescheduled, so he had to give up.Â  Later in the day, we got a call from a friend, who had almost hit one of the dogs with her car.Â  She couldn’t capture the dog, so we had to rush out of our appointment to corral her –Â  the dog, not the friend.Â  We found the dog in the middle of Main St. –Â  it’s a 4 lane road that is as busy as it sounds – just standing there.Â  My husband got out of the car, so I circled around the block, and they were gone when I came back.Â  I circled about 10 more times, didn’t see them, then I left because we were about to run out of gas.Â  And all this while I’m fielding calls on the cellÂ  phone about the other dog and my husband’s work – where he was supposed to be today.Â  Long story short – this dog situation has been a nightmare, and we thought we had solved it with the concrete blocks.Â  But it’s worse than ever.Â  And I simply cannot keep these dogs from running away while I’m pregnant, feel yucky, and have 4 other kids to care for.Â  So we have to surrender one or both of the dogs.Â  We’re going to try one at a time – the older one is the one who leads the team inÂ  the escapes.Â  We think she is just so desparate to get away from the year old puppy that she will do anything to get outÂ  – including moving concrete blocks and plowing through chain link fence.Â  And now, becuase it’s clear that she would rather get struck by a car than live with her “brother”, for her own safety I think we’re going to have to return her to the humane society.Â  We can only hope she will find a good home and that our other dog will stop escaping from the fence.Â  Numerous people have suggested putting them on tie-out chains, but the older dog has already snapped one of those, plus they would get tangled together.Â  I just can’t believe we’ve spent over $400 on these dogs in the past week and we still have to give one or bothÂ  up.Â  It’s not about the money, but it adds insult to injury. It’s about disappointing the kidsÂ  and me having to feel terrible for adding to the homeless pet problem in this country.Â  I always wanted to be part of the solution…

### Comments

# Highlights From A Beth Moore Bible Study

One of the activities that’s been keeping me so busy lately is the Beth Moore Bible study I’m attending on Mondays, called Jesus The One and Only.Â  It’s great; I’m learning a lot, getting to know other women from my church, and it gets me and the kids out of the house for a few hours every Monday morning.Â  The kids can blow off some steam while I go through the workbook with my small group and watch the dvd.Â  A fun class, but there is a side effect of all the learning: homework.Â  Our workbook is divided into weekly sessions, and there are 5 days of homework for every week’s lesson.Â  Each day has about 4-5 pages of homework that involves creative thinking and looking up passages in the Bible, contemplating them, comparing them, and answering thought-provoking questions.Â  Time-wise, it’s intense, especially for this pregnant mother of 4.Â  This is the 3rd week of class, and so far I’ve been able to get all my homework finished on time and am really enjoying it.Â  I struggled a bit at first with the stress of trying to find those extra hour 5 days a week that I was sure I didn’t have, but I’m managing and reaping the rewards.Â  Before I begin today’s homework, I thought I’d share some things that I’ve highlighted in my workbook.

Before I do that, however, I will recap in a nutshell what the study itself is all about: Jesus.Â  We began our discussions talking about Mary, and Beth Moore is really great at delving more deeply into things and encouraging the student to give more thought.Â  We talked about what Mary might have been like as a young Jewish woman (Mary was probably around 13 or 14 whenÂ  she was told she was about to carry the Lord’s childÂ  – did you know she was that young?Â  I didn’t!), and we talked about her pregnancy (of particular interest to me right now), her thoughts and feelings, her journey to see her cousin Elizabeth, and then we moved on to talking about Jesus himself.Â  We talked about him as a baby, a child, and about how he was led into the desert, all while relating it to our own lives.Â  Some of Beth Moore’s statements that stuck out to me in the workbook are:

*God seems to love little more than stunning the humble with His awesome intervention.*

*Seasons of intense temptation are not indications of God’s displeasure.*

*God emphasized that the road to redemption would be costly and confrontational.*

*Luke was the only Gentile God inspired to write a Gospel.*

*God allows circumstances to exist in our lives that drive us to dependency on Him.*

*God is far too faithful to let anyone make it through life without confronting seasons of utter helplessness.*

*The good news Christ may want to preach to you today is that you don’t have to subsist.Â  YouÂ  were meant to thrive.*

*I’m quite sure if my healing process had been painless, I would have relapsed.*

*Many people sincerely love God, but I don’t think anyone stands to appreciate the unfailing love of God like the believer finally set free from failure.*

### Comments

**derek**As far as I know, the Bible doesn't say anything about his age. Here is something from the ISBE, Bible encyclopedia: 2. Character: If a type is to be sought in the character of Joseph, it is that of a simple, honest, hard-working, God-fearing man, who was possessed of large sympathies and a warm heart. Strict in the observance of Jewish law and custom, he was yet ready when occasion arose to make these subservient to the greater law of the Spirit. Too practical to possess any deep insight into the Divine mysteries or eternal significance of events which came within his knowledge (compare Luk\_2:50), he was quick to make answer to what he perceived to be the direct call of God (compare Mat\_1:24). Originally a â€œjust manâ€ (the King James Version), the natural clemency within his heart prevailed over mere justice, and by the promptings of the Holy Spirit that clemency was transferred into a strong and enduring love (compare Mat\_1:24). Joseph is known to us only as a dim figure in the background of the Gospel narratives, yet his whole-hearted reconciliation to Mary, even in the face of possible slanderings by his neighbors, his complete self-sacrifice, when he left all and fled into Egypt to save the infant Jesus, are indicative that he was not unworthy to fulfill the great trust which was imposed upon him by the Eternal Father. 3. References in Apocryphal Literature: The Gospel of the Infancy according to James, a work composed originally in the 2nd century, but with later additions (compare Hennecke, Neutestamentliche Apokryphen, 47-63), gives a detailed account of the marriage of the aged Joseph with Mary, of their journey to Bethlehem, and of the birth of Jesus. A similar gospel, reputed to be by Thomas the philosopher, of later origin and Gnostic tendency (compare Hennecke, 63-73), narrates several fantastic, miraculous happenings in the domestic life of the Holy Family, and the dealings of Joseph with the teachers of the youthful Jesus. Other legends, from Syriac or Egyptian sources, also dealing with the Infancy, in which Joseph figures, are extant. The chief is The History of Joseph the Carpenter (compare Hennecke, Handbuch der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen, 95-105). This contains an account of the death and burial of Joseph at the age of 110, and of the entreaties of Mary to Christ to save him. Its aim was to show forth Christ as the Saviour, even at the last hour, and the rightful manner of Christian death. Joseph has received a high place in the Calendar of the Roman Catholic Saints, his feast being celebrated on March 19.  
**Taylhis**Interesting thought, Derek. Is there anything else that could give us clues about Joseph's age (things he did, festivals he attended, etc). I haven't read the New Testament yet.  
**derek**I did know what is said about Mary's age, and just for kicks I decided to look up Joseph since I never heard anything on his age. I expected he was probably somewhat older, but apparently a manuscript describes him as quite old. Well, since the Bible doesn't speak of it, I am not sure I will trust this extra-canonical source. By the way, the title of the series is also the title of a song we have sung at church before in choir: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OriHO21pBsE  
**jamiahsh**Very though-provoking! Glad you are enjoying the class. Your discussion of Mary took me back to high school when we had a bunch of students from other churches some and join us on a Wednesday night in order to "better understand" why Catholicism is so different than other branches of Christianity (small town drama) One of their questions was "Why do we worship Mary?" It's not that we "worship" her as much as we honor her. And yes, she was a young teenager when she was with child.

# I WAS Gonna Blog More This Summer, But...

I am enjoying some of the freedom that the summer affords me: no youth group on Wednesday nights, no teaching Sunday school, no having to drop the kids off or pick them up at school – well, the kids will be out of school in 2 days, so I haven’t had a taste of that yet, but I’m looking forward to trying for my afternoon nap without time constraints – if only Terrible-Two-Dude will stop yelling my name during these nap attempts.

Don’t get me wrong, I enjoy all of these activities, but there is something liberating about not being tied down to them for an entire summer.Â  As much as I absolutely loved teaching 1st graders on Sunday mornings, it was really great last Sunday to not have to get up at 8am and get 4 crabby kids ready for what amounted to a double church service for themÂ  – one while Mom and Dad teach and one while Mom and Dad go to worship.Â  Our family rolled out of bed by 10, got ready, and left the house around 10:40, getting to church in time to relax with friends before the service with plenty of time to spare.Â  I enjoyed Wednesday nights with my 6th grade girls, but there was a lot of emotionally exhausting drama there at the end, and I so needed a break.Â  Besides, it’s nice to have Wednesdays free.Â  But wait, I don’t have Wednesdays free!Â  Hubby and I signed up to organize and facilitate a class at church called Changing Hearts, Changing Lives – a personal ministry class that utilizes a DVD series by Paul Tripp and small group discussion to lead Christians to be able to effectively counsel others in a God-loving and caring way.Â  We’ve had two weeks of this class so far, and it’s going great!Â  So I can’t really say that I miss my free Wednesday nights.Â  IÂ  never got a taste of a free Wednesday night anyway; what’s that like?

I also signed up for a women’s Bible study series (Beth Moore for those of you that know her work) that meets on Monday mornings.Â  I hesitated with this one because it meets ALL summer – beginning today before school is out and going right through to August after the kids go back to school.Â  But there is child care there, so if my 4 kids haven’t killed each other by the time Mondays roll around, this will get us out of the house once a week.Â  Also, my oldest daughter gets to help with the child care with other ‘big kids’ her age,Â  so that will be good for her too.Â  I enjoyed my first class today, but I have to note the intensity of this class – 5 nights of homework per week!Â  Pre-Christian Taylhis 1.0Â  would have panicked and said ‘I don’t have time for this!!’, but Taylhis 2.0 feels pretty good about it.Â  I’m excited to immerse myself more fully in God’s word, and the structure of the class will have me getting to know better other women at my church.Â  I can find time for my homework; after all, isn’t more butt-time for the pregnant lady just what the doctor ordered?Â  I’m not sure about that, but it’s definitely on MY want-list because these days my feet (legs, thighs, etc) are killing me, and I have a lot more growing to do!!Â  Problem is, I’m going to spend that butt-time in front of my Bible and my class workbook rather than my blog, so there goes my plan of blogging more…Â  oh well, who said blogging more was a good plan for me anyway?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/06/jesus-the-one1.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/06/jesus-the-one.jpg)

### Comments

**taylhis**Thanks for your comments, but optimism on the homework front is more difficult today. I've done a few pages as I've had time, but I haven't even finished 'Day 1' in the workbook. If each day takes me 45 minutes and I have 5 days per week - ugh. And it's a lot of reading passages, reflecting, and writing about it, so it's not the kind of hw I can do while getting interrupted every 10 minutes or so to break up a fight between kids - which is what I'm about to go do now, coincidentally.... Or not so, really, since they are CONSTANTLY fighting!!!  
**derek**You should find something to keep you busy- you have way too much free time. ;) Well, busy as these summer things will keep you, I second jamiahsh's comment. :)  
**jamiahsh**Have fun with all your church activities. I'm sure that all of them will help you and, by extension, others develop your relationship with God even more fully.

# Evil Animals

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/06/see-no-evil.jpg)Every once in awhile, time.com has interesting countdown-style articles.Â  The other day, this one caught my eye:

[Top 10 Evil Animals](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2074429_2074446,00.html" \t "_blank)

Beyond the expected varieties of insects, you’ll be surprised to learn which mammals are featured (I know I was shocked by a few of the species the authors felt worthy of being on the evil animal list), and it’s interesting to read about the characteristics of all the creatures included in this article.Â  I was going to include a shortened version of the list so you didn’t have to flip through the slide show, but some are so entertaining that I’m going to let you flip through for yourself – click the link above.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**#9... Is it just me or did my neck of the woods have issues with them not too long ago... hmmm. #1... Having a NY channel via our DISH network, it seems that you can turn it on the news and hear about more new and improved methods of dealing with the critters. Has cut tourism by quite a bit last I heard Fun and interesting article.  
**derek**Yes, #8 makes this seem more like a Cracked magazine list than that of a supposedly respected mainstream magazine. Mosquitoes = #11?  
**taylhis**That is funny and random, D. Written back in OJ's heyday, it seems? And when you said 'bloodsucker', it made me wonder, why the heck were mosquitoes not on this list? I HATE those little buggers!!!!! They cause illness, pain, itchiness, and even death - I find that much more evil than the so-called evilness of #8 (they only go so far as to say the animal's deceptive looks are what makes it evil? Or that it's mean to others of its species? Big deal).  
**derek**Well, only one on that list has the capability of truly being evil. Interesting that that animal was not number one. Of course, number one is a nightmarish bloodsucker. One of them made me think of this: http://www.glyphjockey.com/sequitur/juicedingo.jpg

# Still Here... Somewhere

Realizing I haven’t blogged in awhile, I’ve been trying to think of something to write about.Â  I have plenty of material; I just don’t feel like writing for some reason.Â  Plenty of material, not plenty of time is part of the reason.Â  I’ve even started a few drafts, but at least one ended up being a laundry list of complaint about my dogs’ behavior and other things that have been stressing me lately, and I don’t feel like publishing it.Â  After all, Walmart complaints are fun, tongue-in-cheek ways to vent about how I feel ripped off after shopping at Walmart, but when I write huge rants of real life complaints I annoy *myself*, so I can’t imagine my readers’ feelings.Â  Plus all the complaining doesn’t ease the stress, nor does it help me fulfil the main purpose of my blog – which is giving my family a virtual diary of our lives while the kids are growing up.Â  Sure, it shares the information, but I want their reading experience of our family blog when I’m gone to be a good one, not something like, “Hey – I DO remember when mom was stressed all the time!!”

So I wanted to drop a quick line to let it be known that I’m still here, still a part of blog world, still interested in posting blogs.Â  My kids are not any less cute these days, nor my life any less busy or exciting…Â  just much more stressful, which kind of puts a damper on my creative writing spirit I think.Â  I’m hoping maybe that will change here soon…Â  if not this summer, something tells me I might feelÂ  better in October or November with less of the negative pregnancy symptoms and more of the ‘new baby joys’ to focus upon.Â  Can’t wait!

### Comments

**derek**Harold Camping, yes. And it would appear that he is [somewhat less than repentant](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/23/harold-camping-to-speak-t_n_865746.html). Sigh.  
**jamiahsh**AMEn, Derek! Was that really the guy's name, mr. Camping? Guess I did not pay that close of attention.  
**derek**What must Mr. Camping and his followers be thinking now? I pray he repents his false teachings and leads his followers, including the one member of my men's small group, to the real Truth. The church age isn't over, people are still being saved in churches, and we still don't know the time and day of Christ's return.  
**justj**I guess I am still here. ;). Thanks Chris!  
**justj**But am I here? I'm not sure since I haven't been able to post or reply.  
**taylhis**Pastor gave us some fun at the expense of the "Rapture" this morning ;)  
**jamiahsh**A very creative, entertaining post to tell us all that you wer not part of yesterdays "Rapture" UGH!

# The Return of the Commodore 64?

It holds the Guinness World record for best-selling single computer model of all time, so who had a Commodore 64?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/05/commodore.jpg)My family had one when I was growing up, and I enjoyed playing hours of games on it.Â  I remember how novel it was that we could create a sign, card, or banner on the computer and then print it out –Â  complete with pixel-riddled graphics and what-do-you-call those side strips on the paper with the holes in them that you tear off and either discard or twist them together and make art out of them.Â  My uncle had a subscription to Loadstar, which was a Commodore club of sorts – he would get magazines and new games monthly in the mail.Â  I used to love some of those Loadstar games, unfortunately, I can’t find them to play on emulators now.Â  I really enjoyed an Activision game called Toy Bizzarre, and my all time favorie game for the Commodore 64 was Maniac Mansion – I was addicted to it until I won it, and then I had to go back and win it withÂ  all the different character combinations.Â  They did make a version of Maniac Mansion for the original Nintendo, but I was biased toward my Commodore version.Â  I always thought that game would make a great movie (think Clue), and when I was younger, I tried to write the game into a novel but never finished it.

So what’s got me thinking back to the 80’s days of the Commodore today?Â  I came across an article on cnn.com about how advance orders are being taken for the resurrection of the Commodore here in 2011.Â  It’s being made to look just like the Commodores of the 80’s, but it will have today’s computer capacities since the ’64’ in Commodore 64 referred to the unit having 64 Kilobytes of memory – about the equivalent of one long email, according to the article.Â  If you’d like to read the article, [click here.](http://www.cnn.com/2011/TECH/gaming.gadgets/05/09/commodore.64.reborn/index.html" \t "_blank)

### Comments

**derek**I found another source- just the D64/D81 files, not a CD. I will download them and get them to you.  
**derek**Hmm. Daemon Tools won't mount it. Interesting.  
**derek**How can a software program destroy a CD writer? A fluke in any event. It runs without issues on both computers here.  
**Taylhis**Yep - sounds like an unrecognizable foreign language. So that lets you play the Loadstar games? Now I just have to remember the names of the ones I liked. Oops, C says Daemon Tools destroyed his CD writer.  
**derek**Just finished downloading. It's a CD image in a weird format (created with a program called BlindWrite). Just install Daemon Tools and mount it as a drive. I'm sure C can help you if this sounds [insert foreign language] to you. :)  
**derek**I haven't tried it yet, but I'm downloading this now: [Loadstar Compleat [sic] on Megaupload](http://www.megaupload.com/?d=NFAKLNMW) The computer seems more like a netbook shaped like a C64, what with the Atom processor. I'll just continue to use Gamebase 64 with an ordinary PC. I might be tempted by a new model Amiga however, if a decent one (there have been attempts) were to ever come out...  
**jamiahsh**I remember playing on one back in the day... at school, perhaps during study hall... when I had them which was not often? Must have been it.  
**justj**The nerd in me is going "I want it now.". The practical side is telling me that I have plenty of computers. So far the practical side is winning.

# Easter 2011

Easter is definitely a favorite holiday of mine.Â  Can’t be THE favorite because nothing beats Christmas, but it’s proven to be even better than Halloween these days.Â  No matter how you celebrate Easter, there is always lots to do this time of year, and I think our family found the perfect balance between celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the traditional kids’ stuff like Easter eggs and bunnies.

Every year, our community has an Easter egg hunt, and my kids always love it.Â  My oldest is now too old to participate, but I was proud that she chose to come along with us and that she was a HUGE help with the little ones.Â  Our community’s Easter egg hunt is more of a candy scramble now.Â  They used to have it in the park, and the volunteer teens from the high school would hide the candy all around the park, but they got tired of having to move the event indoors at the last minute because of inclement weather.Â  With Easter being in April, you just can’t guarantee a sunny, dry, Saturday morning without muddy ground in which to hide the Easter surprises.Â  So now they have it in the middle school gym, and while they can’t exactly hide the candy, the kids seem to love it all the same.Â  If the kids find a piece of candy with a colored dot on it, then they win an extra prize, and 2 of my 3 kids did just that – those of you who know our family can guess who was the one with the (as always) bad luckÂ  – poor kid.

At church the following day, we had two special guests join us – one friend who doesn’t go to church but began to come after falling on hard times in his life, and a new friend who is also going through tough times and looking to switch churches.Â  I’m so happy to report that New Friend now calls our church her church home – she and her kids really like it!Â  Also, Friend #1 has been coming to church every week since!Â  God is amazing!

Monday, we were invited by some friends to attend “The Living Last Supper”, a show near Fort Wayne Indiana staged solely for God’s glory – to depict the last days and the death and Resurrection of Jesus.Â  It was an **awesome, powerful** show; one I **strongly recommend**.Â  This will be an annual tradition for our family for sure!Â  Especially since all 4 of our children were moved by the performance, and we didn’t even need to use the child care!

Friday saw the annual kid-friendly tradition of egg coloring, and I think this was really the first year we’ve done egg coloring with a little BOY in the house.Â  Our son is 2, and what a difference there was between his rowdy excited way of dropping the eggs into the colors versus his sisters’ delicate quest for prettiness in their egg designs.Â  Our son barreled through his allotment of eggs so quickly that his sisters were still working on theirs when he was done, and this is what happened:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/05/Easter-weekend-4-222324-2011-009.jpg)After dinner, our family sat down in a circle to do another one of our favorite Easter traditions: [Resurrection Eggs](http://www.amazon.com/Resurrection-Eggs-Familylife/dp/1572297220" \t "_blank).Â  It’s a set that was given to us by my sister last year, and I have to remember to tell her how much we enjoy doing this every year.Â  We even lent our set to some friends this year for them to enjoy!Â  It comes with a booklet, and we take turns reading the little paragraphs that tell the story of Jesus’ death.Â  The booklet asks questions and gives you places to pause,Â  and you open each of the 12 eggs when prompted.Â  Each of the different colored eggs contains a little something that represents the part of the story that was just read, and we have kids take turns opening eggs.Â  It’s a wonderful way to combine the eggs aspect and the spiritual meaning of Easter into a fun-filled educational family activity, and we love it!

Saturday morning the kids got a nice surprise – the Easter Bunny had visited early and hidden their gorgeous eggs!Â  I think the Easter Bunny thought it would be too much for us to search for eggs while trying to get to church on time Sunday morning, and he was right Â  Oh, here’s a pic of the kids with their eggs; Dude is still recovering from his egg coloring tantrum:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/05/Easter-weekend-4-222324-2011-005.jpg)After the egg hunting , we attended a fun Easter event at the community theater up the street, and the weather actually cooperated.Â  There were Easter egg hunts, games, lunch, and plenty of prizes for everyone, and the kids had a blast.Â  We returned home and made a last minute decision to check out another Easter drama at a friends’ church.

It seems that the Easter Bunny made another visit to our house on Saturday night since Sunday morning the kids woke up to a laundry basket for each of them full of surprises.Â  We went to church, and I enjoyed a whopping class size of 13 first-graders to teach!Â  Problem was, all of their jacked-up-on-candy brains could only think about the other aspects of Easter, and we had difficulty doing some of our planned activities.Â  It’s often difficult to accomplish much when I have a class of that size anyhow, so I took it in stride and we went to the gym early to run around and burn off some of that sugar!Â  At adult worship, we were blessed to see enough friends join us so that our group filled up an entire row!Â  It’s not about quantity, but it was amazing to see some friends there who don’t regularly go to church and some whom we’ve been inviting for years and haven’t come until now.Â  I am so excited to see what God is doing in the lives of those I care about!!!

We went out to brunch, took a family nap, and then we took the kids to the movies.Â  No, we didn’t see Hop, which might have made sense for Easter, but our older kids have already seen it.Â  So we took in Rio, which is a cute family movie about a couple of rare parrots – fitting for our family since we reside with a jerky parrot of our own, and we had fun.

Overall, one of the best Easter seasons *ever*; actually, this season just keeps getting better and better every year, especially as I become aware of what the season is all about and how to really celebrate it.Â  I am truly blessed!

So a belated happy Easter to everyone!Â  I hope you all had a wonderful Easter and have many more to come!Â  Celebrate Easter, celebrate Jesus, celebrate love, celebrate family – Easter is great & we have God to thank!

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Wonderful post Lisa. Great family traditions you have established that I am sure your children will follow up with when they are older.  
**derek**I should post a short vid I shot from onstage Easter Sunday. It's not very good, but it definitely will give you an idea of how our church celebrates the resurrection. :D I keep waiting for an official video to be posted on their Vimeo account, but I guess they chose not to.  
**taylhis**Easter Sunday to me will always be Resurrection Day, but I used the term Easter Season for those who celebrate differently :)  
**jamiahsh**Easter lasts for 7 Sundays, I believe. Maybe that is the basis for the old adage that if it rains on Easter Sunday, you get seven Sundays of rain. But glad that you enjoyed all of your Easter blessings and events. Glad that the weather cooperated for all the hunting as wet as the month of April was :D Our school egg hunt has an Adult version (one that I have never participated in...this year especially). So glad that you all continue to share God's love with your friends and hopefully those who so rightfully deserve his grace come to accept it! Well done!

# Now What Do I Do?

The title of this blog post makes me think of the movie Forrest Gump – remember the part where Forrest runs and runs; pretty soon he has a pack of people following him, running with him, and then suddenly he stops and says, “I think I’ll go home now.”Â  The pack of followers is suddenly lost and without purpose.Â  “NOW what do we do!”

That’s kind of how I feel now that I’ve finished the masterpiece novel I was reading, Under the Dome by Stephen King.Â  This book was a page-turner from start to finish, all 1000+ pages of it, and it’s one of those books that’s so good it sends the reader into withdrawal once they’ve finished the story.Â  Not helping is the fact that I’m sick, and the only good part of being sick (if there is a good part of being sick) is curling up with a good book.Â  But now I’ve finished my good book.Â  I’m reading two others, but they’re not the same type of book.

One additional note about Under the Dome:Â  I learned before I had read too far into the novel that they were making it into a tv mini-series, and as the novel progressed, I kept wondering how that would work given the book’s adult themes and graphic violence.Â  Now that I’ve finished the book, I felt comfortable doing a google search on it since I didn’t have to worry about the ending being spoiled (don’t worry, I’m not going to do that to you – not when I recommend it so highly for you to read for yourself; it’s really very good!).Â  Here I learned that it is indeed being turned into a tv mini-series – for **cable** tv.Â  That makes more sense, and I will have to find a way to get my hands on it when it comes out; maybe that will help cure my withdrawal!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/04/under-the-dome.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Agreed, there is a lot of language in there with the violence but like tay said the good really outweighs the not so good.  
**taylhis**@derek - There is A LOT of bad language, graphic violence, adult themes and other stuff that's not quite fun to read at times, but since it's a very long book, the good outweighs the bad and I dealt with it. Some of it was essential for the amazing character development and to portray realistically how these people would act in this kind of a stressful situation. I DO NOT recommend this book for those with a weak stomach or people who don't like obscene language or graphic content in books. And it reminds me of my idea of a book rating system like movies have - I would NOT want my kids reading this, it would need an "R" rating FOR SURE. @justj - I have a "to read" list a mile long, but there is never any guarantee as to which will be the page turner I'm looking for. I've gotten back into my "Caril" book pretty easily though, and once I'm done with that I think I'll re-read the last Potter in prep for the movie this summer. And I would love to catch up on my blogging, but it's not the same block of time that needs to be filled - I read in bed, blogging in bed would not be relaxing and would take at least twice the time it should to post!  
**derek**I admit I used to read Stephen King novels. After a few years break I attempted to read a Dark Tower book and was so put off by the F- this F- that, that I promptly returned the book to the library after having read only a chapter or so and haven't picked up one since. It's not as if I hadn't read any other Dark Tower books- I don't know what happened with this one. Maybe I was just in a mood.  
**justj**Hmmm. I wish I could think of another page turner for you. Maybe you could catch up with your blog posts. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Hmmm... what network..prolly HBO or something like that which I don't have. But it was an EXCELLENT book! Glad you enjoyed it, too! Maybe in a few years it will be on Netflix like some of the other King miniseries. I know The Stand (another highly recommended 1000 pager) is on my queue.

# Florida 2011 - Trip Diary - Part 3

Tuesday January 18 – We began the dayÂ  at Sizzler’s breakfast buffet, again.Â  If you are noticing a pattern, you won’t be surprised to see this in the diary for pretty much every day of the week.Â  The prices there were great ($3.99 per adult and kids were free!), the food wasn’t bad, and it left our group full enough to sustain us until mid-afternoon, which saved us a lot of money.Â  Today was Epcot day, and it was a great day – the sun finally came out, and the temp was in the low 70s.Â  We rode the usual favorites, and we got to take our daughter Disney on my favorite Epcot ride Soarin’ for the first time because she was finally tall enough – and she liked it!Â  Epcot has a World Showcase which is an area set up like different countries, so we took the ferry to Germany and walked to Japan for their delicious snow cones.Â  We walked around the lake through Morocco and Italy, and stopped in Norway and Mexico for their boat rides which are very cool.Â  Someday I would like to visit the countries in Epcot, sampling the ethnic foods as I go – but that’s more of a retirement plan since the kids would never go for that now!Â  Oh, and we ran into Stitch in America!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/03/025.jpg)After the day at Epcot, we sent the little ones home with Grandma, and Hubby, Jamy and I attempted to find a good place to eat dinner, but to our surprise, there weren’t many good dinner choices left at 10pm, even in Orlando.Â  We ended up at Perkins – famished – and they were out of most everything I asked for.Â  I stomached the sandwich I got, which wasn’t very good, and Hubby was not too happy with his salad.Â  We did end up with a box of Eclairs to go, and those were pretty goodÂ  – well, what little of them we had anyway once the kids got a hold of them.Â  Our friend Derek arrived that night while we were sleeping, so our next day would see one more joining our group…

Wednesday January 19 – Breakfast at Sizzler (did you think I was exaggerating about eating there every day?), then on to the Magic Kingdom where we spent a fun-filled day.Â  We learned that there is an expansion planned and under construction to double the size of Fantasyland, so we are looking forward to seeing that on a future visit.Â  Splashwater Falls was undergoing maintenance (usually does in January when we go, but this is a small price to pay for ideal weather and low crowdsÂ  – BEST time to visit Orlando!!), but we enjoyed the classics like Big Thunder Mountain Railroad (and little Disney liked this one, even though it is a roller coaster!), Jungle Cruise, Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean, and Hubby’s and my personal favorite that many others find to be lame,Â  The Carousel of Progress.Â  We skipped out on Space Mountain this time, mainly because the kids wouldn’t have liked it, and we don’t find that its long wait it worth it for a herky-jerky outdated roller coaster.Â  If you are into indoor roller coasters in the dark, I’ve always liked the Aerosmith one at Disney’s MGM, er, Hollywood Studios, althoughÂ  we never find that park worth the time for a visit since there isn’t much there.Â  And [King’s Island](http://www.visitkingsisland.com/" \t "_blank) in Mason Ohio outside of Cincinnati has a SUPER dark coaster called Flight of Fear.Â  But back in Orlando, the People Mover ride in the Magic Kingdom, an elevated train-type ride that goes all around Tomorrowland, treated us to a one-of-a-kind glimpse inside Space Mountain – *with the lights on*!!Â  The People Mover travels into the Space Mountain building, but usually you can only see the glowing streaks of the ride trains as they zip past.Â  Because of a ride malfunction, the lights in the building were on, so we got an insider’s view of all the tracks and trains which was pretty cool!!Â  After the Magic Kingdom, Derek, Chris and I took the two oldest kids to Fun Spot to try the extreme go-karts, but it didn’t go over so well.Â  The oldest hated them, and she made me go putt-putt-putt all the way up the spiral and around the track – that was not fun; I’m more pedal-to-the-metal!Â  But we all took a spin on the bumper cars, and that was some great old-fashioned family fun that everyone was able to enjoy.

Thursday January 20 – Breakfast at Sizzler (every day – told ya!), then on to our second day at Universal, this time with Derek, although we lost one because by now, Jamy’s back pain was so bad that he had to stay in the rental house and relax all day.Â Â  Thankfully it did not rain this time, and we had a wonderful day.Â  It was a bit chilly, but we couldn’t resist the urge to ride Bluto’s Barges 3 (or was it 4?Â  I can’t remember) times in a row –Â  we were drenched!Â  Smarter ones in our group (Derek and Grandma) opted to stay out and stay dry, but those of us who got off soaked (and shivered) had a blast.Â  It’s a large round boat that’s propelled down a raging river of rapids; every time it dips, the riders on that side get drenched by a wave that cascades over the wall of the boat.Â  Then there are waterfalls and waterspouts – it’s so much fun to bond with the strangers in your boat as you take turns laughing over who gets soaked and who dodges the torrents of water – whether everyone speaks English or not, there is bonding in the boat!Â  Next it was on to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, and I think I talked about this earlier in this diary – it’s amazing; that’s all I need to repeat.Â  We went on the ForbiddenÂ  Journey ride again, this time with Derek, and he really liked it.Â  Unfortunately, they decided that Sammie had shrunk an inch or two since Monday, and she no longer met the height requirement, so she had to wait in the child swap room – which is actually quite entertaining because theyÂ  have the old Harry Potter movies playing, and I had forgotten how young Harry Potter (actor Daniel Radcliffe) was when the movies began.  
After Universal, we went to the McDonald’s largest Playplace where the kids had a blast.Â  Grandma stayed with them while Hubby, Derek and I went to the Titanic attraction I’ve always wanted to see.Â  Unfortunately, our adventure was a bit marred when Hubby was pulled over and ticketed for U-turn in a No U-turn intersection.Â  In our opinion, it should have been a warningÂ  – clearly we were tourists, it was an honest mistake, he didn’t doÂ  it when there was oncoming traffic present so no one was in direct danger, and of the 3 people in the car, not one of us saw the (supposed) no U-turn sign.Â  Personally, I thinkÂ  Orlando should treat their tourists a little more like the guests that they are, especially considering how much moneyÂ  the average tourist brings into their local economy.Â  Also, they seemed to milk us for every penny – the ticket itself was very expensive, and because we were from out of town, we couldn’t even show up to traffic court and contest the ticket, not to mention that when we returned home, we were bombarded with offers of traffic school via mail, which showed that they were looking for even more money by selling our info to these traffic schools so they could bombard us with ads.Â  A frustrating episode in our otherwise super vacation, but that’s enough – traffic ticket tangent over!  
So back to the Titanic exhibit…Â  I’ve always wanted to see it, but it’s quite pricey, and we were always nervous about spending so much on trying something new that we didn’t even know would be worth the cost or not.Â  So enter Groupon – before we left, there was a Groupon for Titanic, and we got it.Â  It kind of obligated us to fitting this in since we already had tickets, but with the money we saved on Groupon, it was worth it.Â  And, we even made it on time, getting pulled over and all!Â  Upon entry, each visitor gets a little card with the name and info of a Titanic passenger, and one of the rooms at the end of the tour has a wall with all the names of the passengers on it.Â  The lights go down, and the names of the passengers who survived stay bold while the names of those who perished are hollow, so you can see if “your” passenger made it.Â  Mine survived, which I had guessed correctly because she had been a first class passenger.Â  Our tour guide (portraying the famous Titanic personality “Unsinkable” Molly Brown) was very knowledgeable about all things Titanic, but our friend Derek’s passenger card stumped her – the name on his card was half-solid, half-hollowed, so we don’t know if he made it through the ill-fated voyage or not.Â  But overall, it was a lot of fun, and a well spent hour or two.Â  I’ve always beenÂ  a Titanic buff (excluding the movie which I feel really commercialized, cheapened, and capitalized on the tragedy and the great loss of life involved – enough about that), so this museum was right up my alley.Â  There were re-creations to see and explore (a first class cabin, the deck, which they had even chilled to provide an example of the actual temperature that night, and the grand staircase, see picture below), as well as actual artifacts recovered from the bottom of the ocean, like dishes.Â  There was room after room of signs to read and pictures to look at, and as much as I don’t like the movie, they even had a few costumes and props from it which were interesting to see.Â  Among my favorite parts of the exhibit:Â  the hall of newspapers, which had newspaper editions reporting the disaster in 1912 from all over the country, complete with early 20th century advertisements and other news articles.  
I also found this quite remarkable:Â  it was an ordinary cooler, and the exploration staff autographed it and put it down at the bottom of the ocean where the Titanic now lies.Â  I forgot how long it was there, but it’s not nearly as long as the remains of the ship have been there, and this is what the ocean pressure did to it:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/04/Florida-Jan-14-23-2011-033.jpg)Interesting as it may be, it is a sad representation of what will happen to the remains of the luxury liner itself.Â  Scientists estimate that it won’t last more than 50 additional years if people don’t find a way to salvage it and bring it up for study.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/04/Florida-Jan-14-23-2011-032.jpg)

Hubby and I in front of the actual sized re-creation of the Titanic's Grand Staircase

After Titanic, we stopped at Dippin’ Dots, but it was our only taste of the delicious ice creamish treat for this trip, and I was SO disappointed to find out they discontinued my favorite flavor of Dippin’ Dots:Â  Root Beer Float.Â  

### Comments

**taylhis**We went back to Sizzlers for lunch one day (or was it the first day, can't remember it's been so long now), and the food wasn't that great. But for breakfast, there really isn't a way to make food too bad, and it filled us up for much of the day so at that price, we couldn't go wrong! One of these years Justj, I really hope to see you and maybe a daughter or two down there with us :)  
**justj**I don't think I've ever been to a Sizzlers. Or most of the other places mentioned. Sounds like a good time.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Minor correction - Grandma rode the water ride once and did get very wet but was smart enought not to ride again.  
**derek**@jamiahsh: Hmm- where indeed..? (looks innocent) @taylhis: Check your email :)  
**taylhis**And yes, this post took forever. I've had the draft sitting there since part 2 was published what, a month ago? But I didn't have a chance to work on it much. It's all worth it when I print out the trip diary and store them with the photos in a memory book for the kids :) Even if it's not done til 6 months later...  
**taylhis**Yes Derek, email it! I'd like to see it. We should have taken your Grand Staircase pic on our camera, nuts...  
**jamiahsh**POTTERVILLE... HEHEHEHE!! Where have I heard that name before. Memories. And another memorable trip with amazing friends. Might not have all been good but cherish each and every moment spent with you all.  
**derek**Most of the rest of the days in one post- that must have taken awhile. Ah, the memories. I just wish we had had a little more time at Universal- I felt a little rushed toward the end and would have liked to explore Potterville- err, Hogwarts a little more. Ah, well. Maybe next year. My grand staircase photo didn't turn out so nice. With my Android phone it would have been much better since it has a flash. I can email it if you'd like.

# BookWorm

I was always an avid reader, but then I took an almost decade hiatus from reading books.Â  Because I did (and do) my reading before bed, I think the hiatus was due to the combination of getting used to parenting and also being fresh out of college which meant that I wasn’t used to getting to read what I wanted rather than what was assigned to me.Â  But a few years ago, I took up the hobby once again, and I’ve been thoroughly enjoying it.Â  I began by reading non-fiction because I liked the idea of learning something while I was reading.Â  I read biographies and stories that ranged from fun to inspirational, and my favorite reading was centered on true crime.

I read *[In the Presence of My Enemies](http://www.graciaburnham.org/index.asp?sec=2_1" \t "_blank)*, the inspiring true story of the Burnham couple who, after years of missionary work in the Philippines, were taken hostage during a vacation there and held for a year.Â  I read *[My Lobotomy](http://www.amazon.com/My-Lobotomy-Howard-Dully/dp/0307381269" \t "_blank)*, the biography of a man named Howard Dully who underwent a forced frontal lobotomy at the age of 12.Â  I read *[How Many Hills to Hillsboro](http://www.paperbackswap.com/How-Hills-Hillsboro-Fred-Bauer/book/142684/" \t "_blank)*, an account of a family of 5 who attempted and almost made a cross country trip together in the ’60s – on their bicycles.Â  I delved into fiction, reading the entire Harry Potter series and loving it.Â  And now I call myself an avid reader with a “to read” book list a mile long – and by the way, all of the above mentioned books I enjoyed immensely, and I highly recommend them.

I think that’s how I ended up reading 3 books at the same time.Â  It began when I was looking for something to read that would compare to Harry Potter, so I tried C.S. Lewis’ Narnia series and began with The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe.Â  While enjoyable, it wasn’t quite the can’t-put-it-down book that I was looking for, so I consulted my “to read” list and decided to try a Stephen King book that had been recommended by a local newspaper columnist – *[Under the Dome](http://www.amazon.com/Under-Dome-Novel-Stephen-King/dp/1439148503" \t "_blank)*.Â  With the exception of some short stories, I haven’t read Stephen King before, but I’ve enjoyed a few of his movies.Â  So far, Under the Dome has been exactly what I’m looking for – page-turning excitement that is hard to put down!Â  The novel is about a small town in Maine that is suddenly and inexplicably cut off from the rest ofÂ  the world by a mysterious,Â  invisible – yet very real barrier.Â  Between trying to draft and enforce their own laws, keeping lawless individuals under control and townspeople from going crazy – literally –Â  and attempting to figure out what the dome is and how to get rid of it, the little town has more than its fair share of strife.

A few weeks before my request for Under the Dome came in at the library, I had decided I wanted to read the Bible, and so I find myself switching between two 1000+ page books in bed at night – I am so grateful we found a great sale on that e-book reader, which makes switching between these two books easy on my arms and my bed partner.Â  I know a lot of people are intimidated by the complex language of the Bible, but the NIV version is fairly easy reading, and I really enjoy reading it and especially learning more about the chapters I’ve read when I go to church on Sunday.

As if reading two 1000+ page books at the same time weren’t enough (though on the plus side, it’s not like I can possibly get the characters in the Bible and those in Under the Dome mixed up – a complication I used to run into in my heavier reading days when I would try to read a book for pleasure and a book for school at the same time), another one of my requests came in at the library – Caril by Ninette Beaver.Â  Being a more obscure book, I don’t know that I will get the opportunity to get it from the library again, so I’m attempting the book-reading tri-fecta.Â  Caril is the unauthorized biography of Caril Fugate, the alleged accomplice to [Charles Starkweather](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Starkweather" \t "_blank) who went on an infamous murder spree centered in Lincoln Nebraska in 1958.Â  Although Caril was tried and convicted in a court of law, there has been much debate about her actual role in the murders because of her age at the time – 14.Â  The book follows the cases and Caril’s incarceration and is written from the media’s point of view in the 1970’s before Caril was released from prison.Â  It’s been interesting to read about other news items of the day (breaking news items in 1958 included: Liz Taylor’s husband killed in a plane crash and Elvis being drafted into the Army) and also how differently people reacted to news reporters taking interviews for the brand-new medium of the day: television.Â  Family members of suspects, law enforcement, and attorneys were all much more willing and able to talk to reporters and share details for the camera than they are today.Â  You may have seen one of a number of movies made about the Starkweather cases; the most famous is NaturalÂ  Born Killers, although that movie DOES NOT follow the cases accurately and is, in my opinion, a terrible movie.Â  IÂ  guess the reason I’m so interested in these cases is because Charles Starkweather was a different type of serial killer and one who has escaped the major notoriety of say, Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy.Â  I also lived in the lovely city of Lincoln Nebraska for a year, and I’ve seen many of the places where the crimes took place for myself – including the penitentiary where Starkweather was electrocuted and the cemetery where he is buried.

I’m really enjoying all 3 of my books right now, but reaching my goal of re-reading the last installment of the Harry Potter series before the final movie comes out mid-July is going to prove to be quite challenging!!

And one more note – further encouragement to read Under the Dome is the movie being made due to come out this year – looks like a made-for-tv movie, which is difficult for me to imagine based upon the violence involved and intensity of the story.Â  But if Stephen King’s other tv mini-series are any indication, Under the Dome the movie version will not disappoint and is an excellent reason toÂ  pick up this great book for some perfect summer reading!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**THREE TIMES! I knew about the two. And yes, part 2 is going to be in 3D. Hope it is good. Yes, seems that Hollywood likes to take liberties when saying that a movie is based on other material.  
**taylhis**It was seeing Deathly Hallows in the theater 3 times that made me WANT to re-read the book :) Natural Born Killers is terrible; that's worth reiterating. One of the worst movies I've ever seen. I checked the synopsis just now, and I don't see any similarities between the movie and the Starkweather case, just murder. Don't know why they say it was loosely based, but I guess a vague one word subject is all you need to be considered loosely based anyway.  
**jamiahsh**And I have never seen Natural Born Killers so thanks for warning me away from it ;)  
**jamiahsh**LOVED Under the Dome. I like the Nook's ease of going from one book to another as well. I'm just doing two at a time... reading a 1000+page turner and working on the last Percy Jackson book. I wonder why Hollywood has not jumped on that series more... they have only made the first book a movie. Don't think I'll reread Deathly Hollows before July. Think part 1 will be enough to satisfy now that it is on DVD.

# ACM Awards - 2011 Edition

Was it really 11 years ago already that we got to attend the 2000 Academy of Country Music Awards in Los Angeles?Â  Newcomer Brad Paisley won that year for Best New Male Vocalist, and he’s now a country music veteran who took the Top Male Vocalist prize in 2011.Â  Someday, I’d like to attend the recording of another live awards show.Â  Nothing beats the excitement in the air and participating in a live tv show taping where anything goes.Â  And never in one place will you see so many super performances by a variety of outstanding performers – both from country music and also outside the genre.Â  But my 4.5 kids keep me grounded, and I don’t travel as much as I would or as much as I used to.Â  So until the day when I can get back to a live country music awards show taping (and I will be in no hurry to go to the ACMs until they move it out of Vegas!), I will enjoy watching and voting along at home.

This year was a super show; I had a nice time watching it last night.Â  And a surprise awaited me at the end…

Some highlights:

– Brad Paisley opens with a performance, and then he’s joined by none other than –Â  ALABAMA!!Â  They were so awesome; this number really got my country blood pumping!

– Some unlikely duos performing this year:  
Unlikely duet #1 – Jennifer Nettles from Sugarland and pop star Rihanna. Â  Their duet made for an interesting performance.Â  Not my favorite kind of music, but they sounded good.  
Unlikely duet #2 – Country music sweetheart Carrie Underwood screaming alongside Aerosmith frontman turned American Idol judge Steven Tyler.Â  The first song wasn’t great; it was more for Tyler than Underwood, in fact, I thought it a waste of her lovely voice.Â  But their “Walk This Way” duet was toe-tappin’ fun!  
Unlikely duet #3 – Zac Brown Band and James Taylor.Â  I’m really starting to enjoy the harmonies of the Zac Brown Band, and their performance with James Taylor tonight was thoroughly enjoyable!

– Probably the first time I’ve cried while watching the ACM awards – Darius Rucker’s song backed by a chorus from the Lifting Lives music camp was incredibly uplifting and awe-inspiring!Â  I loved every minute of it!

Overall, a wonderful show!Â  Except one thing – where the heck was Rascall Flatts?!?

And oh yeah, that surprise at the end – Taylor Swift won Entertainer of the Year.Â  No surprise there; if I had paid attention when I filled out my fan ballot and realized that the Entertainer award was fan-chosen, I would have picked Swift in a heartbeat.Â  But I spaced and chose Miranda Lambert (still beat Hubby on the ballot 7-3, just sayin’) for some reason.Â  The real surprise came when they announced the nominees for Entertainer of the Year, and I actually found myself rooting for Taylor Swift – what was going on?Â  I’ve never been a fan of Swift’s music, and I hadn’t voted for her, so what gives?Â  My 6-year-old daughter was enjoying the show with me, and every time Taylor Swift came on or her name was mentioned, Sammie got SO excited.Â  So I told her I would let her know when “the big award” was coming on, and you should have seen her face when Taylor Swift won – she cheered!Â  It was adorable, and I cried.Â  I cried at the ACM awards twice last night, what is wrong with me?Â  Oh yeah – pregnancy will do that to you.Â  Probably a good thing that I was watching from the safety of my own home.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Glad you were able to catch it and that it was so much fun! Hopefully, one day you will get to attend another big live awards event!

# At Least I Have No Regrets

Spring break is over, and for me it flew by- and it was wonderful.Â  I had my concerns about being so tired and keeping 4 kids from getting bored and restless, and those fears mounted last week when I saw the weather forecast – 40s all week, scarce sunshine, and maybe even a little snow.Â  I was especially concerned that spring break would be my own personal forecast to what summer break will be like because hard as I try not to, I have times where I dread the summer a little bit.

For one thing, there is a wonderful Christian camp that we’ve been hearing about from a friend, and we’ve been trying to let our kids go for years now, but it hasn’t worked out for one reason or another.Â  This year, it seems that the dates will work, but the fees are a little steep, and the 45-minute trip to the camp x4 (there-back-there-back for two kids) might hurt the wallet a little bit with the price of gas the way it is.Â  Add to that a trip to Nashville Indiana with extended family – SO fun, but 8 more hours of driving, plus groceries and supplies to buy, plus 4 round-trips to South Bend Indiana, and I calculated my mileage from July 4-23 at 1388 – That’s one thousand eighty-eight miles in 20 days.Â  Factor in our van’s crummy gas mileage and all the pregnant lady bathroom stops, and OUCH.Â  But then I got to thinking about it, and I think I’d rather spend my July driving around the tri-state area than locked away in my air-conditioning with 4 rambunctious kiddos.Â  As I said, the trip to Nashville will be lots of fun, and most expenses have been paid thanks to a generous Christmas gift.Â  So what if I have to miss the 4th of July fireworks for one year (next year we do have to pick a different date though guys if you are reading this 4th of July is one of my favorite holidays!).Â  And the trips to South Bend mean that Grandma is taking the kids – so that means fun for them, and a break for us.Â  So what if it’s not all 4 kids gone at the same time anymore – that’s just one of the small trade-offs for having such a large (wonderful) family.Â  And I’m STOKED that the kids finally get to go to this camp – they are so excited too!Â  So what if we have toÂ  leave Nashville at 5am just to drive the 4 hours to get Sammie there on time?Â  But the main reason for optimism for summer vacation was spring break – it was awesome, and it flew by.

For me, the month of March dragged on and on, and I think much of it had to do with my prenatal dr. appointment on the 31st.Â  I just could not wait.Â  Part of it was excitement – this stage of pregnancy is toughÂ  in a different way than the rest of it because many of the changes are internal, and you have nothing to show for it.Â  I spend my time looking up sketches of what my baby might look like these days, but unless you count fatigue, nausea, moodiness, or tears, there aren’t any outward signs to get excited about – and no, leftover baggage from previous kids does not count as a “baby bump”.Â  Also, I’ve been extra worried about this pregnancy – I can’t put my finger on it, maybe it’s that stupid stat I heard somewhere that keeps sticking in my brain –Â  “1 out of 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage”.Â  This is my 5th pregnancy, so that panics me.Â  I wish I didn’t read the news so much.Â  Maybe the worry is because of how incredibly difficult this pregnancy has been on me (and my family) compared to the others.Â  Whatever it is, I’ve been especially panicked, but I’ve been building a great relationship with my new doctor – she is very understanding and so much more of a problem solver than my previous doctor.Â  But either way, spring break saw me at my prenatal, and everything looks great!Â  Baby is measuring at exactly 12 weeks, right where s(he) should be.Â  AND…Â  I got to see her (him) dance!!Â  The baby keeps sneaking us ultrasounds – I wasn’t scheduled for one, but the heartbeat couldn’t be detected (my understanding doctor warned me of this ahead of time, or I would have panicked.Â  Again.), so she took me into the ultrasound room.Â  There, we saw baby on the screen, and my little 2-inch miracle was *dancing* – I saw her legs moving and everything!Â  I keep thinking and saying “she” and “her”, but don’t place any bets – I’ve been known to be wrong about my children’s genders in the past –Â  *before* they’re born, of course, sheesh.

So I took the kids to the zoo on Monday of this spring break, and last night I’m still on cloud nine from seeing my baby dance, and the more I thought about it, the more I realized that I could not resist going back to the zoo on the last day of our season’s pass.Â  We aren’t going to renew because as much as I love the zoo, it feels like a waste to renew right before summer, especially when I’m pregnant and (probably?) won’t feel like going as much.Â  And I know I won’t be able to go after my surgery for a month or so…Â  So I took the kids to the zoo not once, but twice this spring break, and I didn’t even feel like I was going to keel over by the end of today, which means that my first trimester fatigue *might* be fading (afraid to get too excited).Â  I evenÂ  took an extra kid with me to the zoo both days, a gamble that paid off both times since we all had a blast – even if I was late getting Ellyn home today (that’s why I didn’t stop to chat Justj – I’ve been kicking myself ever since.Â  I really wanted to see your daughters!Â  But I was late, and you just don’t expect to run into a friend 60 miles from home so I was caught off-guard).

So yes, I missed the Chicago Cubs opening day game taking my kids to the zoo, and I’m proud of it!Â  Nevermind that I was looking forward to that game for months.Â  Hubby recorded it for me, and I watched it as soon as I got home anyway.Â  And I’m telling you what, the Cubs did not play badly (except for Dempster – if I still cussed he would be on my you-know-what-list), but they lost.Â  But as I said, they did not play badly, so there is MUCH hope for the season – you can’t tell anything decisive on opening day.Â  Well, except for last year but we’ll leave that out of it.Â  But the best part is, I have no regrets.Â  I can’t imagine how I would have felt had I missed my last chance to take my kids to the zoo in order to watch a game where the Cubs lost.

Super decision on my part, and if this spring break was any kind of predictor for summer vacation, BRING IT ON!

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Sorry about your missing your favorite holiday. Perhaps the town of Nashville will have fireworks you can go to. Actually, we always have to plan around Tim's days off and as you know, that is difficult to do. Plus the fact that I only have the month of July off. But 1 more year and when I retire we can go in June or August.  
**jamiahsh**So glad the break was enjoyable. Your Hubby warned me not to post any spoilers about the Cubbies since you would not be able to watch... but I was not around when the game was finished so you were safe. Glad to hear about the baby dancing! Sounds healthy to me. Are there any other kids going to the camp this summer... perhaps you could arrange a carpool and alternate drivers? But love the optimistic tone of the post!

# A Language All Their Own

WOW – two posts in a row from me, what’s that about?Â  My kids are on spring break, and the older ones are playing with the younger ones, giving me some unexpected spare time.Â  I wouldn’t dare schedule a household project; everyone knows the magic would end and I would suddenly find myself in the middle of an undone project.Â  Don’t worry, I already know it’s a fluke, and I don’t expect it to last long.Â  In the meantime, I enjoyed this video and wanted to share it.Â  Almost makes me want twins someday.Â  Almost.

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 think the one twin got an idea about climbing on the kitchen appliances, and the other twin is telling him how he’d fall, get hurt, and how much mommy would yell at both of them.Â  Whatever they’re saying, they are adorable!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**They were on GMA this morning. The interviewers were nervous that they would not "perform" but were just as adorably talkative ;)

# I Want To Be A Glass Is Half-Full Kind Of Person

…so I’ll start with the Cubs.Â  Because goodness knows in my own life, being an optimist is too exhausting.Â  I wake up feeling crummy, determined to make the best of my day, only to have had to step in to referree not less than 10 fights before I even make it to lunch.Â  And I’m not talking about MY lunch – that comes much later (if I’m lucky)Â  after I’ve served up umpteen helpings, cleaned up infinite messes, and responded to various other distress calls.Â  But the point is that at a time where I could really use my time and energy to focus on me and growing a healthy baby, much ofÂ  said time and energy is wasted on what feels like mundane, pointless referring and the like.

But withÂ  the Chicago Cubs opening day mere HOURS away (ok, dozens of hours, but still countable by hours!), I came across the following article which did indeed fill me with cautious optimismÂ  – not for my own summer, no, for there is no doubtÂ  I’m going to feel like a huge pregnant balloon, warm beyond reason, lazy beyond doubt.Â  I know that I will have 4 little kids to chase around, and I will have to pry myself out of my chair a little earlier in the chase if I’m going to have any hope of catching them to stop the trouble or keep them out of danger.Â  The optimism isn’t for meÂ  – it’s for the Chicago Cubs.Â  If you’re a Cubs fan, read the following, and tell me if you agree.Â  I especially like the line that says, “…allow me to put on the ol’ rose-colored glasses and search out reasons to be hopeful that 2011 will be a better year than 2010 for us Cubs fans.Â  For one, it can’t be much worse.”

Excellent point, that.Â  After all, I had to write off my Cubbies after watching what was the debacle they called opening day last year.Â  Not that I ever tend to give up on the team, I am a Cubs fan affter all, but well, if you saw them play, er um, “play” baseball on opening day of 2010, then you would agree.Â  Check out the rest of the reasons for optimism here as written by Bob Warja for the Bleacher Report @ bleacherreport.com:

**[10 Reasons for Cautious Optimism for the Chicago Cubs in 2011](http://bleacherreport.com/articles/646314-chicago-cubs-10-reasons-for-cautious-optimism-in-2011?utm_source=newsletter" \l "page/1" \t "_blank)**

And GO CUBS!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/03/cubs.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Good luck to your Cubbies this season. Prayers and blessings on a healthy summer for you and the little one. If you need any help, you know where I am. Might be kind of fun to watch me handle 4. By the heat of the summer, prayerfully I will be up to the challenge ;)

# Looking Forward To The Next One

Well, here we are only 2 months out from our last trip to Disney World, and I’m already wanting to go back.Â  That’s nothing new, it’s an awesome place, but I’m also reading about many changes taking place.Â  Ok, so I’m not exactly planning the next trip (step one would be how to fit our family of soon-to-be 7 into the minivan along with a week’s worth of luggage for a 20 hour drive), but articles like the following tempt me.Â  EspeciallyÂ  interesting: Disney’s $1 billion Next Generation project, which includes interactive line queues – they’re adding things like an interactive mystery experience to the line of the Haunted Mansion attraction.Â  And apparently they’ve already added interactive video games to Soarin’ and Space Mountain, none of which I had noticed on our last visit!Â  Maybe because we did the Fast Pass?Â  That reminds me, Disney is going to try a new concept as part of the Next Gen project: guests will be able to book their ride times for various attractions from their hotels or from home ahead of time, drastically reducing or even eliminating the need to wait in line (and to see all these brand spanking new queue attractions?).Â  Also something I missed this last time around: the new playground and interactive video games in the line for the Winnie the Pooh ride.Â  Now where would they have room for that, I wonder?Â  But no wonder that we didn’t notice these enhancements; that ride normally has an over 40 minute wait even in the down season, so we don’t usually indulge in it.

Lots of interesting changes and enhancements on the horizon,[check them out for yourself](http://www.orlandosentinel.com/the-daily-disney/os-disney-haunted-mansion-lines-20110326,0,3104381.story?page=1" \t "_blank).

### Comments

**jamiahsh**The Hunted Mansion queue sounds fantastic. Not only do we get to read the headstones but see the graves as well.  
**Jamiahsh**Wow! Next time! The map for the new Fantasyland looks great! I was planning my next clot free trip to one of my favorite places even before we left ;)

# I Would SO Try This!!

In pastÂ  summers, Hubby and I have been lucky enough to have all 4 kids watched by Grandma for an entire week.Â  This gave us time for some kid-free fun together with just us, as well as time to catch up on necessities like work and sleep.Â  For the past two summers, we’ve made a trekÂ  down to Cincinnati for some FUN.Â  We’ve been going to [King’s Island](http://www.visitkingsisland.com/" \t "_blank), an amusement park in the suburb of Mason.Â  Their VIP tours are quite reasonable, considering all the benefits you get (your own personal park guide for the day, all you can eat for lunch, and front of the line ride access, to name just a few!).Â  We’ve been making a weekend of it, going to the world-class Cincy Zoo one day, followed by a VIP tour at King’s Island the next.

I was on their site today, and I saw this cute little teaser video starring Don Helbig, the public relations manager at King’s Island: the same guy who meets us by the awesome 5-minute long wooden coaster The Beast for our backstage tour, which is also included in the VIP ticket.Â  Having ridden King’s Island’s wooden coaster The Racer over a whopping 12,000 times and holding the Guinness record for coaster riding, Don is fascinating to talk to.Â  He made this video to unveil King’s Island’s new 2011 attraction – or so I thought.

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.

So after seeing the video, I did a bit of internet searching, and it didn’t take me long to find the attraction being unveiled on March 18; here is [your sneak peak](http://www.b105.com/blog/2010/08/new-attraction-coming-to-kings-island/" \t "_blank):

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/03/WindSeeker11.jpg)The Windseeker is a swing ride, but it’s going to suspend riders 301 feet above the ground, swinging at speeds over 30 mph!!Â  Even though I have not been enjoying the height of the coasters in the past few years, I would try this!!Â  Thing is, we won’t be making it to King’s Island this summer because buying a ticket to enter the park would be a waste of money for me this year – I am due with my 5th child in the fall!Â  I’m not too broken up about missing the new ride or any of my old favorites; after all, I’d rather have a baby than a trip to King’s Island a million times over, but for the record, I would try this ride!!

We’re going to have to find something equally fun and pregnant-lady-in-the-summer-friendly to do this summer, but it might be a challenge – everything I can think of involves being outdoors and also lots of walking.Â  Not only that, but since there are now 4 kids, Grandma wants to split their vacations with her into shifts during the Grandma week, meaning Hubby and I are down to zero kidless days.Â  Oh well, there is plenty of time for that in about 20 years, right?!?

### Comments

**derek**It does look interesting- like one of those super thrill rides in Florida. Well, maybe not so, but bound to be cheaper, nothing more than the normal admission price, right? But it won't be the event that brings me to visit you as you mentioned above. I don't think I would horn in on your couple time anyway even if you were going. Not that I won't visit- I realize this post makes it sound that way, sorry.  
**taylhis**Just clicked on Cedar Fair and started visited the sites of their parks and found that Canada's Wonderland is building one too. Didn't see anything about it on Michigan's Adventure.  
**taylhis**Having the same ride at different parks, not so unusual. 3 opening the same year, more rare... They are all owned by the same company, so that makes a little more sense, but from a business standpoint, I wonder if it is a helpful marketing tool or a hindrance that they are all named the same (Windseeker)?  
**jamiahsh**BTGO, maybe? Add Knott's Berry Farm in California to the list. I THINK those are the only three parks ;)  
**taylhis**BOGO, maybe? :)  
**jamiahsh**Funny thing... KI's sister park, Cedar Point is unveiling the same attraction. Don't think this has been done before. Wonder if it is going to happen more that they are owned by the same company. But it does look fun. Wonder if the doc would allow for this. I might have to get used to the no coaster rule. But we will not think about that until the time comes.

# Jack Hanna, David Cassidy, Goats, Camels, And Live TV

I saw a link to this on Facebook, and it’s hilarious – gave me my smile for the day!Â  Watch chaos erupt on live TV in the 70s when Jack Hanna brings a gaggle of goats into the tv studio, and they run amok.Â  The host, Bob Braun, has a great sense of humor about all of it, although the same can’t be said for all of the audience members, especially those who end up with rogue goats in their laps!Â  David Cassidy even has a hand rounding up the herd, and by the time the camel puts in his two cents, the host is practically rolling on the floor with laughter!

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

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I'm sure that the lady in the red suit was really thrilled with the old goat. :D Hilarious on so many levels! 70s live tv... love it! Liked how the host tried to keep things flowing by giving a plug to David's concert. Imagine this happening in a Letterman audience :D  
**Phyllis Beyer**This was hilarious. I would have loved to be in this audience.

# Why I Dislike Time Change

Just a few of the reasons why I dislike the time change, especially the “Spring Ahead” version:

1. Â  LOSING AN HOUR OF SLEEP

2.Â  Mechanical clocks can be reset, kids’ internal clocks cannot.Â  I will lose an hour of sleep, and my kids will still wake up at the same time, which doesn’t bode well for the “fall back” version of the clock change.Â  In the spring, the kids will still want to go to bed at the same time, no matter what the clock says –Â  see #2.

3.Â  Normally I would like having the sun out later into the evening, but with 4 kids who don’t want to go to bed until it’s dark, the old go-to-bed reply, “but it’s not dark out yet” can actually make sense until 10pm where we live.Â  I both like having daylight until 10pm in the summer and dislike it at the same time – a conundrum for now, maybe something I’ll like better when my kids get older.

4.Â  LOSING AN HOUR OF SLEEP (that hour is so precious, it’s on here twice)

5.Â  There is a HUGE difference between 9:45pm and 10:45pm that I wouldn’t have noticed if not for the time change tonight.Â  At 9:45, the night was young, I had time for my shower, some laundry, and maybe a quick tv show or two to watch with Hubby before bed.Â  But before getting into the shower, I changed the clocks, and suddenly it was 10:45.Â  Suddenly there is only time for the shower and maybe a quick load of laundry before getting to bed too late to really feel good tomorrow anyway.Â  And no kid-free time with Hubby because (see #2).Â  

6.Â  LOSING THAT HOUR OF SLEEP (so important, it needs to end the list)

**Don’t forget to set your clocks ahead one hour everyone, and forgive me if I chuckle at those of you who show up late to church tomorrow – maybe it will help me feel better about my tiredness!!Â  **

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I, too, hated the time change when my kids were small. Now I have to deal with a dog who still gets up early but actually that's my husband's problem since I get to sleep in on the weekend. I also don't like getting up when it's still dark outside. But I do like it staying light longer. I feel like I have more of an evening.  
**justj**I would prefer the time to stay the same. I don't care which, just so we don't have to change twice a year.  
**derek**But what about losing the hour of sleep? :lol: I almost can't afford to lose the hour with the way I don't sleep well. But we'll all get used to it, leaving just #3. Eventually. And yes, I made it to church at the right time this morning. :)  
**jamiahsh**Oh, YES the Spring ahead. I worked 12-9 yesterday and had to be there at 7:30 this morning to open. By the time my head hit the pillow, the alarm went off :( But bring on the warmth! I do remember using #3 back in the day ;)

# Florida 2011 - Trip Diary - Part 2

Sunday January 16 – We drove over to Congo River mini golf to try to feed the gators they have there, which never works out because it’s usually too cold in January for the cold-blooded gators to care much about eating, and this time was no exception.Â  But we spent a long time just watching the gators and their habitat-mate turtles climbing around and over each other, getting in and out of the water – kind of like a free little zoo exhibit.Â  My kids are too little to enjoy or let us enjoy playing mini-golf, so we went to Sizzler for an all-you-can eat lunch buffet.Â  We spent the afternoon relaxing at the house so Hubby could watch the Chicago Bears game and the kids could swim, and we even took a dip ourselves at half-time.Â  For dinner, we went to Medieval Times, which is a dinner show – it is SO fun!!!Â  Everyone is seated around an arena, and the audience eats a Medieval-style feast while watching a show complete with horse, knights, and jousting.Â  You are assigned a seat in a certain color section (we were green – note the crown in the picture below), and you cheer on your color knight in the jousting and gamesÂ  – it’s a blast!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/03/012.jpg)After watching the knights duke it out, Grandma took the kids back to the house and we took Jamy on the extreme go-karts at Fun Spot.Â  The track called The Vortex is wicked; you wind up and around 3 or 4 times until you reach the top, and it’s strange to be up so high in a go-kart.Â  But you don’t really have time to think about that, because there is a steep drop down, followed by a couple of hairpin /Â  bowl-like turns that you have toÂ  navigate as driver of the kart!Â  Super fun, though not for everyone.Â  We thought this is what caused Jamy’s back injury that ended up plaguing his trip, but turns out it was something else.Â  And we took our daughters on these go-karts later in the week – with helmets of course –Â  and our oldest hated them and wouldn’t let me use the accelerator; it was SO frustrating!!Â  Our daredevil 6-year-old Sammie loved it though, and I found her to be a passenger more willing to go my speed – pedal to the metal!!

Monday January 17 – We ate breakfast at Sizzler at their breakfast buffet, and then headed out to Universal Studios as planned despite the dire forecast of rain all day, and the weathermen were not mistaken.Â  It was like a monsoon when we arrived, and scarcely let up all day.Â  Many of the rides at Universal are indoor, but Hubby and I did take a bit of a gamble (and lost) when we got in line for the new Rip Ride Rockit coaster.Â  They had to shut the ride down when they saw lightning, and wouldn’t you know it, we were first in line!Â  After investing that much time waiting, we really didn’t want to get out of line, but the kids were waiting with Grandma and Jamy, so we called them to see if they were ok and able to stay dry.Â  We waited probably about 20 minutes, and it was fun to try to read the different hand signals and procedures the staff was doing to see if we would get to ride soon or not.Â  Finally, they opened the coaster, and we were first –Â  test rats.Â  This coaster looks more intimidating than it is, mostly because the first lift is straight up, face pointed at the sky, your back is parallel to the ground.Â  Other than that, it’s a pretty lame coaster; the best thing about it is that you get to choose a song to listen to while you’re on it, and your song choice plays in the speakers behind your head.Â  I chose “Devil Went Down to Georgia” which made a very good coaster theme song, but the coaster was so tame that I was able to do some air-fiddling along to the song.Â  I heard Hubby beside me rocking out to Gloria Gaynor’s I Will Survive, and that seemed like fun too, but I wasn’t about to wait in line again for this ride.Â  The other thing that stank about the Rip Rockit is the rain – riding a coaster in the rain is not a lot of fun.Â  The rain pelts your face; it hurts and you can’t see anything, so it takes a lot of the fun out of it.Â  And oh yeah, this is how soggy we looked when we were done riding:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/03/016.jpg)Most of us made the best of the rain; after all, where we were from in Ohio the weather was sub-zero, so rainy 50’s still felt good to us.Â  Our oldest was not a happy camper, however, and she soon grew tired of walking around in the rain, even though Grandma splurged and bought the kids ponchos – I didn’t think to bring any, but maybe I will next time.Â  It never does the all-day-rain thing in Florida!Â  It usually rains or storms for less than an hour and then the sun comes back out so we were unprepared for the all day down-pour.Â  But seriously, how could Universal be anything but fun?Â  Even though the rain slowed us down a bit, we were still able to catch our first glimpse of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter – it was very cool!!

Hogwarts castle was amazing, and I guess I must have misplaced the picture I made Hubby take of me in Hogsmeade, which was beautiful at night.Â  We got some Butterbeer, and it was yummier than the version we attempted at one of our game nights here in Ohio.Â  The Wizarding World has 3 rides, and we only had time to get on The Forbidden Journey on this day – that’s the one inside the castle.Â  While you wait in line, there is plenty to see – it looks like you are on the movie set except better because it doesn’t look like a set – it looks real!Â  The portraits move and talk, and there are 3D projections of Harry, Ron, and Hermione that look like real people.Â  As you wind around the corridors of the castle, you get to explore many scenes straight from the books and movies: Dumbledore’s office, Gryffindor common room – even the Sorting Hat makes an appearance!Â  And the ride itself is *amazing*!!Â  If you are a Harry Potter fan, this area is a **must-see**!!Â  Though we did have a slight oopsie – while trying to rush over to the Harry Potter World before the park closed, we skipped lunch, so now we were cold, wet, and hungry.Â  It would have been ok, except that once we snaked throughout the corridors of the Hogwarts castle, we learned that the Forbidden Journey ride was down.Â  After waiting in the dark hallway listening to the Sorting Hat give his spiel over and over and on empty stomachs, we had had it – especially grumpy oldest who, if you remember, was not happy withÂ  the day at Universal in the rain to begin with.Â  Our torturous wait in the hallway of Hogwarts became so irritating that I wished my husband had bought the flaming wallet we had seen at the magic show – so we could throw it at the Sorting Hat, flames and all!Â  ðŸ˜‰

We did finally get on the ride, and it was awesome, but my oldest neglected to try it –Â  she doesn’t like anything faster or more thrilling than the Scrambler.Â  As I said, the ride was amazing, so now we were all famished after a day at Universal.Â  But being budget-conscious we wanted to leave the parks before finding dinner, though I must confess: I was so hungry that the idea of the ‘whopper bar’ on Universal’s City Walk that had turned my stomach that very morning was actually sounding quite good after a day walking around in the rain!Â  We ended up at Denny’s, which is a place I hadn’t been to in probably over a decade, and while the food wasn’t great, it sufficed.

*(to be continued in part 3)*

### Comments

**derek**Oh! I remember you telling me about the sorting hat- having to listen to it over and over- whoops. What else did you tell me that I forgot about I wonder... :/  
**Taylhis**D, I think a lot of my keen observation skills had to do with the fact that we were stuck in the castle while the ride was broken. I forgot to mention that being stuck in there was so bad that I briefly wished I had bought one of the flaming wallets at the magic show because I was tempted to throw it at the Sorting Hat! Funny, I didn't remember the floating candles until you mentioned it... Also about the Hogwarts ride, a lot of things you see on the ride depend upon which seat you get.  
**derek**Clearly I missed most of the things you mention at the Hogwarts ride. I do remember the floating candles, and of course the general ambiance. Not too upset I missed out on the rain or the Denny's. ;)  
**jamiahsh**I loved Hogwarts Castle! For never having eaten at Denny's... well.. as you said, it sufficed ;) Everything is better with great friends!

# Florida 2011 - Trip Diary - Part 1

Friday January 14 – We left our hometown about 4:40pm after loading the car, getting kids’ school stuff stashed for the week off, the gas tank filled up, and some snacks from the drive-thru for the kids.Â  I noted the dashboard temp at 20Â°F.Â  Around 8pm, we found a Goldstar Chili to stop at in Westchester, a suburb of Cincinnati – we love to stop for Cincy chili and coneys!Â  We took about an hour there, giving the little ones some time to run off some steam since there weren’t many people there that time of night.Â  Luckily we asked first and that’s how we learned that the McDonald’s Playland across the street had been removed – otherwise we would have taken 4 kids into the Playplace-shaped McDonald’s and had much disappointment to contend with.Â  Dinner went well, despite the waitress’ well-meaning attempt to reward our cute kids with balloons – *helium balloons*.Â  Really, lady?Â  4 helium balloons to add to the 6 people and the 6 people’s week’s worth of luggage in the mini-van about to trek 1000 miles?Â  So we managed to sneak out of the restaurant with only 2 balloons, and one popped right after we got on the expressway – thankfully it wasn’t too distracting to driver Hubby or we would have all been in trouble.Â  That last balloon made it all the way down to Florida with us, and it bopped around our rental house for the rest of the week until I “forgot” to pack it for the trip home.Â  After the Goldstar stop, the kids bedded down for the night, and they were all out by 10:30 – not bad, not bad at all!!Â  I had such a great time talking with Hubby and keeping him company as we drove down the country together that I didn’t want to go to bed, but I made myself try for some shut-eye around 2:30am.Â  I do really like the schedule we’ve made for these long drives to Florida, but there is just one downside – the most beautiful part of our trip, the winding drives through the breathtaking Tennessee mountains, is always done during the night when we cannot see anything outside but the lights of the towns in the valleys far below.Â  Hubby (and me) arrive in Florida tired, but the kids are well rested, and this is a way to break up the monotony of a 20+ hour car ride for those kids.

Saturday January 15 – We all woke up around 6:30am when we stopped for gas; I can’t remember where we were.Â  But the kids were in good moods, and the sunrise was beautiful.Â  Since the south was just coming out of a cold snap at this time, the air had an odd smell to it – a hard-to-describe tropical-climate-frozen-over kind of smell.Â  The kids awoke in wonderful moods, and we ate up all the miles we could until we began to get hungry for breakfast.Â  We decided to stop first for breakfast and then head to the beach since we had made the extra 90 minute jaunt over to the coast to visit while we were in the area.Â  We chose St. Augustine Florida since it’s coastal, and I had been there as a kid and kind of wanted to see it again.Â  But when we got off the expressway, there was no place for a family breakfast.Â  The Shoney’s that was on the roadside attraction sign had turned into a Chinese buffet, and even if we decided to stomach Chinese food for breakfast, they were not open at 8 in the morning.Â  So we headed east to the coast, and we found St. Augustine to be somewhat of a ghost town.Â  There were shuttered buildings and for lease signs everywhere; it was sad.Â  There seemed to be 2 sections to the city, however, and while the one section was full of shuttered attractions, empty storefronts and loiterers, the ‘original’ part of St. Augustine was bustling and beautiful.Â  Hoards of people were walking around the streets near the quaint shops, and we found our first glimpse of the ocean beyond the [Castillo de San Marcos](http://www.nps.gov/casa/index.htm" \t "_blank).Â  We weren’t able to stay long since everyone was starving and St. Augustine does not seem to have any family-type restaurants (mostly seafood and steak here), but we did get to glimpse some of the oldest city in the United States and marvel at the narrow streets as we tried to find our way out.Â  We got back on I-95 and exited miles south; near Palm Bay, I think – everyone was SO hungry at this point I wasn’t paying much attention to where we were, just that there was food nearby.Â  The Golden Corral here was excellent and satisfied our hunger pangs quite well.Â  And I have toÂ  note how incredibly amazing those hungry, tired kid behaved!!!Â  All they wanted was to get to the beach, and they were SO hungry, but they were SO patient while we looked for foodÂ  – unbelievable!!Â  Next it was time to find a beach, so we drove east and found a nice place where we had been before.Â  It’s a minimal $2 toll to get over a bridge and to the coast, but well worth it since there is ample parking and shelters with bathrooms and showerheads to get the sand off.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/03/Florida-Jan-14-23-2011-007.jpg)

We had a great time at the beach, even if it was cold (I think in the 50s – I’m writing this so long after it’s hard to remember!) and the locals were walking along the coastline wearing hats and gloves while we were wading.Â  The kids LOVED the beach, but we got cold and very tired since we were on minimal sleep, so we threw everyone into the car; most of the kids were half-dressed.Â  At this point, all we wanted to do was get to our rental house in Orlando, and we were so excited when we spotted Orlando’s familiar landmarks along the I-4 corridor.Â  But we had one stop to make – Downtown Disney to check how many Disney World tickets we had left – you can’t do this over the phone anymore.Â  Downtown Disney was MOBBED and we were a bit discouraged, but then again, we go through this every time we take a trip to Florida- we think it’s crowded down there, but everything ends up ok.Â  This year was quite crowded comparatively, so we asked a Disney cast member, and they summedÂ  it up in one word, “Brazilians.”Â  After she said that, looking around, there were a lot of Brazilians, I guess because in January it’s their summer vacation since they are in the southern hemisphere.Â  But anyway, my husband was walking around Downtown Disney, trying to find our ticket info, and things had been so crazy when we dropped him off, that he got out of the car without his shoes (remember he was on 0 hours of sleep!).Â  So he’s walking around Downtown Disney, confused, shoeless, and smelling like the ocean – people are staring, some are laughing.Â  Then he realizes – his toenails are painted!!Â  He had promised our 6 year old a week before that if she was good about getting up and going to school in the morning for a whole week, she could paint Daddy’s toenails.Â  We and some random strangers had a good laugh about that.

We left Downtown Disney, and we were SO anxious to get to the house we made a beeline straight for it except for one problemÂ  – we were an hour early for check-in.Â  So we headed back to the tourist area (Irlo Bronson Highway), and we looked for some timeshare presentations to sign up for.Â  Don’t get me wrong, it’s not that weÂ  like to do timeshare presentations, but we’ve gotten great at saying no, and Hubby and I used to make little games we’d play (insert funny random word in the conversation, things like that) that would make the 2-3 hours fly by.Â  Plus they would feed you and pay you for your time, so we recovered some of our vacation expenses that way.Â  Little did we know that the Orlando vacation scene is changing – timeshare presentations are no longer a dime a dozen;Â  in fact, we never found one that paid enough to be worth our time.

So we’re trying to kill an hour before we could get to the house, and we make a stop at the gift shop when we realize that most of the kids are not even dressed.Â  So I open the back of the van, and everything that we had just haphazardly thrown in the back when we left the beach tumbles out – including our bag of collected seashells.Â  So I’m picking up the seashells from the parking lot, one by one, and since I was half asleep, I didn’t really notice what I was doing until I heard, “Uh, Mom…”Â  I look in my hand, and I had picked up a couple of someone’s old discarded cigarette butts!!Â  Having had barely any sleep, I lost it then, and I laughed with the kids until I cried.

We pulled ourselves together and made it back to the house, which was finally ready – YAY!!!Â  Hubby took the kids in the pool while I unloaded and unpacked – I was happy to do this chore without little ones underfoot, and their behavior on the long drive was so incredibly stellar that they deserved a swim.Â  In a couple of hours, some of our fellow vacationers arrived (my mom and our friend Jamiahsh), and we headed out for some stuffed Chicago style pizza at Giordano’s.Â  We have had the question, why go all the way to Florida to get Chicago-style pizza, but it was YUMMY and we had gotten a Groupon for it which saved us money.

After that, Hubby and I went out together while the kids stayed with Grandma and Jamy, but we didn’t do muchÂ  – we were still looking (in vain) for timeshare presentations to attend.Â  We went toÂ  Old Town, which is an area in Orlando set up like an old-fashioned midway.Â  There are blocks of little shops – and bars, which were overflowing this Saturday night with intoxicated people- and carnival and thrill rides at either end of the strip of shops.Â  We normally have fun at Old Town, but I don’t think we will be going back on a Saturday night- definitely wasn’t for kids.

*(continued in part 2, a more abbreviated version!)*

### Comments

**derek**And where was I during all of this? Oh yes, the usual-sitting around on the weekend, slaving away Monday and Tuesday. :P But I'll show up in this eventually, in part 3 or 4. :)

# Drifter

I really like this song our church worship band has been playing lately.Â  Enjoy Drifter:

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**Good song, thanks for sharing.

# Right Out Of Flipper

Came across this inspiring animal story, and since I haven’t had the time to blog about any of the (mostly yucky) personal issues going on right now, I thought this would make a nice feel-good post.Â  I’m still working on that Florida trip diary, really, I am!!Â  But in the meantime, here is a story about some dolphins who saved a dog’s life.Â  This happened in Marco Island Florida, where we took our wonderful honeymoon almost 12 years ago.

[Dolphins Save Dog](http://www.nbc-2.com/Global/story.asp?S=14088636&hpt=T2" \t "_blank)

### Comments

**derek**Wonderful creation, those dolphins. Thanks for the story!

# Monkey, Er, Ape See - Ape Do

To take a break from the vacation unpacking, I took the little ones to the zoo a few weeks ago.Â  We had a great time – oh how I love winter zoo visits!Â  There aren’t many people around, and the animals can act like the animals they are instead of worrying about the hoards of visiting humans.Â  Well, most of the time it’s cool to see the animals acting like animals, unless they are doing disgusting things like the gorillas last week – don’t watch this if you are squeamish, but I have to publish it because of how embarrassed the gorilla seems about her behavior.Â  I felt so badly for filming her after she tried to hide that I turned off the camera, and that’s when she got up and went and sat behind a post – out of my view.Â  Why would she do something so gross if she is embarrassed by it?Â  WARNING: it’s VERY gross!!!

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.

The chimp was another story!Â  His name is Harvey, and he is a senior citizen chimp – he just had his 52nd birthday, which is quite a milestone for a chimpanzee.Â Â  Despite his age, Harvey is quite playful and has a penchant for young kids.Â  When we walked over in front of Harvey’s window, he was sitting in the corner wearing a sparkly lei, presumably from his birthday party which had just taken place days before.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/02/zoo-jan-28-2011-011.jpg)

When he saw us, he pulled off his lei and came over to his window to see the kids and play:

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

If you 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.

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These videos were takenÂ  almost a month ago, and I’ve been trying to get back to the zoo, but my oldest child has decided that the zoo is “boring” – her words, *NEVER* mine.Â  In fact, I’m wondering if I need a DNA test – how could someone with my DNA find the zoo boring???

During the week, I’m so tired and have so much to do that just writing this blog post is quite a challenge – I’m having a towelÂ  thrown over my head by my 2-year-old as I write!Â  I think I fell in love with Harvey that January day, and I miss him!

### Comments

**taylhis**Ok, so now she is a tweenager, then a teenager... how many more years does she get excuses to not act like a human being? ;)  
**derek**Blah. Misplaced apostrophe. Oh, well.  
**derek**Agreed w/Phyllis. Pretty soon your oldest will be demanding a phone with unlimited texting if she isn't already... The chimp: "I have a comfy rock to lay on and yo-ou do-o'nt!" :lol:  
**Phyllis Beyer**OMG - how adorable. I mean the videos of the chimp and Disney not the gorilla. They were very fun to watch. Don't worry about Taylor not liking the zoo - it's called being a tweenager.

# Hambone Award Contender

Have you ever heard of the Hambone Award?Â  It’s a prize given out by Veterinary Pet Insurance, the nation’s largest and oldest pet insurance company.Â  Each month, the company selects the most unusual claims and chooses a monthly winner to vie for the yearly prize – the Hambone Award.Â  Don’t worry, all the contenders are pets who survived their ordeals.Â  Last year’s winner Ellie, a Labrador retriever from California, went to the emergency room after eating an entire beehive.Â  She vomited large piles containing hundreds of dead bees, but Ellie was not harmed by the dead bees nor by the pesticide that killed them.

When reading suburban Chicago newspaper The Daily Herald’s online headlines, the following caught my eye, “Owl Vs. Chihuahua”, and that’s where I read about Chico the Chihuahua’s brave fight against a Great Horned Owl.Â  Chico’s owner was taking him for a walk in the wee hours of the morning, when a Great Horned Owl swooped out of nowhere (owls are silent flight birds) and picked up poor Chico, intending him for his late night snack.Â  Chico and his owner won the tug-of-war, and Chico won the VPI ‘most unusual’ story for the month of January, beating out such claims as a Labrador retriever that ate a marijuana cookie, a Golden retriever that swallowed a 5-inch barbecue skewer, a mutt that got wedged between banister bars and a Boston terrier who collided with a skier.Â  If you’d like to read the other entries and be part of the public voting in September, you can go to the [VPI Hambone Award’s website](http://www.VPIHamboneAward.com" \t "_blank).

Oh, and how did the Hambone Award get its name?Â  There was a dog insured by VPI who got himself trapped in a refrigerator and ate an entire Thanksgiving ham before he was discovered.Â  He was treated for a mild case of hypothermia whereupon he fully recovered.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Fascinating stories. Stuck in the refrigerator and ate the Thanksgiving ham, eh?  
**taylhis**Thanks for the feedback, D. Link fixed!  
**derek**Yes, I remember reading about these in the paper. Interesting stories. BTW, your link doesn't work. I was able to get the real url from your link though, so no ham, no fowl. Err- no harm, no foul. :mrgreen:

# A Different Sort Of Homecoming

Before I publish my vacation diary, I would like to say a few words about some unexpected feelings I encountered upon returning home.Â  Ending a vacation is always a chore, and for an in-the-process-of-being-reformed-worrywart like me, it’s easy to get caught up in dreading the negatives that accompany getting back to normal life; ie, returning to a cold climate, laundry, unpacking, etc.Â  Thanks to my growing relationship with God, I’ve been learning to embrace positives more easily, and I could not be more grateful for the opportunity for such a wonderful vacation and for the fact that we made it there and back safely.

But when we did return home, the welcome committee seemed a bit small.Â  The greetings of family members left behind (read: pets) seemed to be missing something, and the house seemed more empty than I had remembered it.Â  Then it hit me:Â  this was the first homecoming we’ve had since our family dog passed away last year.

I had noticed it on vacation, and in Florida it was actually an unexpectedly freeing feeling to not worry about a loved one left behind.Â  Don’t get me wrong; I love the pets we still have, but no one will ever take Charity’s place.Â  I used to feel such a hole in my heart when we went on vacation and left her behind that it gave me an extra motivation to hurry home.Â  But this time, our homecoming celebration was short-lived: we greeted pets and they greeted us, and there was no one around to hold a grudge like Charity used to do when we left her behind.Â  No one was miffed about getting left behind, in fact, I wonder if the dogs even really noticed…

It’s been over a year since the last time I saw her, and I still miss her a lot.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I would have surprised if you did not feel the absence of Charity. She was your first family pet and was a HUGE part of your family being through so many memories with you all. A real part of your family is never forgotten :)  
**derek**I haven't thought about losing pets for a long time, since it has been quite a while since we've had any. I don't think I can come up with the right words for you at the moment- a dog really is a close part of any family and losing one... I'll stop there.

# Cutest Bunny Ever!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/02/New-bunny-2-2-11-004.jpg)

Our kids had two snow days off school this week, so what better activity for a family full of animal lovers than to visit the pet store?Â  You can see where this is going…Â  we went looking for 1 baby rat, and we came home with 2 baby rats and a bunny.Â  One ridiculously cute bunny as yet without a name!Â  There have been a lot of contenders, but we just haven’t found any perfect ones yet.Â  The leading ones so far are Tigger, Snow Bunny, and Arcy.Â  Arcy is like a feminine version of R.C. which stands for Ridiculously Cute.Â  I really like Tigger even though we THINK she’s a girl bunny, but when I tried calling her Tigger it didn’t click.Â  Here’s a video, and more suggestions are welcome in the comment box below:

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

And the new rats:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/02/Feb-3-2011-005.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/02/Feb-3-2011-001.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I've always liked Droopy!  
**jamiahsh**WOW... The black one is almost camouflaged by t's top and the couch. Adorable!  
**derek**Of course Droopy is MGM (like Tom & Jerry) rather than Disney. Just thought I'd mention that since from the comments it might make a difference.  
**taylhis**That's hilarious D! And I like Droopy. Next time I have her out, I will test names and see if any stick.  
**derek**With those ears, how about Droopy? :D In the video I kept seeing a puppy instead of a rabbit. Then she would turn her head and it would be quite clear what she really was!  
**taylhis**And oh yeah - forgot to add pictures of the new rats. Adding them now...  
**taylhis**Good point Mom, although Tigger is also a Disney name! Though like I said, it just didn't click. Maybe I will try calling her Thumper because I like that name too.  
**Taylhis**Each of the older girls chose a rat and a name for that rat. Taylor's is Alex and Sammie's is Squirmy. :)  
**jamiahsh**Arcy IS cute ;) how about the other new additions?  
**Phyllis Beyer**I like Thumper. A Disney bunny name for a family who loves "Disney".

# Florida 2011

Well, I’ve been back in town from a glorious family vacation to Florida for a few days now, and realistically, I guess I could say that I’m getting back onÂ  track.Â  But catching up is going so slowly, and it’s easy to feel overwhelmed and like I’ll never be done.Â  But you know what?Â  With 4 small children in the house, I NEVER feel caught up on the to-dos, even when I don’t leave town, so what does it matter if I took a week and a half off?Â  It was great!Â  Eventually I’ll get around to posting an in-depth trip diary – these have come in such handy when I go back to find the name of a restaurant we visited or certain info about the trip; it’s fun for reminiscence purposes too.Â  For now, I will just post a small run-down of the 20-hour drive from Florida to Ohio which illustrates the dramatic temperature decrease we endured between the south and the north.Â  There will be more to come later, I promise, so please don’t forget about me and my little blog.

Sat Jan 22:  
Orlando FL = 58 degrees at noon  
GA / FL state line = 48 degrees at 5:20pm  
Atlanta GA = 34 degrees at 10:15pm

Sun Jan 23:  
Chattanooga, TN = 24 degrees at 12:30am  
TN/KY border = 18 degrees at 2:45am  
Van Wert/Paulding County borders, nw Ohio = NEGATIVE 8 degrees at 7:45am

BRRRrrrrrr!!!!!

### Comments

**derek**It really didn't seem so bad getting home- I suppose I just ended up bracing for the worst so I was ready for it. At least I didn't have to work in it- just made up for that today though!  
**taylhis**Ok, Mom, you win. But my journey was probably more fun. :)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Mine was a faster temp change. Left Florida in the rain and about 65 deg.. The temp on the plane was a perfect 70 deg. Stepping outside in Chicago was sunny - but only 10 deg.

# The Dude Is Growing!

My son had his 30-month (2Â½ years for you laypeople) check-up at the doctor today.Â  All is well, though he wasn’t very cooperative for the student doctor in training when it came to getting his nose and ears checked.Â  And he had to get a shot, which of course was sad to witness.Â  Unlike his 3 brave older sisters, he did cry, but he got over it quickly and proudlyÂ  showed off his “owie” for the rest of the day.Â  The little dude weighs 29.2 lbs. and is 2 feet and 10.5 inches tall.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/01/12-12-10-008.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**What an adorable picture. Looking forward to spending 6 whole days with him and the girls (and of course, you and Chris also).  
**Jamiahsh**What a hAndsome little dude! Love ya buddy!  
**justj**How do they grow up so fast when I haven't aged any. (At least not mentally)

# A God Story

I love coming across God stories.Â  Real life anecdotes which display the way God works in our lives, God stories can be experienced by Christians and non-Christians alike; it’s just a matter of recognizing them and taking the time to be thankful and appreciate them.

I was at our babysitter’s house last week picking up my kids, and there was a little girl cuddling a dog.Â  BeingÂ  an animal lover, I had to say hello to the cute little furball and find out her name and age.Â  The little girl’s father said he didn’t know the pup’s age because they had found her, and then he said, “I have to tell you the whole story.”Â  So he begins his story, not knowing me or that I am a Christian who appreciates God stories.Â  His story went something like this:

*“My wife left me; she left me and the kids and even took our dogs, so these poor kids lost their mother and their dogs.Â  I kept telling them I would get them a dog, but I had lots of other things to work out too.Â  So for Halloween, we went to one of those ‘trunk or treat’ things at a church, and there was a little girl walking around inside the church with a puppy in her arms.Â  I thought, something doesn’t seemÂ  right there – why is this little girl walking around a church with a puppy, so I asked her about the dog.Â  “We’re not even sure what we’re going to do withÂ  her – we just found her outside.” the little girl told him.Â  “Well,” I told her, “my kids have been looking for a dog.”Â  We took home the little puppy, and she was mangy and starving, just skin and bones.Â  We didn’t estimate her to be more than 10 weeks old at that time, and she has beenÂ  a part of the family for the last few months.Â  She is thriving physically, and she has helped provide some of the healing the kids needed as they spent Christmas without their mom.”*

After hearing the story, it was magical to see the little girl cuddle her puppy.Â  It warmed my heart to see them together, knowing that God brought this little puppy into the lives of a family who needed her – and brought a family into the life of an ailing little puppy who needed them as well.Â  God works in wonderful ways, and being a witness to it is awesome – you just have to stop and look around; He is always there!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Love that story!

# FIVE MORE DAYS!!

Only FIVE more days until we leave for a family vacation to warm sunny Florida!!Â  Making this one even better than most are extended family and friends that are able to meet us down there.Â  The kids (and us!!) could not be more excited!!!

I just have to figure out how to get 6 people and all the stuff that goes along with 2 adults and 4 kids into a mini-van and keep us sane for aÂ  20+ hour car trip and one again on the way back…Â  Every time we take a big vacation I worry about it, every time it goes better than I could have imagined.Â  Not going to make that mistake this time; I am just SO appreciative and happy to be going!Â  Thank you God for blessing my family with such a fun opportunity for some togetherness!!!

Much work ahead of me this week, but the most fun kind of work: preparing-for-a-vacation work!!!

CAN’T WAIT!!!

### Comments

**Jamiahsh**DONALD DUCK!!! Who cares if my comment is too short?! :D  
**Phyllis Beyer**Grandma can't wait either. I just love Disney World and spending a week with my "kids" are icing on the cake. Mickey Mouse, here I come!!!!!  
**jamiahsh**WOO HOO!!! I can't wait, either! It will be a hoot to see the Beebs on his first trip where he will know what is going on and will remember and all the fun we will all have!

# Sharing My Daily Bread

I’ve written before about [Our Daily Bread](http://odb.org/" \t "_blank) –Â  it’s a little pamphlet of daily devotionals that I find very helpful in remembering to take time to think about God and His many gifts everyday – even when time is short.Â  Yesterday’s devotional was a good one that I think can help and/or speak to many people.Â  Enjoy:

***Trouble by Dennis J. De Haan***

***Does it surprise you that trouble is a part of life? Probably not. We all know trouble close-up and personalâ€”bad health, empty bank account, blighted love, grief, loss of job, and the list goes on.***

***It shouldnâ€™t surprise us, therefore, that God permits the added trials of being ridiculed and hated because we follow Christ (1 Peter 4:12). But trouble, whether it is common to man or unique to Christians, can reveal to us the moral fiber of our soul.***

***I have never seen a golf course without hazards. They are part of the game. Golfers speak of the courses with the most hazards as the most challenging, and they will travel a long way to test their skill against the most demanding 18 holes.***

***Oliver Wendell Holmes said, â€œIf I had a formula for bypassing trouble, I wouldnâ€™t pass it around. I wouldnâ€™t be doing anyone a favor. Trouble creates a capacity to handle it . . . . Meet it as a friend, for youâ€™ll see a lot of it and you had better be on speaking terms with it.â€***

***Letâ€™s not think it strange when trouble comes, for God is using it to test the stamina of our souls. The best way to handle trouble is to commit our â€œsouls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creatorâ€ (v.19).***

***The troubles that we face each day  
Reveal how much we need the Lord;  
They test our faith and strength of will  
And help us then to trust Godâ€™s Word. â€”D. De Haan***

***Great triumphs are born out of great troubles.***

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Great-ER triumphs are born out of great troubles.

# Crazy Cat Lady = Me?

Seems like it’s been a long time since my last griping-about-Walmart blog post.Â  Either I’m getting used to their secretive price-gauging ways, or I’m too busy in my personal life to spend as much time feeling wronged by the corporate giant.Â  Maybe it’s a little of both.Â  But a few weeks ago, a couple of Walmart employees made themselves worth mentioning on my blog for their roles in turning a normally hectic pre-Christmas nighttime shopping trip with 4 little kids into quite an irritating adventure.

After wandering past empty shelf upon empty shelf and compromising my shopping list due to all of the out-of-stock items there were (and I’m talking everyday items, nothing gourmet nor exotic), my frustrations were growing.Â  But finally I was finished in the grocery section, so I split off from my family and headed for the garden center.Â  It might seem like a strange time of year to get those cement garden-border-blocks, but they are just over $1 at Walmart, so I use them as a cost effective way to keep my puppy from digging holes under our fence.Â  He digs a hole, I stick in a Walmart cement brick and solve the problem for under $1.50 – done.Â  It won’t be long until I have a pretty little brick fence bordering my chain link fence.Â  Except that my puppy dug a hole the other day, and just because it was December in Ohio (never mind the thunderstorms and rain we’ve been having), Walmart decided that they are going to lock up their cement bricks in the outdoor garden section and not let customers back there to get them.Â  I get back there and find the door to the outside blocked with a bench (so THAT’S where they’re putting the benches they removed from the entire store.Â  Why Walmart decided to make seating scarce in their store is beyond me.Â  Don’t shoppers stay longer and spend more money if there is a place to rest their feet?Â  Don’t they want to come back to a store that lets them rest while their shopping companion goes at it?Â  But that’s a whole ‘nother post, I guess, even if I entertained the tangent).Â  So anyway, I hunt downÂ  an employee and ask her about the cement bricks, and she tells me that the garden center is closed for the night and to come back another day.Â  And this is AFTER I’ve already spent almost 2 hours in the store, wandering amongst empty shelves that it seems they don’t know how to stock.Â  It was difficult to explain to her that I had come there that night with all my kids and that this would not be happening again any time soon.Â  Take a bunch of kids into a store that sells toys that time of year if you want to know how draining it can be – go on, I dare you to borrow some kids and do it next year.Â  But the bottom line is, Ms. Walmart employee was not nice when she told me to come back another time, and she didn’t offer to go back there or have someone else get me a brick or two or anything.Â  She acted like we were both just stuck there in Walmart, and if she could deal with it, so could I.Â  But guess what?Â  She is GETTING paid to be there, while I have to PAY to be there – see the difference?Â  She did not.

So what’s with the Walmart policy of selling an item but not letting customers buy it?Â  Are they hoarding cement bricks to build a top-secret Walmart price-gouging planning party fortress or something?Â  Well, I was crabby that night, but I was not going to cause a scene; I don’t like to be the scene-causing type.Â  I had some good advice from a fellow tangenteer floating around in my head, “Walmart employees are people too”, so I got over it and moved on.Â  But by the time the second Walmart employee wronged me that night, I was *really* mad…Â  The woman at the check-out did not want to take our coupon, even though it was clearly for the item we purchased.Â  Not even worth writing about now; I might as well move on to the incident that inspired the title of this post – thought I would throw an amusing Walmart story into my grab bag of gripes…

I had to run to Walmart on New Year’s Eve.Â  Yes, New Year’s Eve, the day when even our normally not-so-full rural Walmart is filled to the brim with people who can’t wait to get where they’re going to stuff themselves, get drunk or do both at the same time.Â  The mood in Walmart was festive, but I couldn’t find a parking spot.Â  I opted for one a mile away, especially because the weather decided it wanted to be more like May than December; it was in the 50s.Â  I’m picking up some last minute New Year’s goodies, and I notice that the mixed shelled nuts are on sale for only $1 /pound.Â  Cracking fresh nuts is one of my favorite ways toÂ  snack – hold comments on this please, this isn’t Facebook, it’s a mostly family-friendly blog Â  – nuts are nutritious, one of the natural foods I believe the human body is meant to consume, plus I have a monster parrot that loves them.Â  So I called Hubby, and he told me to buy 30 pounds.Â  By the time I got done putting 30 pounds of nuts into sacks (still holding on the comments), my little boy had bitten through an orange I was going to buy (I put it back instead –Â  haha, just kidding, I had to buy the dehydrated orange at the end of the trip), and I had fielded the same exact question from at least two different people: “What are you going to do with all those nuts?”Â  I had some conversations about my parrot and my 4 kids, and then I had had enough and wanted out.Â  Here’s the funny part.

We returned to our friendly local Walmart on January 2, and my husband runs in and finds the same nuts for now only a quarter a pound!!Â  I’m not going to think about how much money I could have saved, not going to do that; it’s not the funny part.Â  At a quarter a pound, they were out of the nuts, so my husband asked an employee if they had any more (wait, the 30 pounds I bought weren’t enough?) to which he replied, “No, some lady came in here on New Year’s Eve and bought most of them for all of her cats.”Â  My husband thinks that somehow my stories of us having a nut-eating pet parrot turned into Crazy Cat Lady Buys Nuts among our local Walmart employees, and that’s ok with me – I could be crazy cat lady.Â  If only I weren’t allergic to cats…

Happy holidays from me and Walmart!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2011/01/crazy-cat-lady.jpg)

### Comments

**taylhis**Interesting justj, thanks for the info!! Might have to check it out; I could probably use some more patching bricks before spring!  
**justj**They may have been locked up because a sale started in Lawn and Garden. I think yesterday or today.  
**taylhis**Don't apologize for chuckling - I like that someone can find amusement from things that might have been aggravating to me at the time, makes it worth it in a way. Thanks for reading my rambling... been awhile since I've gone on and on and on about something so meaningless :)  
**jamiahsh**30 lbs of shelled nuts?! That IS nuts (crazy, type). I do remember when said WM first opened and the benches were strategically placed to allow for shoppers to rest while on shopping sprees. Wonder what happened there. And it seems to me that it would create more hassle to lock up the blocks than to keep them out. What are they afraid of... someone stealing a gaggle of cinder blocks at $1.50 a pop? Thanks for the post. I always get a good chuckle... sorry. I do know what it is like to have a child (not my own) with you around the toy dept. during the holidays... perhaps not as close to the day.

# Too Close To Home

Crazy night here last night!!

Our 6-year-old, Samantha was up late, and since she was the only one of our 4 kids still awake, we decided to spend some ‘just parents with Sammie’ time and play a game.Â  Dad had sunk one of our ships in Battleship when we heard a series of pops from outside.Â  Following our instincts to take cover, we went into the interior of the house away from windows, where we discussed what we heard.Â  Had we spaced on the date, was it New Year’s already and someone was lighting off fireworks in celebration?Â  No, my husband said, there is only one thing that sounds like that, and when he put it that way, I had to agree – it was gunfire.Â  After we decided that it couldn’t really have been anything else, we called the police, who told us there were already officers on scene.Â  We got our police scanner hooked up (who said I don’t need a police scanner to keep tabs on small town action?), and we continued to sit in the hallway and listen to it.Â  Soon we heard the unmistakable churning of the LifeFlight helicopter (we live blocks from the hospital), and we wondered if it was related – we would have more info in the morning.Â  The police scanner just had mild chatter about officers responding and trying to find the “suspect’s ID”.Â  They found his cell phone, and an officer was told to see who the suspect had called.Â  Not getting any useful info, we went to bed, and my husband woke me this morning with the info that he had heard on the big city Toledo news – a shootout had occurred in our small town, only blocks from our house, mere feet from our friends’ house.

Turns out, a man had shot at the police station and then drove down to the park, where he shot at the police who chased him.Â  The police returned fire, which explains the series of 6-8 pops we heard.Â  The man was then LifeFlighted to a bigger hospital with life-threatening injuries.Â  That was all the info in the newspaper, but when I did a google search this morning on the man’s name, something interesting came up: a memory page for his daughter who died in a motorcycle accident in our town (this family was from a town 25 miles away) last spring.Â  I remember that case: a man was driving a speeding motorcycle, and when police tried to pull him over,Â  he gave chase.Â  He eventually lost control of the motorcycle, and it crashed, killing his passenger when she was ejected from the motorcycle.Â  From the research I did on the internet this morning, it seems that the suspect from last night’s shooting incident was the father of the victim in the motorcycle chase case.Â  Perhaps he was upset with the way police handled things last spring, so he shot up the police station and led them back to where his daughter was killed –Â  the shootout took place at the same scene.

Tragic case all around, and we are reeling from yet another so-called ‘big city’ incident that seems quite out of place here in our small Utopian town.Â  I went to the shooting suspect’s Facebook page, and there are severalÂ  Christian activities on it.Â  Perhaps in his grief for his daughter, the man lost faith in letting God handle things, and that is another aspect of the tragedy.Â  Thank God that no officers or bystanders were injured, and I’m going to pray for the recovery and physical and emotional healing of the man and his family.

[Here’s a link to the news story](http://www.wtol.com/Global/story.asp?S=13764065" \t "_blank).

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Until we know the full details we are open to speculate. Perhaps the suspect had not had enough time (of course how much time is debatable) to grieve or was incapable of doing so. Thanks for the update. It sure beat the headline being repeated over the news this morning of Man Shoots at Bryan PD. Thank Heaven indeed that no one else was hurt.  
**Phyllis Beyer**WOW! Who would have thought something like that would happen in your quaint small town. Thank goodness no one else was hurt.

# It's A Myth That You Can't Get A Speeding Ticket On Christmas Day

Finding out that it’s only a myth that cops are nice and forgiving on Christmas Day was not pleasant, and that’s all I’m going to say about that – except to disclaim that the lead foot did not belong to me.

Other than ‘the incident’ , Christmas day was a fun day full of blessings and family cheer.Â  We drove the 200+ miles to Chicago and back to spend the day with family, and despite promising ourselves this will be the last year we attempt that sort of craziness, it was fun –Â  although we returned more tired than ever with less time to recuperate than ever, and it really might be time to sit back and relax at home on Christmas Day one of these years.

Hope your holiday season was blessed and happy!!Â  And oh yeah, watch out for those Indiana State Troopers!Â  ðŸ˜‰

### Comments

**jamiahsh**It's only in Ohio where it is unlawful to be given a speeding ticket on Christmas Day! :D

# A Christmas Blessing

Speaking of family outings, we found a fun place weekends ago in Fort Wayne IndianaÂ  – it’s an indoor ice skating place, and they have THREE ice rinks!Â  But we didn’t have time to try ice skating; our family was more interested in the bouncy castles.Â  At $5 /Â  head from 1-4pm, it wasn’t a bad deal.Â  The only problem was that they had the bouncy castles in the ice arena area, and it was freezing in there!Â  The kids were ok, but we weren’t able to stay as long as we wanted, plus they were all frozen by the time we left.Â  If they had just noted their arrangement on their website, we could have dressed for the occasion, but that’s ok, it was still fun.Â  After that, we had a delicious dinner at Golden Corral – YUM!

But something strange happened there – I was waiting for a man to finish at the buffet, and he apologized for taking so long (he wasn’t) and then handed me a “Christmas blessing” on a folded up piece of paper.Â  He was vague in the details; just mentioning ‘Christmas Blessing’, so I opened up the paper, and it was a copy of a newspaper article about the man’s family – mainly his elderly mother.Â  Looking at the picture in the article told me that the man who gave it to me was Raymond, whom you’ll read about below.Â  Although the article was from 1996, he mentioned that he was with his mother that day at the restaurant – she is doing well here in 2010, 14 years later!Â  I find the family’s story inspirational, and I thought I’d help the man spread his family’s touching story – the story featuring his mother’s boundless faith and he and his father finding Christ.Â  Below is a copy of the article he gave me; I hope you find it inspirational reading on this very special holiday.Â  Merry Christmas!

*‘She taught us by what she did’*

*Thanksgiving this year had a special glow for Arlene Berger, 74, and her family.  
They gathered for the holiday meal in the new house the Flushing Township resident, severely brain-damaged in a 1994 traffic accident, shares with one of her sons, his wife, and two children.  
Her house was built with funds from her accident settlement and her family is determined life will be as meaningful as possible for the woman left with physical as well as mental impairment.  
Her progress has been awesome, as has been the help she’s received from others, according to two of her five children.*

*Raymond, 47, the eldest of her four sons, and David, 32, the youngest, this week recounted details of their mother’s accident and her life of righteousness.*

*With 15 years separating them, they hold different views of how their mother’s faith affected them.*

*“I used to mock her; my other brothers did,” Raymond said of his youth in Flint.*

*David said, “She was the most giving person, many of us thought to a fault.Â  I remember a couple of times she didn’t know how she was going to pay her bills, and when I asked her about how she had spent her money, she had given some to this person, some to that one.”*

*Raymond concurred, “We thought she was being used.Â  We told her there ain’t no God and to quit giving everything away.Â  But we weren’t thinking like she was.”*

*Their Bible-reading Baptist mother was living up to the passage:”Give, and it shall be given toÂ  you.” (Luke 6:38)*

*“Now she’s on the receiving end.” said David.Â  “Because of the way she was before the accident, people want to do for her.”*

*Church members are showing up to care for her toÂ  a degreeÂ  the family never could have imagined.*

*“She gave everything away her whole life, and now her kids all want her to have an enjoyable life,” David said.*

*It was not just her older sons who derided her faith.*

*Raymond, a Flint truck plant employee, recalls his late father chasing ministers away from the door.*

*“He had been anti-religious.Â  He worked and he drank.Â  I didn’t really know him until I was old enough to drink, old enough to go to the bars,” Raymond said.*

*In 1981, their father had a massive heart attack.Â  His wife’s church prayed for him, and he survived to embrace salvation.*

*He lived the last two years of his life a Christian.*

*Raymond said he also has been saved, and has seen the difference faith has made in his life.”That was a miracle,” he said.Â  “I never thought I’d see my dad in a church.Â  I never thought I’d see myself in a church.”*

*David, on the other hand, attended John R. Rice Baptist Academy in Davison and went on to graduate from a bible college.Â  He teaches at Bridgeport Baptist Academy during the day and works at Delphi Saginaw Steering Systems at night.*

*He was the assistant pastor at Landmark Baptist Church, where his mother was headed Feb.24, 1994, when her car was hit in the driver’s side by a Jeep Cherokee whose driver had run a red light, he said.Â  He was notified that his mother had been taken to Hurley Medical Center, where she was in critical condition.*

*She underwent two emergency surgeries in short order.*

*A CAT scan showed 11 brain hemorrhages and blood on her brain stem, he said.*

*“She was in a coma the whole time,” David said.Â  “After three months, the doctors told us she might not ever come out of it because of her age and the length of time since the accident.”*

*Her children were told of the probability that she would never be able to walk, talk, or feed herself.*

*“Well, you ain’t God,” Raymond told them.*

*After three-and-a-half months at Hurley, she was moved to Riverbend Nursing Center in Grand Blanc, where she stunned David by allowing nurses to walk her in ” baby steps” the first day.*

*She progressed out of the coma.Â  Raymond rememberedd first noticing her fingers tapping to the inspirational music tapes her family supplied.*

*Raymond and David recall the times she responded with an “I love you, too” to each of them.*

*Arlene Berger received three months of therapy at Riverbend before transferring to McLaren Regional Medical Center to build skills she would need for living at home.*

*His brothers and sister back David up in caring for their mother, who lost her left eye and use of her left hand in the accident and now has an erratically functioning mind with an IQ of 90.*

*“A lot of people live for themselves, don’t do for their kids.Â  And then the kids don’t do for them,” David said.Â  “She taught us by what she did.”*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Wonderful story! Thanks for sharing.  
**Carol**Very awesome story - one of those Christmas miracles!

# Merry Christmas!

Merry Christmas! Happy holidays! Happy New Year!

Whatever you are celebrating this year, here’s to hoping that it is safe, fun, and happy!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/12/Santa-came-12-18-10-015.jpg)

Merry Christmas from our family to yours!

*8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, â€œDo not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.â€*

*13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

*14 â€œGlory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.â€*

*15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, â€œLetâ€™s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.â€*

*16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

*– Luke 2:8-20 NIV*

### Comments

**Mysmichelle**Merry Christmas to you and yours, haven't been here in a while but thought of you and your family today. Michelle  
**jamiahsh**Beautiful! Nice of Santa to pose with the kids! Thanks for sharing The Christmas Story.

# 10 Years, 1 Year

December 18 marks two anniversaries of immense personal loss – 10 years ago today, my father-in-law passed away from ALS.Â  Though some memories are still painful, a decade of time has numbed the pain of his loss a little, and it’s easier to focus on the good times we shared and the countless wonderful things he did for people during his lifetime.Â  Albeit selfishly, I sometimes wish that Vince was here to meet his 7 wonderful grandchildren, to realize our family’s growing relationship with God and our spiritual journey, and to see how far his son has come in life.Â  I think he would be so proud.Â  [More about December 18, 2000 was written here](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/04/20/als-is-an-awful-disease/" \t "_blank).

December 18, 2009 – Last year, on the day that was 9 years to the day after Vince’s passing, our family dog Charity passed away unexpectedly.Â  She was almost 12 years old but in seemingly good health.Â  She was fine in the morning, gone by dinnertime.Â  Not enough time has passed to heal the pain of her loss since she was like a child to us, but there is no reason to dwell on such melancholy topics here in the blog.

I’m thankful that I have a busy December 18 this year, that it’s on a Saturday and that I don’t have to spend it alone.Â  I’m writing this ahead of time and scheduling it to post itself on December 18 automatically in hopes of maybe not realizing this day of personal infamy until it’s over.Â  Will the entire day pass without me thinking about Vince or Charity?Â  Probably not, they and other loved ones lost hold a special place in my heart, and I think about them most every day, especiallyÂ  in December.Â  But December 18 this year will have joy of its own as family comes from far away to celebrate the season.Â  I look forward to making happy memories for December, especially for the 18th, which just happens to be exactly one week before Christmas, a day I’m really looking forward to celebrating this year more than ever.Â  Losing Charity last year was an awful thing to happen just before Christmas time, just as it was even more terrible to lose a parent / grandparent in our family just before Christmas 10 years ago.Â  But when I lost Charity, and I realized that I was more curious about God’s plan for me than I was looking to be angry with Him, I knew that I was on my way to having a wonderful spiritual relationship with Him.

For that, I am very thankful, and it makes me want to celebrate this Christmas season for what it truly is: a celebration of the birth of Jesus and an acknowledgment of the glorious love that God has for us.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Beautiful! I hope that any thoughts you have of Vince and Charity today are happy ones. I know for certain how proud Cs' father would be of his amazing son.

# Go See... Oh Wait, It's Much Too Late And So Am I

Big surprise, time got away from me.Â  How did that happen?Â  Couldn’t be that it’s Christmas time and I have a million things to do.Â  Honestly, I always try to refrain from sending Christmas cards, but sometimes I feel so badly when we get cards from others and I’m not sending any back.Â  So then I start sending some – just to my MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) group, I’ll say.Â  But next thing I know, I’ve decided to send Christmas cards to “a few” select groups of people, and that’s when I realize that I’m just sending Christmas cards anyway even though I wasn’t going to!Â  Well, this that and the other stuff; Christmas cards are just one extra check on my holiday time to-do list, but that’s a tangent…

My point was busyness.Â  I was so busy that a few weeks ago when I wrote another newspaper review for one of our community theater groups, I forgot to post it on my blog.Â  I usually like to post my reviews in my blog – since I’m doing the work to write them anyway, I might as well post them here to try to remind some friends and readers to go see the show.Â  But now it’s too late, for the show I saw and reviewed has finished its run.Â  Oh well, such things happen; hopefully my review as it was printed in the paper made some people want to come see the cute show.Â  For fun, here is a copy of the review:

**Pageant Shines This Season**

**Early December finds many people preoccupied with the hustle and bustle of the approaching holiday season, so what better way to unwind from holiday stress than to see a live show?**

**A play guaranteed to inspire Yuletide spirit, The Best Christmas Pageant Ever is being performed by The Williams County Community Theatre in the playhouse at 501 S. East Avenue in Montpelier during these chilly December weekends between Thanksgiving and Christmas.**

**This festive show provides fun for the entire family. The audience can spend a wintery evening or an afternoon matinee getting to know the Bradley clan (cohesively played by Jake McAfee, Mary Valdez, Allie Boyer, and Logan Psurny) as their normally normal life erupts into chaos. Thoughtfully narrated by young Beth Bradley (a cute and concise Allie Boyer), a heartwarming story unfolds, and the audience is a captive witness to the events leading up to what everyone hopes will be The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.**

**When Bradley mom Grace (a funny, flustered Mary Valdez) is chosen to replace Mrs. Armstrong (an amusing character played by Nicki Bassett) as director of the church’s annual Christmas Pageant, all seems well until the Herdman family (outrageously played by Lance Day, Jessica Valdez / Sunny Bowman, Mason Bassett, Elliot Bowman, Isaiah Valdez, Jamison Grime, and Katie Taylor / Zara McNalley) slips into the scene. The Bradleys’ seemingly picture-perfect world is turned upside-down when the six trouble-maker Herdman kids come to Sunday school. Even the reason why they began attending in the first place is hilarious (Logan Psurny takes the heat as Charlie Bradley). Poor Grace just wants to tell the story of Mary and Baby Jesus in the Pageant, but rehearsals are tough with a zany assortment of characters (brought to life by Amy Boyer, Jenna Bowman, Kyla Huband, Jake McAfee, Abby Ledyard, Makayah Long / Alisa Parsons, Kayden Long, Anna Valdez / Carolyn Rychener, Brook Ward / Bailey Ward, Taylor Brown, Amari Blanco, Tatum Grime, Savanah Kleinhen, Ethan Psurny, Hailey Tressler, Hannah Tressler) who just don’t seem to like the idea of giving the Herdman kids a chance. Will it all come together in time to be The Best Christmas Pageant Ever?**

**It’s the perfect time of year for this touching show, and WCCT’s The Best Christmas Pageant Ever will have you flooded with Christmas spirit. Whether you simply come for the holiday fun, to see the joyously decorated theatre, or to watch the adorable children in the cast put on their Pageant, this show will tug at your heartstrings, chase away holiday blues, and leave you humming Christmas carols with a glow and a grin!**

**â€œAfter all, It’s almost Christmas!â€, so come out to the theater and join the fun!**

**The Best Christmas Pageant Ever can be seen on the Montpelier stage on Friday and Saturday nights at 8 pm on December 3,4, 10, and 11 and Thursday night December 9, and Sunday afternoon December 12 at 2:30 pm. Some of the roles are split between multiple actors, which is just one reason to see this show more than once. Reservations are recommended, but not required. Please call the WCCT Office for reservations and more info: 1-888-569-9228.**

*Taylhis has experience in community theatre that spans multiple decades. Ms. Taylhis has been on the stage as an actor, as well as behind-the-scenes doing production work like assistant-directing, producing, and stage-managing. As an enthusiastic supporter of the arts in Northwest Ohio, she has also enjoyed serving administratively on the boards of various local community theatre groups.*

### Comments

**Taylhis**Exactly what is extra motivation to publish some things, Jamiahsh. ;)  
**Jamiahsh**And a reminder for the future to look back upon! :)

# I Needed To Smile Today

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/12/flat.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yes, and you shared it! The best kind of smile!

# low fat and delicious lunches

Tomatoes and SW chkn pasta

### Comments

# Nothing Worse...

Than having to care for sick kids when you are a sick parent.Â  Ok, so there are plenty of worse things, but this is one of my least favorite things about daily life, getting sick at the same time as my kids.Â  The hits just keep on coming – is it December or what?Â  (in case you aren’t aware, this is in reference to my family’s annual dose of uncanny bad luck that seems to show its ugly face every December)

This time around, it’s a nasty stomach virus, which means loads of extra laundry and some very crabby kids.Â  The two little ones were up all night last night, and even though Hubby was the one who got up with them, I was still awakened all night, so neither of us got much sleep.Â  Today was a take-it-easy day, and somehow I found the energy to get through it while being sick and on little sleep.Â  I’m slightly concerned about the little ones being kept up all night again because it’s the night of our oldest daughter’s birthday party, and we have 8 screaming, shrieking 5th graders running around the house.Â  But they seem to be having a blast (while us sickies keep our distance), and that’s what matters.Â  Now I just have to figure out how to talk them out of wanting to watch Twilight Eclipse, which in my opinion, does not seem appropriate for a bunch of 10 and 11 and one 6-year-old.

In a way it stinks getting sick on the weekend- there goes any chance we have of a fun family outing tomorrow, and I’m going to be really upset if I have to miss teaching my Sunday school class onÂ  Sunday morning – those 1st graders are adorable, and we have so much fun together every week; I really look forward to seeing them.Â  But on the other hand, getting sick on the weekend means that Hubbydoesn’t have to worry about missing work, so that’s a positive.

Well, here’s to hoping that we are well soon and that there is some way that the rest of the family (2 left standing) does not come down with this.Â  I guess if there was a weekend in December for the whole family to come down sick, this was the best one.Â  We have my daughter’s birthday party, but nothing that involves travel like the weekends in the rest of the month.

Take care of yourself and your family in this, the lovely month of December!!

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Happy Birthday party to Taylor! I survived many tween and teen slumber parties and so will you. Sorry to hear about your illnesses. Hope everyone is on the mend soon. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone next weekend.  
**Jamiahsh**Loverly! Just keeps getting better and better ;) Hang in there, pal. I don't think Twilight is appropriate for ANY age group but that is just me. Good luck with the rest of the weekend.

# An Afternoon With The FBI

It seemed like something out of a movie, our visit to the localÂ  FBI office yesterday.Â  Except that it wasn’t a movie, and the office wasn’t exactly local…

Let me back up.Â  It’s December, and don’t you know, that seems to signal a yearly torrent of bad luck thrown our way.Â  Shortly after turning the page on our calendar this month, we found out (among other things) that my husband’s website (and our family’s livelihood) had been attacked.Â  And I don’t mean a little harmless virus or an annoying spam attack – it’s a DDoS – simply put, someone targeted this website, and essentially used thousands of computers around the world to overload this website and crash the server.Â  It’s enough of an incident to capture both the interest of the local media and the FBI, both of whom politely requested interviews yesterday.Â  So we drove out to the city, found the government building that houses the FBI offices, walked inside and checked with the doorman who wanted to know who we were there to see.

“I have an appointment with Mr. X at the FBI (*name changed for privacy*).” said my husband, and once it was confirmed that he was on the list, the doorman stated that he “would get us up.”Â  He led us to the elevator and punched in a special code – can’t just push the floor number for the FBI these days it seems.Â  We got off the elevator and waited around for a few minutes, entertained by the FBI’s 10 Most Wanted posters.Â  One in particular caught my husband’s eye.Â  “Doesn’t that look like our neighbor?”Â  He asked me, and I had to agree.Â  I began to read the description and was surprised to see that it did seem to describe our neighbor – he’s into sports like golf and dirt-biking, and it’s strange because my husband and I would often notice the neighbor packing up his car for weekend trips and coming back, unloading things like helmets, golf clubs, and lots of other sporting equipment.Â  Such is life when you don’t have kids, we thought, and I guess you should know that the reason we pay so much attention to this neighbor’s activities is because he happens to have a nasty cat that terrorizes our neighborhood.Â  So while keeping tabs on [that darn cat](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2008/08/27/that-darn-cat/" \t "_blank), we’ve observed some of our ~~most wanted~~ neighbor’s behavior.Â  The kicker of this whole coincidence is that the Wanted-by-the-FBI guy was listed as possibly having bi-sexual tendencies, and that fits in with what we’ve seen about our neighbor as well.Â  Don’t get me wrong, I don’t think it’s him, but it was an entertaining wait, to say the least.

So then an agent comes out of a door and asks if we’ve been helped.Â  We said not yet and repeated the name of the agent we were there to see.Â  We were led to a door, and there was a sophisticated series of security measures that the man went through to enter (not going to repeat them here on the internet out of respect for the security of the FBI – not that I even knew what he was doing anyway).Â  In this small waiting area, there was a metal detector, which began to go crazy every time this guy went near it – I forgot to mention that he’s carrying 2 or 3 very large bags.Â  He disappears behind a door, and the man we were supposed to meet with appears and introduces his assistant – a lady carrying a notepad, a pen, and oh yeah, I shouldn’t forget to mention the large gun she was packing tucked into the back of her skirt.Â  What kind of assistant is that?!?

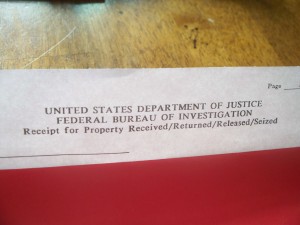
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/12/mulder-and-scully.jpg)*Two of the most famous fictional FBI agents in pop culture history: Agents Mulder and Scully from the X-Files.Â  Ok, so our agents were not Mulder and Scully, but I couldn’t resist making the comparison.*

So we go into a conference room of sorts, and the interview begins.Â  The agent and his assistant are not unfriendly, and they want to know the facts of the case.Â  They are both taking notes, but probably most surprising to us is the absence of laptop computers –Â  these FBI guys (from the cyber crimes division) are taking notes with pens on Steno pads, and that’s not even a joke.Â  But it is hilarious.

The entire day had a Men in Black-like feel…Â  If you’ve seen the movie, then you remember the part where Will Smith is recruited to be a man in black – he goes to this bland looking government building that turns out to be very sci-fi on the inside with all the security measures and things like that.Â  Such was the case here – lots of doors, signs about authorization, keypads, things like that, very sci-fi, and my husband told the agent so at the end of the interview.Â  Mr. X seemed to chuckle (we wondered on the way home, are FBI agents trained to drain themselves of personality?), and he told us that we could just take the elevator back downstairs, no special code needed – thanks for the advice.

All in all, a very interesting trip.Â  Made me want to do things like see Salt (a movie about the FBI) or read *[Special Agent: My Life on the Front Lines as a Woman in the FBI](http://www.amazon.com/Special-Agent-Front-Lines-Woman/dp/0786867078" \t "_blank)* again.Â  Did the FBI interview do any good for my husband’s business?Â  We don’t know yet.Â  It depends if they catch the people who are doing it.Â  The FBI disclaimed several times that it doesn’t seem as if the damages the business has incurred will be recovered, and we of course are praying otherwise.Â  Whatever happens, this is part of learning to trust God’s plan for us, isn’t it?Â  Easier said than done.Â  I’m really hoping that the stress on my husband dissipates soon…

And oh yeah, a little souvenir from the FBI (the property we gave them was received and not seized, in case you are wondering):

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/12/FBI-doc-12-8-10.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I adore the lightheartedness you are creating! But I hope and pray that everything works out in a positive way. "The Truth is Out There." Too bad your reason for going to the Bureau were serious... sounded like it would have been a great field trip! Continued love, thoughts, and prayers. I am positive that you will all come through great!

# Mars, Venus, Whatever You Call It

It seems like men and women can be from different planets at times. During a series at youth group called “Lovesick”, we were shown the following videos, and they illustrate the differences between the opposite sexes hilariously – Enjoy!

[cartoonconversation-outtoeat.mp4](http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/media/previews/s/mm/slf/sf/cartoonconversation-outtoeat.mp4)

[cartoonconversation-pant.mp4](http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/media/previews/s/mm/slf/sf/cartoonconversation-pant.mp4)

### Comments

**derek**Hmm. Doesn't like caps on the smilies. I meant :lol:  
**derek**I thought the first one was the funniest. :LOL:  
**jamiahsh**HAHAHAHAAHAHAHA! Love it!

# Retro Movies

It’s always fun (for me anyway) to search online and find pictures of toys or clips of old movies from my youth.Â  I’ve found dozens of fun nostalgic images, but one movie is alluding me.Â  The problem is, I don’t remember the title of the movie; I only recall a vague synopsis that has had my husband and I searching for the movie without success.

tort and hare – http://www.metacafe.com/watch/1793588/the\_hare\_and\_the\_tortoise\_in\_live\_action\_vintage\_kid\_s\_film/

haunted

the small one

### Comments

# Goodbye To Ron Santo

People who don’t pay much attention to baseball and the MLB, particularly the Chicago Cubs, might not realize who Ron Santo is or that he is gone.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/12/ronsanto.jpg)

Ron Santo, legendary Chicago Cubs supporter, has passed away at the age of 70.Â  Gaining popularity first as a player then as an outspoken sportscaster, Ron Santo became the voice and face of the Chicago Cubs in recent years.Â  Always saying what was on his mind, Santo’s gravelly voice was the easiest way to find that Cubs game on WGN radio 720 in a hurry.Â  As a Cubs fan, I will miss it.

Sadly, Ron Santo did not live to see himself inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, nor did he see his beloved Cubbies win the World Series.Â  If you’d like to read more about Ron Santo or about his crusade against juvenile diabetes, [here is an article](http://dailyherald.com/article/20101203/sports/101209870/" \t "_blank) in the suburban Chicago newspaper, The Daily Herald.

Condolences and prayers to the Santo family.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Indeed... Cubbie fans everywhere are in mourning.

# Thanksgiving Traditions

Another holiday, come and gone…Â  seems like yesterday when IÂ  told my husband that I would be on board to put up the Christmas decorations early.Â  Had we not done it then, they would be late now; how fast time flies.Â  Our Thanksgiving holiday was great, as always, and in this glorious season, I’m making sure to take the time to truly appreciate our blessings, thank God for everything, and to savor the family traditionsÂ  and memories we’ve been creating.

From the **delicious** spread on Thanksgiving Day (thank you to Hubby!) shared with great friends to the joyous ‘Welcome Santa!” parade we enjoy annually in our small town the day after Thanksgiving (though a tad bit nippy at the parade this year, but fun as ever!); with Black Friday bargains (Hubby took a few kids Black Friday shopping early in the morning this year while I slept in – always fun!) and a long, lazy vacation with the kids while they enjoy a break from school, our Thanksgiving weekend was happy, prayerful, relaxing, and full of traditions that I hope will last for years to come.

Hope your Thanksgiving was happy, safe, wondrous, and that you were able to have some time to relax and reflect upon your blessings…Â  may the rest of your 2010 holidays hold the same.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Glad it was Wonderful! Hopefully the rest of this season of wonder, peace, and love will be just as great!

# JJ

My little parakeet JJ passed away some time during the night last night.Â  Not much of a surprise there; he has been sick for a while, and even though he began looking well again a few weeks ago, he took a turn for the worse in the last few days.Â  He looked so awful yesterday that I knew he wouldn’t make it through the night.Â  But there was always hope that I was wrong.Â  He had been on what I called “death watch” before and made it through the night, so the hope was there.

I don’t really know what happened – he was only about a year old, and I had had him since January, not even a year.Â  He started showing signs of illness about 2 months ago.Â  I gave him medicine and TLC, and he began to do better, but like I said, I guess it just wasn’t enough.

He was “just a parakeet”, but I loved his company.Â  I was so excited to see what kind of bird he would become; how he would look and act as an adult and who he would be when he felt healthy, but now I won’t know.Â  Honestly, taking care of animals is one of my favorite things in the whole world, so why do I have to be so bad at it?Â  A few months ago, JJ was so happy when we moved his cage intoÂ  the living room so he had company all day rather than living in the solitude (or was it protection?) of our bedroom upstairs.Â  We kept him right near the Halogen lamp, could there have been a smell or the heat or something that made him sick?Â  On the rare occasion that a bug would fly into the Halogen, yuck, what a smell that made.Â  We tried to get rid of Teflon pans and things like that, but JJ’s new home in the living room wasn’t too far from the kitchen – maybe cooking smells did him in?Â  He was a fraidy-bird, so I couldn’t really take apart his cage to clean it out; maybe it got too dirty?Â  A dozen why’s and what-if’s, but no more parakeet.Â  At least he is not suffering anymore – it was getting really difficult to see him in his cage looking so miserable and worse for the wear.Â  Poor JJ.Â  Even if he was just a caged bird, I miss him already.Â  Ugh, and the cold weather is back today…Â  fitting somehow, just feels like a miserable day all around – time to make the best of it.

### Comments

**Derek**A moment of silence for JJ. :|  
**Phyllis Beyer**I am sure it was nothing you did not do that did JJ in. You take very good care of your animals. Parakeets are fairly fragil.  
**jamiahsh**AWWW... REALLY sorry. We all know what a fan of animals in general you are so of course he was much much more than "just a parakeet."  
**justj**so very sorry to read this,

# how baseballs are made

http://www.reliableplant.com/view/25724/how-baseballs-are-manufactured

### Comments

# If Cats Ran The World

Because my family and friends know that I’m an animal lover, they’re always sending me emails with pictures and articles about cute animal-related topics.Â  All of them are adorable, but this one stands out as something to share – a man built an entire feline-sized village for homeless cats!Â  Kind of sounds like something I’d like to do with some extra free time, money, and if only I didn’t have the darn cat allergy that’s always getting in the way…

Below are some pictures of his creation.Â  For the entire story, [click here](http://green.yahoo.com/blog/guest_bloggers/69/man-builds-cat-sized-village-for-homeless-cats.html" \t "_blank).Â  And to visit the cat village online, The Caboodle Ranch, [click here](http://caboodleranch.com/" \t "_blank).

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/cat-village.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/cat-village2.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/cat-village1.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**He spends 14 hours a day at this? And provides expenses out of pocket (alongside donations)? What's his secret? Agreed with J#1- cool!  
**justj**Ok, I can see that. I know of someone who would have loved that for her chinchillas.  
**jamiahsh**That is uncategorically cool! What a catastrophe it would be if a cataclysmic storm came through and blew down the kitty Wal-Mart.

# Poor Paul The Psychic Octopus

No play on words necessaryÂ  for this blog post – there really was a Psychic Octopus named Paul who lived in Germany, and he recently passed away at the ripe old age (for an octopus) of 2Â½ years.

In his lifetime, however short is seems to us humans, [Paul made himself famous](http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,20436926,00.html" \t "_blank) with his uncanny ability to predict World Cup game winners correctly!Â  Before games, Paul would receive 2 boxes of mussels, one each with a flag of the countries of the two teams who would be facing off in the World Cup.Â  The country whose box was eaten out of by [Paul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Octopus" \t "_blank) first was declared Paul’s pick as the winner of that match, and he predicted correctly an astounding 100% of the time (8/8) for his World Cup predictions, and 86% (12/14) overall.

RIP â€¢ Paul the Octopus â€¢ 2008-2010

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/paul.jpg)

### Comments

**justj**I never realized the shorter life span of octopi. Even the largest only has a life span of 4 to 5 years. Interesting.  
**Taylhis**Octopuses are fascinating animals (then again, show me an animal that is NOT fascinating... bet you can't). I never realized that their lifespan is so short - probably makes it more difficult to study their intelligence as related to long-term memory and things like that.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I remember hearing of the octopus' passing

# Preschool or Politics? Bonus Episode

November Election Day 2010 – it’s come and gone; everyone is ecstatic to be freed from being forced to absorb those scathing campaign ads.Â  In the wake of Election Day, one Chicago ‘burb emerged with a history-making result.Â  Buffalo Grove, Illinois citizens voted upon and passed a successful recall vote of a village trustee for the first time ever.Â  You might have [read my previous post](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/07/21/are-we-playing-politics-or-preschool/" \t "_blank) about Lisa Stone, the *tenacious* (polite word) village trustee who helped make Buffalo Grove village council meetings look like too-good-to-be-real-for-reality-tv.Â  She would do things like nit-pick, interrupt, refuse to take order; many times single-handedly being responsible for meetings lasting into the following morning!Â  Lisa Stone and the Village President Elliott Hartstein would butt heads at every meeting until he was so frustrated he looked ready to burst.Â  Well, the votes were counted, and Ms. Stone has to leave office.Â  And if you think that Village President Hartstein was happy about this, check out this little video of him impersonating (complete with wig) the thorn, uh, Stone in his side:

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.

Yes, it was a horrible political decision, and a public apology was issued promptly.Â  A guy’s gotta vent, but he should have known better.Â  Just when we thought the reality show was canceled, a bonus episode appears.Â  [For the whole story, click here](http://dailyherald.com/article/20101103/news/711049991/" \t "_blank).

\*\*\*It’s come to my attention that the video is no longer available – bummmer!!Â  It was too funny!Â  Well, there’s nothing I can do about that, so here’s the next best thing: pictures.

Ms. Lisa Stone herself:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/lisa-stone.jpg)And Village President Elliott Hartstein dressed as Lisa Stone:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/bg.jpg)

### Comments

**taylhis**Thanks Jamiahsh for bringing the broken video to my attention - pictures added instead.  
**justj**I think that the politicians behave the same way all over the place. I'm beginning to wonder if politics is the career choice of those that do not mature.  
**jamiahsh**WOW! I read the article and ALMOST wish that the video was not removed. Must have been quick! I thought we already had Halloween.

# Halloween Fun (Was Had)

It’s officially mid-November already, and Halloween is over.Â  Because Halloween is one of our family’s favorite holidays, we try to take advantage of doing every Halloween-related activity we can, which often stretches the season.Â  We began on the Tuesday before Halloween at the mall.Â  They held a weather-proof (good thing too, the weather on Tuesday was so awful our tornado sirens were activated) trick-or-treat event in the mall, with costumed kids going from store to store receiving candy.Â  Our kids had a blast, and our little guy got the hang of trick-or-treating REALLY quickly!Â  He would receive his candy, and his way of saying ‘thank you’ was to give a little wave – it was adorable – see for yourself!Â  He’s the one in the Blue’s Clues costume:

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.

At first he was afraid of some of the scary masks, but he was quickly over that too.Â  The rest of the week stayed relatively Halloween-free, until Friday, when we had planned a Halloween-themed game night.Â  We requested guests to wear costumes (any excuse to dress up in a costume for Halloween – I really like to participate as much as I can!!), and we had quite a variety: from an escaped inmate (Hubby) to Flo the Progressive Insurance nurse, a nerd, a couple of hippies, a professor, a zookeeper on safari (me) – even a few members of the “real” Mafia made an appearance (we frequently play a game called ‘Mafia’ at game night and it’s tons of fun!Â  A few of the regular game nighters decided to dress up as Mafia as a shout-out to the game).Â  Fun was had, and we were able to rest up for Saturday, which was the annual community Halloween party.Â  My kids loved the hayride, complete with monsters that jump out of the brush and chase the wagon, and we rode 3 times.Â  There are all kinds of things to do at the community party, and it’s all free: from gourmet slushes (best wild berry slush ever!), cotton candy, hot dogs, and popcorn to carnival games, bouncy castles, and a maze for the kids, it’s all so much fun!

After that was time for Trick or Treating, and we had fun even if Hubby wasn’t feeling so well (he is better now – thanks for your thoughts and prayers!).Â  Let’s see…Â  don’t think I mentioned the kids’ costumes: my oldest (almost 11 already!) was a cowgirl, 6-year-old Sammie was a princess, 4-year-old Disney was a witch at the mall who switched to Dora for Saturdays’ events, and 2-year-old Christopher was Blue from Blue’s Clues.Â  We had fun Trick or Treating, and Hubby and I chose an old favorite movie of ours to watch afterward: The Uninvited – not totally scary (we usually try to watch a scary movie together on Halloween), but we both felt like a great thriller more than a horror movie this year.Â  Here is my little boy dressed as Blue:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/Halloween-mall-10-26-10-001.jpg)Sunday saw church, and we had a blast in Sunday school as usual – except that poor Hubby had to stay home.Â  Also, we were very tired on Saturday after trick or treating, so we didn’t get a chance to get our annual picture of the kids in their costumes sitting on the couch.Â  But we got one of all 4 of them in the mall, so here it is:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/Halloween-mall-10-26-10-11.jpg)Overall, a very fun 2010 Halloween, one that I can’t believe came and went so quickly – SO quickly in fact, that it’s already been over for weeks!Â  Unbelievable!!Â  Hope your Halloween was safe, fun, and happy, and that your Thanksgiving will be the same!!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I suppose that two weeks qualifies as weeks... I think that is all it has been. But it did go fast. I can't believe that it has been nearly a month since the last theatrical extravaganza ended. :( It's gonna be a long winter, but I do have plenty to beat those non-theatre blues.

# CMA Time Already!!

It’s that time of year again!Â  Dust off your cowboy hat, put it on, and get ready for a rootin’ tootin’ time watching the 44th annual Country Music Association Awards!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/Sammies-barn-dance10-27-10-251.jpg)I’m going to try something different this year – I’m not going to watch it.

Not that I don’t want to, because I really do, especially when I [go to the website](http://www.cmaawards.com/" \t "_blank) and see all the stuff about live streaming comments and things like that.Â  It wasn’t too many years ago when I made my own blog of live streaming comments, and I had fun doing it.Â  But I won’t be able to watch the CMAs this year because I have something much more important to do:Â  I lead a small group of 6th grade girls at our church’s youth group on Wednesday nights.Â  I’m not about to put a tv show above those girls, and I certainly wouldn’t be prepared to tell them the reason for my absence was because of the CMA awards – that would not be acceptable.Â  If one of my own kids was sick and I stayed home for that reason (as it happened last year on CMA night), that would be a different story, but it’s a great thing that everyone is healthy enough for me to have to miss one of my two most favorite tv events of the year (not including a year the Chicago Cubs would make it into MLB playoffs, but that hasn’t been anything I need to concern myself with in quite some time, Grrrr – my other favorite tv event is the other big country music awards show, the ACMs in the spring).

If you watch the CMA awards, HAVE FUN!!Â  I’m hoping that whatever recording device my husband has in mind to record these will work – we often have bad luck with recording devices.Â  Part of me will miss being a part of the event, reading the live commentary and providing my own, and part of me was ready to move on anyway – seems I’ve become increasingly disconnected with today’s country music scene (now I just sound old).Â  I’ll still give my picks, but they are guesses at best because I really haven’t been following the genre lately.Â  I didn’t even know until I looked last night to find out what time the awards came on that Gwyneth Paltrow, the movie star, has a hit song on country radio right now.Â  I’m actually more into Christian music than ever before; there is some pretty good stuff out there.Â  And listening to Christian music gives me a chance to practice my dances I have on Sunday mornings with the 1st graders Â  But all of that leaves less time to listen and keep up with country music.

But what the hey, I’ve had fun trying to pick the winners every year so here goes.Â  My picks are in green with random thoughts in *itallics*:

â™¦â™¦Entertainer of the Year – Brad Paisley, Lady Antebellum, Keith Urban, Miranda Lambert, Zac Brown Band *(What?!?Â  No Kenny Chesney??Â  That’s great news for those of us who aren’t big fans…Â  now, who to choose to take his place?)*

Female Vocalist – Miranda Lambert, Martina McBride, Reba McEntire, Taylor Swift, Carrie Underwood *(So great to see 2 of my favorites (Martina and Reba) back in the game!Â  I don’t think Martina will win, but I SO WANTED to choose her!!Â  Carrie Underwood is great too – I’m not a big fan of Taylor Swift, but unfortunately, I think she will win this one)*

â™¦â™¦Male Vocalist –Â  Dierks Bentley, Brad Paisley, Blake Shelton, George Strait, Keith Urban

New Artist – Luke Bryan, Easton Corbin, Jerrod Nieman, Chris Young, Zac Brown Band *(Explain to me how Zac Brown Band is still considered “new”?Â  They have some great music and have proven themselves, as I would think being a nominee for Entertainer of the Year would prove!)*

Vocal Group – Lady Antebellum, Little Big Town, Rascall Flatts, The Band Perry, Zac Brown Band *(Let’s be honest, I think Lady Antebellum will take it.Â  But I just love the music of Rascall Flatts, and can’t bear to vote against them. I’m not trying to get 2 votes in – officially, my pick is Rascall Flatts)*

Vocal Duo – Brooks and Dunn, Joey + Rory, Montgomery Gentry, Steel Magnolia, Sugarland *(The last year for Brooks and Dunn, and I don’t think they’ll pull a GARTH Brooks and pull out of retirement, so this powerful duo gets my vote – they are so talented, so they deserve it anyway.Â  I was lucky enough to see them in concert 3 times, and they did not disappoint once!)*

â™¦â™¦Single – A Little More Country Than That by Easton Corbin, Hillbilly Bone by Blake Shelton featuring Trace Adkins, Need You Now by Lady Antebellum, The House That Built Me by Miranda Lambert, White Liar by Miranda Lambert

â™¦â™¦Song – A Little More Country Than That, Need You Now, The House That Built Me, Toes, White Liar

â™¦â™¦Musical Event – Bad Angel by Dierks Bentley feat. Miranda Lambert & Jamey Johnson, Canâ€™t You See by Zac Brown Band feat. Kid Rock, Hillbilly Bone by Blake Shelton feat. Trace Adkins, Iâ€™m Alive by Kenny Chesney with Dave Matthews, Till The End by Alan Jackson with Lee Ann Womack

Music Video – Hillbilly Bone by Blake Shelton feat. Trace Adkins, Need You Now Lady Antebellum, The House That Built Me by Miranda Lambert, Water by Brad Paisley, White Liar by Miranda Lambert

Musician – Paul Franklin â€“ Steel Guitar, Dann Huff – Guitar, Brent Mason – Guitar, Mac McAnally – Guitar, Randy Scruggs â€“ Guitar

**Hmm, 5 correct of the 11 I guessed…Â  not too great.Â  Oh well, it was a good show and fun to watch!**

### Comments

**derek**I'll take Christian music over country any day too. Heck, I'd take just about anything over country. :lol: Okay, it's not \*that\* bad to these ears- I have caught myself listening to it from time to time when others have it on.  
**jamiahsh**I may not follow the C.M. scene as closely as you, but I do enjoy the commentary ;)

# Back To Blogging

It seems like I haven’t had the time to blog as much as I’d like to lately.Â  Put it this way –Â  Halloween ended over a week ago now, and I still have a draft sitting here detailing how my family spent what’s probably our 2nd favorite holiday.Â  I think I will quickly summarize and get it churned out next, hopefully.

One thing that’s been taking up my blogging time is laundry.Â  When the seasons change, my laundry responsibilities increase from about 3 loads per week to 6 or 7.Â  That’s because my family of 6 is now wearing pants instead of shorts or sundresses, many of us dress in layers in the fall which adds sweatshirts to the mix, and then there are the added number of blankies that the kids use when it turns cold outside.Â  The good news of all this is that when spring turns to summer, I find myself with about half the laundry I’ve gotten used to doing in the winter – kind of a fall back, spring ahead-type thing for laundry, I guess.Â  But more laundry folding and less blogging for me in the mean time.

And that reminds me, a funny thing happened at church yesterday.Â  When my class got back to our classroom after large group, there were 2 new kids sitting there.Â  I introduced myself, and we were just getting started when their dad came to the door, seemingly embarrassed and very apologetic as he asked for his kids back – turns out their family had forgotten to set their clocks backÂ  an hour, so they were actually there for the next service 

Our family remembered to change our clocks, but we didn’t get to appreciate the extra hour of sleep it was supposed to bring – kids have biological clocks, they wake up at the same time every day regardless of what the clock says or what time zone they are in.Â  This is especially good advice if you’re going to travel with kids across time zones – don’t fool yourself into thinking that your kids will adjust to the local time when you travel, or you could be in for a not-so-pleasant surprise.Â  My wonderful, thoughtful husband is always the one who gets up early with the kids, but I had to be at church at 8:30 yesterday.Â  Also, I was up all night with a killer headache – now that was strange.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/headache.jpg)I am very lucky to be able to say that I very rarely get headaches.Â  If I don’t get enough sleep, I will have a dull ringing in my head, but nothing like Saturday night’s doozy that was actually waking me up throughout the night.Â  Luckily it went away (with help) before I arrived in my classroom full of 1st graders.Â  But I have to wonder about the cause of this colossal headache – could it perhaps be some kind of weird virus that had me laid up all weekend?Â  Saturday I was knocked flat on my back by a sudden and severe mysterious back pain.Â  It began on Friday, when I decided to take my kids to the zoo since they had a day off school.Â  By the time we were ready to leave, I couldn’t bend over and had to ask for help to tie my shoes.Â  I thought maybe it was a pulled muscle or something, maybe a cramp that would work itself out – I couldn’t remember injuring it.Â  But I did not enjoy myself nearly as much as I usually do at the zoo Â  And thank goodness Hubby decided toÂ  come with or I don’t know how I would have been able to handle 5 kids (my daughter’s friend came along) by myself without hardly being able to bend or move right.Â  When we got home, Hubby had some work to catch up on, and I fell asleep on the couch while waiting for him – something I haven’t done for ages which makes me realize that I didn’t feel too well on Friday.Â  Then Saturday dawns, and I can’t get out of bed because of the extreme pain every time I tried to bend.Â  So I stayed in bed until 1:30 – played my cards right and got lunch in bed too – when we absolutely had to leave to meet our youth group kids for a service project.Â  I got the easy job – waiting for the kids who were late – while the others raked leaves and picked up litter, and while I took it easy, my back started to feel better.Â  But then came the headache which was to plague me all night.Â  What makes me think this is a virus is because of all the stuff going around lately, plus the fact that my sister had this same exact sudden backache a few weeks ago – could it be a contagious ‘backache virus’?Â  I owed my parents an email, but I couldn’t get in front of the computer with my sore back, so I called them from bed Saturday morning, and that’s how I found out about my sister.Â  Anyway, my point is, it was a busy weekend, but also one where I couldn’t get to my computer even if I had had the time, hence the slow pace of the blogging.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/11/headachedog.jpg)And speaking of things going around…Â  my parakeet JJ is feeling much better.Â  He’s even chirping again!!Â  He hasn’t lost his balance while sitting on his perch in days, and his physical appearance is starting to look healthier.Â  The lady at the pet store said that if a little bird is fluffed up and at the bottom of his cage like JJ was that it’s almost always too late to save them, so I feel really great that my little guy seems to have another chance.Â  I guess I should have bought this really cool looking toy I saw the other day, but my husband and I have a policy that we try not to buy anything unless we have an immediate use for it.Â  This thing was a $10 cabinet – you install it in your living room or somewhere; it’s a nice looking wood cabinet, and it opens into a little play yard for small birds.Â  Ugh, just writing about it makes me want it, but the store was an hour away, and JJ is a cage bird – I don’t know that he would come out to play in a play yard.Â  I think of him as so fragile, so it would be difficult for me to make him come out; I sure wouldn’t want him to get sick again.

Well, anyway, I’ve rambled enough – guess I just wanted to share my relief at getting well and of being able to blog again.Â  Until that overdue Halloween post…

### Comments

**taylhis**Oops - I really meant to put C in there... he's doing much better. Cold is still lingering, but he was never in as bad a shape as JJ, thank God for that. Thanks for asking!  
**derek**Happy to read things are going better for the bird (how about C?). Here's a prayer for your back pain!  
**jamiahsh**Hope you get over your "back virus" soon! Super glad to hear that JJ is on the mend ;)

# My Poor Little Bird

JJ, my parakeet, is very sick.Â  I had parakeets when I was younger, and I know enough about them to know that we are lucky that he’s still alive.Â  His chirping and squawking gradually decreased until I realized the other day that he doesn’t vocalize at all anymore.Â  He is very lathargic, and sits puffed up on his perch where he loses his balance every few minutes.Â  His tail is bobbing when he breathes, which is a sign of respiratory distress, and he has some discoloring around his cere (nose), which indicates discharge.Â  The other day, I noticed that he was sitting on the bottom of his cage, which is a sign of imminent death in parakeets.Â  Based upon my research (past experience, the internet, and bothering the heck out of the local pet store), JJ seems to have a respiratory infection – something that is often fatal for small birds.

But he’s hung on a few days now from when I first believed his death was imminent when he was at the bottom of his cage.Â  After all, parakeets’ instincts are to hide their illnesses.Â  If they show any sign of being sick, wild birds will be cast out by their flock, so if captive birds allow signs of illness to show, it’s often too late to save them.Â  I got some birdie antibiotics, and I’m hoping that he is drinking his water where the meds are.Â  He is still eating, and that’s a great sign.Â  We put a blanket over the cage, and are trying to keep him warm and calm so he can rest and get well.Â  It’s just touch and go at this point, so I’m praying for my little bird.Â  I got so attached to the little guy!Â  I got him right after my beloved dog passed away, and seeing my happy little bird helped me feel at least a tiny bit better.Â  And now I’m watching him suffer; it’s hard.Â  I want to move him back upstairs where it’s a little warmer and quieter, but I’m afraid of stressing him out too much, which is basically the same reason I don’t want to take him to the vet.Â  I guess I’ll wait for him to improve a little more before moving him upstairs; that’s the only plan I have right now.

Like I said, he does seem to be improving – the loss of balance on his perch seems to have subsided anyway.Â  But he still does not look well, and he is not vocalizing.Â  He is less than a year old, so maybe his youth is keeping him strong and resilient.Â  Poor JJ!Â  He is just a little parakeet, but he means a lot to me.Â  If you could send out a little prayer for JJ, we’d appreciate it.Â  And pray for my husband while you’re at it; he’s fighting a nasty cold.Â  Obviously, Hubby’s health is a billion times more important than JJ’s, but if I wrote a blog post every time Hubby got sick…Â Â  well, I wouldn’t have time for that!Â  Besides, Hubby’s illness is not life-threatening.Â  I wonder if Hubby and JJ have the same thing?Â  That’s one thing that stinks about this time of year – all the illness!Â  Wish I could transfer some of my super-immune system over to Hubby, who seems to get EVERY single thing that comes our way…

### Comments

**derek**And the season is just beginning... Prayers lifted. :)  
**justj**It sounds like respiratory illnesses are going around. I'm just getting over a doosy myself. Best to JJ and C.  
**jamiahsh**I really do enjoy all of your animal insight. Ver intriguing if not the best time at the moment. Hopefully, both guys get better soon. ;)

# There Was A WHAT In The Front Seat?

Just in time for Halloween, I came across a macabre news story the other day involving a woman whose actions had even veteran police officers scratching their heads.

***Woman Drove with Corpse for 10 Months****‘It was very shocking’*COSTA MESA, Calif. (CNN/KTLA) – It’s hard to shock a seasoned police officer, but cops in the Los Angeles area say they were shocked by what they found in a woman’s car this week. They say a woman was driving around for months with a dead mummified body in the front passenger’s seat.

“It was surprising even to myself. I’ve been a police officer for 15 years. To find a mummy in a vehicle, it was very shocking,” said Det. Sgt. Ed Everett.

Police say a corpse was propped up in the passenger seat of a Mercury Marquis for the last ten months. A woman was driving it around town during that time. Apparently, conditions inside the vehicle allowed for mummification.

But how did this happen?

“Initially the driver of the vehicle had indicated that she was unaware that this person was in the vehicle and didn’t indicate that there was anything wrong with the vehicle,” Sgt. Everett explained.

But later, the driver came clean. The 57-year-old woman says she met a homeless woman at a local park and allowed her to sleep in the car. One day, the driver discovered her friend was dead, panicked, and the left the corpse in the passenger’s seat. But she continued to dress the body and drive around with it.

“Due to the condition of the body, the coroner’s office was not able to determine the cause of death. There was no obvious signs of foul play at this point or trauma to the body that we know of,” said Sgt. Everett.

Police have few details on the deceased woman’s identity. The driver only had a first name for the lady and the poor condition of her remains will make identifying her difficult.

First my sympathies to the deceased and her family, and I hope they can identify her and then let her rest in peace.Â  But how does this happen?Â Â  Was the woman lonely?Â  Afraid of getting into trouble?Â  Lazy?Â  Crazy?Â  Wanted into the carpool lane?Â  Here’s to hoping she gets the help she needs, whatever that might be.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Ten months seems like an awful long time to drive around with a passenger of that nature.  
**jamiahsh**How long until the corpse started to reek? But I'm also thinking the driver needs a little help. Great seasonal post ;) Unintentional perhaps, but great!

# RIP Oreo

This post is a few weeks in the making – my daughter Sammie’s favorite rat died on October 11.Â  She took it pretty well; I was dreading having to tell her when she got off the bus that day.Â  She got off the bus and promptly handed her younger brother and sister each a piece of her candy.Â  ‘Oh great’, I’m thinking – she gets off the bus and immediately does something really nice for her siblings, and I have to tell her that her favorite rat died.Â  But I didn’t have to tell her – she asked me first if he had died.Â  I said yes and asked her how she knew – turns out that big sis had taken it upon herself to tell Sammie on the way to the bus stop that morning.Â  What are big sisters for?Â  ðŸ˜‰Â  But like I said, Sammie was ok with it, but now that just leaves us one pet rat: Buckeye.Â  We began with 2 rats, Bobby Jack and Oreo, and then we took in 2 more from a friend who was unprepared for pets, Mater and Buckeye – 4 rats at once was a bit much, but we didn’t want to see them wind up as snake food, so that gave us 4 pet rats.

Bobby was the first to pass away in June of this year, followed by Mater in August, then Oreo in October – every 2 months we lose a rat, I guess.Â  That’s the only downside to these otherwise great pets – they only have a lifespan of 1-3 years.Â  Otherwise, they are like mini dogs: affectionate as can be and very trainable.Â  My girls love their rats and do very well at feeding them and giving them water every day, cleaning their cage, giving them baths, and taking them for walks.Â  The rats would always seem depressed when my girls spend their week with Grandma in the summer, and they get really excited when the girls return.Â  The only thing that keeps ME from getting too close to the rats is my allergy – what a bummer.Â  I found out I am allergic to rats right after we got them as cute little babies.Â  I would play with them and wonder why I broke out into hives on my forearms and sneezed like crazy and had itchy eyes for hours afterward.Â  In a way, it’s a good thing, otherwise I would be more sad than the girls when theyÂ  die, and at this rate, we are poised to have to say goodbye to a long line of pet rats!

### Comments

**justj**So sorry to read this. I like rats myself. The short lifespan is a downside.  
**taylhis**Well, if you got the right kind of bat, you wouldn't have to worry about mosquitoes :) If I didn't have to worry about real-world responsible things like feeding the pet, cleaning up after it, it hurting someone or destroying my house, I can't think of any animal I wouldn't have as a pet, even perhaps the one of which you are thinking. Hypothetically, of course. :)  
**jamiahsh**BATS?! really. I can think of one pet that you would at least hesitate to own. Any others?  
**taylhis**Yes, Jamiahsh, I'm allergic to rats, cats, and probably bats, which I always thought would make a cool pet. All the cool -at pets make me sneeze! :) Well, if they didn't, I think I would have at least 20 cats :0 Watching rats swim is fun; they like it too! A random rat swimming video (not one of ours): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycOeghLp83Y&feature=related  
**jamiahsh**Rats AND cats? RIP, Oreo. Sammie is growing up. Or maybe it was the length of time she had to think about it. My big brother told me that my poodle had been taken to be put under when I was 9 or 10. But they do look like great pets and they have been well taken care of. I always liked to watch them swim.

# Last Call For Haunted Houses!!

This weekend sees the last of the Halloween season of 2010.Â  I always try my best to do as much Halloween and fall-related things as possible; I just love the season.Â  This year I’ve been lucky enough to have gotten to try THREE haunted houses, and I will rate them here in case anyone has time to check any of them out.Â  I would really like to fit in a few more or even a repeat visit to one I’ve already been to, but I have a jam-packed weekend planned with other fun stuff like Halloween parties and Trick-or-Treating.

A few weekends ago, we visited the Chicago area and were able to get to two haunted houses, both in the area where we were staying – Aurora.Â  We would have liked to check out some other of the MANY haunted houses in the suburbs (as well as other entertainment offerings), but alas, we quickly ran out of time.Â  So the haunted houses visited were:

[BASEMENT OF THE DEAD](http://www.42fear.com/main.htm" \t "_blank) – 42 W. New York St. Aurora IL 60502 -This is by far the best haunted house that I’ve ever been to.Â  I’ve been able to visit here 2 years in a row, and it’s gotten better with time.Â  The makeup on the creatures is incredible – horror movie caliber –Â  and the characters waiting to scare people waiting in line are great.Â  They ALWAYS stay in character, which is very important, and they are creative in their scariness – much more than the typicalÂ  monster or “BOO!” yelling psychopath.Â  I tried to get video of the ultra-impressive 7+ foot tall monsters that hang around outside, but Basement of the Dead is located in downtown Aurora, so I had to help my husband navigate around the tricky one-way streets instead.Â  A MUST SEE for any haunted house enthusiast!Â  We will probably be making the trip next year, if not just for this haunted house alone; it’s that good!Â  4!’s for fright out of 4.

[MIDNIGHT MASSACRE](www.odysseyfunworld.com" \t "_blank) – 3440 Odyssey Court Naperville IL 60540 – Well, there really isn’t much to say about this lame attempt at a haunted house.Â  I don’t even think it was made less scary by our visit to Basement of the Dead before this one – it wouldn’t have been any better even if we hadn’t just visited aÂ  spectacular haunted house first.Â  The scariest thing about Midnight Massacre was the hour and a half we waited in line, which was hidden from view when you buy your tickets.Â  We got a bad clue when we saw a snack stand in line – you know they won’t want you taking food or drink into their haunted house, so if they let you buy food and drink in line, you know you’re going to have a long wait.Â  And in this case, a long wait for what?Â  The haunted house was not scary.Â  This one did consist of actors (?) yelling cheesy things like “BOO!”Â  There was a guy dressed like Freddy from Nightmare on Elm Street, and his “scare” was jumping up from a bed and yelling “Freddy!”Â  We even had one actor apologize to us and say, “Hey, I tried.”Â  Talk about breaking character!Â  But in a haunted house as bad as this one, it didn’t really matter that he broke character, that wasn’t the only thing wrong with it.Â  The first part of if was a black light maze that was so obviously part of a lazer tag course – they didn’t even try to hide it.Â  But there weren’t any monsters in it or anything.Â  They had a couple of cool robots and animatronics, especially this one large dinosaur thing, but it was just a head, and they didn’t do anything to cover up the robotic looking body.Â  And the actors were terrible.Â  Enough said about this one, not recommended – well, maybe for a kid’s first haunted house.Â  One ! (for effort Iguess) out of 4!’s

[Leader’s Family Farms](http://leadersfamilyfarms.com/" \t "_blank) – near the intersection of Ohio State Route 24 and Henry County Rd. 16 near Napoleon, Ohio – I got to go into this haunted attraction with one of my youth group girls, and she was a screamer.Â  It was a lot of fun, especially since the ghouls and monsters focused their attention on the screamer and left me alone!Â  We did not have the time to check out their new haunted attraction, PanDEMONium, but Screamacres was a nice haunted attraction as always.Â  3! out of 4! – Lots of the same old haunted house effects, but being outside and in the middle of nowhere certainly adds to the effect.Â  I should also note that Leader’s has activities for the entire family, every age group.Â  Great fall fun to be had here.

Well, there you have it – those are the 3 I’ve gottenÂ  to this year.Â  If you have the time and are looking for a good scare, I highly recommend Basement of the Dead in Aurora Illinois or Leader’s Family Farm’s Screamacres in Napoleon Ohio.Â  I wish I had more time to visit more and get some reviews.Â  Maybe some day I’ll be able to get down to Columbus Ohio to go to [Dead Acres Haunted Hoochie](http://www.deadacres.com/" \t "_blank); it looks very scary and really cool!

Anyone else think haunted houses should extend their seasons into November for those of us who are very busy in October taking kids trick or treating and to fall parties, etc??Â  I sure wish they would!!!Â  Have a GREAT Halloween!!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I wish they would, too! Are there any still going on the actual DAY... which is Sunday! Yes... we need to check out the Haunted Hoochie. Just the name sends chills up and down my spine. Also in the mood for a GOOD and SCAAAAAARY movie!

# Soul Mates

I just love it when our pastor’s sermons speak to me, which is actually quite often as he is a powerful speaker.Â  A few weeks ago, he was speaking of the relationship between Paul and Timothy, and the discussion that followed was of kindred spirits and soul mates.

This sermon made me think of my husband – we’ve always known we were made for each other.Â  And that leads to a funny story: just a few days before we heard this sermon in church, I was at the library looking for a movie to pick out for Hubby and I to watch that night.Â  My eyes fell upon UHF, a goofy late 80s comedy starring Weird Al Yankovic.Â  IÂ  thought to myself, “He won’t want to watch that.” and I passed it up.Â  Later that night as we were picking a movie to watch, my husband says, “I feel like watching UHF, but we don’t have it.”Â  I could not stop laughing as I told him about how I thought of him in the library that day, and we had a good laugh together.Â  He had seen UHF years ago but not since and never with me (I had never seen it).Â  It’s not like it was one of his favorite movies or one he often felt like watching, and we had probably never even discussed it together.Â  Yet of all the movies just to randomly pop into our heads that day, we shared a random thought that was UHF.Â  

Love You Honey

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/heart.jpg)

### Comments

**Taylhis**Nope hadn't heard that before. Had to listen to it while I'm typing though - couldn't handle that picture staring at me! And I'm surprised to hear it was a Wmart - I usually hear country there (no complaints outta me!)  
**jamiahsh**THAT"S RIGHT! He was at the amphitheatre this past summer, I believe. Anyone remember his last parody: "You're Pitiful." It played it seemed ad nauseum at my former place of employment and the OLD store to boot. So that was MORE han a few years ago. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD\_viEMgk5o&feature=related  
**Taylhis**We did end up watching UHF that night :) Weird Al seems to be around still. I know he was part of the Toledo Zoo's concert series - was it this year or last, I can't remember. He is also one of the many celebrities (guess you would call him a celebrity) that has written a children's book, he's been on the kid's (annoying) show Yo Gabba Gabba, and I think he has a new album due out soon... UHF was a silly kind of funny - something I could use in a movie every once and a while :)  
**jamiahsh**HAHA! That post is hilariously sweet. Who woulda thunk? What is up with the Weird one nowadays?  
**derek**Ah, Weird Al. I would probably buy one of his collections if I had a chance his parodies are so enjoyable. So did you go back to check it out? :)

# Cute Things From Kids

I get all these email forwards quoting kids and the cute things they say.Â  With 4 kids of my own (ages 10, 6, 4, and 2), I have fodder almost daily for such emails.Â  If only I could remember to write down all the cute things they say…

Here are a few that have stuck in my mind from recent months:

end of april 2010:  
5-year-old Sammie –Â  We’re in the drive-thru at the ice cream place, and we ask Sammie what she would like.Â  She says “I don’t know; I think I have gastritis.”

seperate incident:  
3-year-old Disney – “Does Santa work at the gas station”

10-13-10 – Disney (a week before her 4th birthday) holds up the snow brush that was in the garage. “Mom, why did you pack a giant toothbrush?”  
I’m still smiling about that one!

### Comments

**derek**The middle one didn't seem funny, but random. But the other ones... :lol: Giant toothbrush indeed!  
**Phyllis Beyer**What cute sayings. You are smart writing them down because I always talked about doing it but never did.  
**jamiahsh**A giant toothbrush! HEHE! Gastritis! HAHAHA!!! When I was in high school... one of the father of one of my fellow choir members really did look like Santa!

# Fun At School

Some random kid-related stuff to report…

First, my “visitor”Â  showed up to my Sunday morning class.Â  I haven’t had the time to blog about it, but basically there is a parent who came to drop her daughter off a few weeks ago at the worst time possible, and the kids were all over the place (it’s not normally like that, a set of circumstances culminated to create the ‘perfect storm’ – long story).Â  On top of that, her daughter is a 1st grader, which means that she has just come over to the north campus of church.Â  Our first graders “graduate” from the preschool wing and move over to the other building when they get in 1st grade, and their curriculum changes.Â  So this parent had concerns about what her daughter was learning and specifically where her weekly “coloring page” was.Â  So she asked if she could come “observe” my class, and I was all upset and nervous.Â  I sat and pondered this, I prayed about it, and I decided to give it my best shot and show this mother what a wonderful childrens’ ministry we have.Â  I wasn’t evenÂ  nervous, and I used the entire ride home from Illinois planning out my lesson for class the next day.Â  And what happens?Â  She is a no-show.Â  Fast forward to the next week, which was in reality this past Sunday, and she shows up.Â  Luckily I had kind of figured this would happen, so I was well-prepared again.Â  But I alsoÂ  had 9 kids to look after – of course she couldn’t come observe when I had 4 kids last week when games and lessons are much easier…Â  But I think it went well!Â  I can’t speak for the “observer”, but the class ran as smoothly as it could have with 9 kids running around.Â  She wasn’t just a statue standing in the corner making me nervous during class, but an active participant (after some encouragement by me) in the crafts and games.Â  It is my hope that she came away from experiencing her daughter’s Sunday school knowing that our childrens’ ministry program at church is wonderful!Â  We have so many components (there is music, dancing, skits, big group games, small group games, story-telling and crafts – all in one hour every week!)Â  and super volunteers who bring it all together which provides a variety of ways for kids to learn one lesson and virtue.Â  I am so proud of how well my 1st graders are picking up on this month’s virtue, which is “initiative”.Â  I know, a huge word for such small kids, but the lessons are broken down and relate to kids so well that they really are getting it – especially my 1st grader at home, which really surprises me!!Â  So anyway, I just wanted to express my relief about how I don’t have to worry about my “visitor” anymore.Â  At first I was terribly upset, but after a lot of thinking and praying, it all worked out for the better!Â  I was able to step back and take a look at our childrens’ ministry and appreciate it even more when it was under scrutiny, so I am very thankful to God for opening my eyes and getting me through this.

Next bit of kid news – last week was National Eat Lunch at School week, soÂ  us parents were invited to eat with the littles.Â  My husband and I folded ourselves into the kiddie-sized lunch tables and visited with the 1st graders.Â  One problem I didn’t see coming though – we brought little brother (he is 2), so of course he starts running around the lunchroom, but…Â  Mom and Dad were so crammed into the little lunch tables that we could not get up to chase him unless someone else got up first – we were packed in like sardines!Â  Finally we were able to get out and get him before he caused too much trouble, and we had a great time for the remainder of the lunch.Â  I think Sammie really enjoyed haaving her family at lunch.Â  Here are my 3 youngest at ‘big kid’ first grade lunch:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/1st-grade-school-lunch-10-14-10-002.jpg)

And at recess it was so neat to see some of my 1st graders from Sunday morning childrens’ ministry!!

So after lunch in 1st grade, it was time to head to the fire station for a field trip with my preschool-age daughter and her class.Â  I brought my 2-year-old along to this also because I thought he would enjoy it, and he did, even if it was a challenge trying to get him to hold still while the fireman was talking.Â  But as soon as the fire gear came out and the fireman began to put on his boots, gloves, hood, hat, etc, my son was very attentive.Â  After that, each of the kids got a turn “driving” the fire truck!Â  My son made his way up to the front of the group and reached his arms toward the fireman – it was really neat to see because a few of the pre-schoolers, one being my daughter, were nervous about being lifted up by the firefighter and into the big fire truck.Â  But once they saw the little dude have a turn and how much he loved it, they were all eager to try too!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/fire-station-field-trip-011.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/fire-station-field-trip-013.jpg)

So overall a great week!Â  October is always so busy for our family, but I enjoy every minute of it!!

### Comments

**derek**Very busy indeed! Praise God the Sunday observation worked out well, even delayed a week as it was.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I think Beeber is going to be another Daredevil! Look out Sammie! But glad that everything worked out with your "visitor." Prayer is a wonderful thing.  
**Phyllis Beyer**What fun activities. I wish I had been there to enjoy them also.

# EVEN BETTER THAN I IMAGINED!!! (part 2)

*(This is a continuation of my previous post of the same title which can be [found here](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/10/13/even-better-than-i-imagined/" \t "_blank) in case you missed it.)*

*[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/Jack-Hanna-and-us-10-8-101.jpg)(This is us with Jack Hanna!Â  In case you don’t know who he is,Â  I included a brief description of him in my previous blog post about the show!)*

Before we went into the theater to see Jack Hanna’s live stage show, we were just standing there gawking at Jack Hanna signing autographs.Â  Suddenly, a group of young people came up to him, and he was so thrilled to see them that he quickly grabbed his cell phone and called his wife backstage, telling her that their ‘special friends’ would be coming backstage to see her.Â  The friends are then ushered away, and Jack announced during the show that they are the [Von Trapp Children](http://www.vontrappchildren.com/" \t "_blank), a singing quartet of descendants from the family who inspired the infamous memoir, stage musical, and movie *The Sound of Music*.Â  Apparently they had been in the Chicago area to tape an episode of Oprah (which will air on October 29), and they’re family friends of Jack’s and stopped by his show to surprise him.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/Jack-Hanna-10-8-10-012.jpg)*(Me waiting patiently while Jack signs just one of my many books that I brought!!)*

Back to the show…Â  we are seated in the Paramount, and Jack Hanna comes out!!Â  The show itself was a mix of live animals being brought out on the stage and video clips shown on a large screen, all narrated by Jack with his trademark anecdotes and sense of humor.Â  In fact, at one point near the beginning of show, Jack Hanna began to tell a story, and all of a sudden he stops and looks off to the wings of the stage.Â  “Do I have time to tell this story?”Â  He askedÂ  (presumably the producer backstage), but then he didn’t wait for an answer and replied to himself: “Of course I have time to tell it – it’s my show!”Â  It was not said in an arrogant fashion, but rather it seemed as if he were almost reminding himself that he is in charge.Â  It was glimpses of genuineness like this that made his show so special.Â  Jack Hanna is very real and down-to-earth (when it comes to being a celebrity anyway – often he is dreaming about ways to help animals with his head onÂ  the clouds!), and these traits take precedent in his live appearances.

So the story he told was hilarious!Â  It was about his appearance on “Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader”, and…Â  well, you can listen to it if you’d like:

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.

So between video clips of a few animal causes that are near and dear to Jack Hanna’s heart ([Rolling Dog Ranch](http://rollingdogranch.org/" \t "_blank) andÂ  Mountain Gorilla Conservation, among others), the following live animals were brought out on the stage for Jack to tell us about: a Red-Ruffed Lemur, blind Barn Owl, Flamingo, 2-Toed Sloth (did you know that there is a bed and breakfast in South America where you get to take care of a baby sloth in your room overnight?Â  I just might get over this fear of flying thing quicker than I thought I would!!), 3-Banded Armadillo, Siberian Lynx, baby Coatamundi, baby Bennet’s Wallaby (got to meet him earlier at the Jamboree Lunch), Grey fox, Fennec Fox (got to meet him at lunch also), Lesser Anteater, an albino Python, and the finale – a full grown Cheetah!Â  Seeing the animals was great of course, and hearing live ‘Jack facts’ about them was even better.Â  But I think my favorite part of the show was the end – we watched a blooper reel of Jack getting licked, bitten, squirted, tossed around, etc. by animals, and one clip was of Jack Hanna making an appearance on David Letterman’s show in the ’80s.Â  Jack is showing Dave how to milk a goat, and as usual, Dave is cracking jokes.Â  Jack Hanna (the live version) cuts in, saying, “I didn’t even mean to do this!” and the video clip shows him accidentally squirting Letterman with a spray of milk from the goat’s udder!Â  There is only one more thing that can make watching Jack Hanna on Letterman evenÂ  more entertaining, and that is watching Jack Hanna on Letterman WITH Jack Hanna while he narrates it!!

We laughed (plenty of laughs when Jack and animals are involved!), we cried (that video clip of the Rolling Dog ranch was so heartwarming – the ranch takes dogs who are seriously ill, and many of them have extreme physical ailments), and then it was time to go.Â  But not before we got to hear Jack’s bear spray story again, and he even called on one of his assistants to act it out.Â  He told this story during his previous appearance on Letterman, and it was hilarious then as it was hearing it and seeing it live.Â  Funny, that is, until we found out during the live show what *really* happened during that previous Letterman appearance.Â  Apparently it wasn’t demonstration-style bear spray, but the real thing, and Jack got sprayed in the face, causing loss of vision for over 10 minutes and some minor facial burns.Â  Jack warned us (and David Letterman!) that he is planning revenge for his next appearance on the show in December, so stay tuned!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/sloth.jpg)*A sloth relaxing at a sloth sanctuary in Costa Rica.Â  While we were on the subject of sloths, this picture was too cute to pass up!!*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**OOOOOHHHHH! Can't wait til December! But thanks for sharing your fantastic trip!

# Classic Sherlock Holmes Tale Told

Last weekend, we drove some 200 miles on Friday night, which culminated in rush hour in Chicagoland.Â  Saturday was go-go-go, but no complaints here since we got to see Jack Hanna’s stage show, something I have been waiting over a decade to see!Â  After a (much too) short visit with family, we were on the road again late Saturday night, and traveled the 200+ miles back home again, arriving about 2am.Â  We got up early for church, and with my blurry tired eyes, I carefully went over my lesson plan for my 1st grade Sunday school class since I was anticipating a special guest.Â  I’m happy to report that my class went off without a hitch, so thank God for answering my prayers – after leaving it in God’s hands, I was not even nervous about it, which speaks volumes if you know me and my ability to let my nervousness get to me!!

So needless to say, by SundayÂ  night, I was wiped.Â  But I had been asked by some friends to attend the special press night of their stage play, the Sherlock Holmes mystery The Hound of the Baskervilles to write a review for our local paper.Â  I happily obliged, especially because seeing the show on this particular night helped our finding-a-babysitter situation.Â  I didn’t know how I would like a Sherlock Holmes stage play as I had never found the books entertaining.Â  But I was entertained by the show, so I decided to put my review on my blog since some of my readers won’t be able to see it in the paper.Â  Note that each actor brought something unique to the show, but I was unable to include rambling accounts of each individual performance due to spacial limitations.Â  If you are anywhere near Hicksville Ohio this weekend, I hope the following review will make you want to stop by the Huber Opera House to enjoy a great autumn mystery on stage!

From the Bryan Times – Thursday, October 14, 2010:

*HICKSVILLE – While the leaves fall outside, an early darkened evening or a chilly autumn afternoon spent taking in a live stage play is especially enjoyable while viewing a chilling mystery.*

*This weekend, the historic Huber Opera House in Hicksville comes alive with a classic Sherlock Holmes whodunit, The Hound of the Baskervilles. Join the Hicksville Village Players this weekend as Holmes, Watson, and other curious characters guide you through the tale of the hound that haunts the halls of the Baskervilles. Intended for the audience to piece together, the show is a puzzle whose clues are carefully and individually laid out by the intriguing cast of characters.*

*Sherlock Holmes, the know-it-all yet admirable mystery-solver is extraordinarily portrayed by Bill Murphy. The audience is held captive while Holmes connects clues between puffs of his pipe. Nicely complementing Murphy’s natural Holmes as the ever-faithful, always reliable assistant Watson is Travis Heffelfinger of Hicksville. Heffelfinger’s Watson is dependable and sharp-witted, and he is observant enough to attain the job of Holmes’ eyes and ears while protecting their client, Henry Baskerville. John Robinson of Bryan portrays Henry, a man who is fearful for his safety while he remains inquisitive as he tries to deduce who – or what – might have murdered his uncle. Providing clues and distractions alike for the famed detective are Dr. James Mortimer (Corey Fowler) and Beryl Stapleton (Lindsay Clem).*

*Once the investigation carries Holmes and the audience away from Baker Street and into the isolated countryside, strange stories are spun of murder, mayhem, thievery, and betrayal. Around the mysterious moor, the secrets begin to spill, and it becomes apparent that the odd collection of characters might not be as they appear. The audience joins Holmes as he tries to figure out if either the peculiar Mr. Stapleton (compellingly played by John Overberg of Montpelier) or the lady-like Laura Lyons (depicted elegantly by Courtney Widdifield) can be trusted. Can Holmes’ client, Henry Baskerville, presume that the keepers of Baskerville Hall, The Barrymores (persuasively illustrated by Jamy Shaffer of Edgerton and Amber Garza of Antwerp) are truthful witnesses? Why, “It’s elementary, my dear Watson!”*

*In the atmosphere of the historic Huber Opera House, the wonderfully directed The Hound of the Baskervilles will transport you back to 19th century London and directly to Baker Street with Sherlock Holmes himself. The curtain opens Friday and Saturday nights, October 15 and 16 at 7:30pm and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons at 2:30pm on October 16 and 17.*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yes justj, I know. So dark... hardly any light at all. I should have brought a camp cot to sleep on also. But what can you do they are cheap seats?  
**justj**jamiahsh, the word is that we have lousy seats for most of the performance. :( Can't see the stage at all.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I also plan to attend at least one of the productions. The review only increases my desire to see it at least once.  
**justj**Yeah, I want to see this show too!!!. Too bad the review night missed a little of the show. Travis put a slide show together to help the history of Hugo Baskerville flow and to get that story in the minds of the audience. That was a wonderful addition. Thanks for your words about the show.  
**taylhis**Thanks for the compliment Mom. I like to write. I don't know if I would like it as much if I had deadlines and someone constantly on me with critiques. I enjoy writing on my own time under my own terms. Besides, I'd like to think that my calling is raising my 4 beautiful children :) Every time I hear any of my friends talk about their struggles of juggling their work and their families, I am even more thankful that all my time is for my kids.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Lisa, you missed your calling.....what a great review you wrote. If I lived closer I would want to see this play.

# EVEN BETTER THAN I IMAGINED!!!

We are back from Illinois; actually we got back a few days ago, but things here have been so non-stop that I’m not even unpacked from the weekend trip yet – working on that this week.Â  But I had to take a break and write about the super fun Jack Hanna show that we were able to see while in Illinois – after all my anticipating, it was somehow **even better than I had imagined!!!**

We were the first ones to arrive at Aurora’s Paramount Theater (a lovely old-fashioned theater with beautiful architecture – in fact, it was chosenÂ  to be the setting for a few scenes of the Johnny Depp movie about the mobster John Dillinger called Public Enemies that was recently released), so we opted to stand in line rather than wait at the bar.Â  This way, we were first upstairs for our “Jamboree Lunch” and got first pick of our seats.Â  Seeing as how there were only two ways that Jack could get up to the second floor – stairs or elevator – we chose the table nearest both entrances.Â  We went to go pick up our lunch – peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cookies, fruit snacks, and chips situated in a safari hat – and came back to our table which had a bunch of little animal toys on it: lion rulers, a finger puppet zebra, coloring pages, and a parachuting tiger (oh how tempting it was to let him loose over the railing to sail down into the lobby… but Jack was due to arrive, so we were on our best behavior).Â  Once we saw that all of the kids at the event were going to be seated elsewhere, I scooped up all of the jungle paraphernalia and put it in my purse.Â  We put on our safari hats and ate our PB & J – did I mention that this event was designed for kids?Â  Had we known before we got there, we would have brought our kids, but it wasn’t very well organized and so we didn’t really realize it until we got there – oh well.Â  All was forgotten once Jack Hanna arrived!!Â  If you don’t know who JackÂ  Hanna is, here is a brief synopsis:Â  Jack Hanna is an animal guy, and he was the director of the now world famous Columbus Zoo from 1978-1992.Â  In that time, he put that zoo on the map; it went from being a place that even locals didn’t know existed to a world renowned animal facility, and attendance at the zoo increased by 400%!Â  He now travels the world visiting endangered species, zoos, and making live show and tv show appearances (his monthly appearances on David Letterman’s show are always entertaining!!), all in the name of bringing awareness to wildlife conservation.

So anyway, at the Jungle Jamboree lunch, Jack goes from table to table (preceded by a woman carrying a baby wallaby in a pouch and a man with a fox), and he comes to our table first!!Â  He had limited time at each table of course, but he autographed a little picture of himself, and we did have time to tell him how we saw him at Sea World on our honeymoon in 1999.Â  He asked if we liked animals, and my response went something like this: “Duh, huh huh huh”.Â  As much as I had been thinking about what to say to Jack, it happened to me again.Â  When I finally met him, I was dumbfounded and couldn’t think about the most important things to talk about in such a little time.Â  No matter; we would be meeting him AGAIN later that same day!!

So after that, we went back downstairs to the merchandise table, and Hubby bought me Jack’s new book (My Wild Life – it’s kind of a re-write / update to my favorite book, Monkeys on the Interstate.Â  But I didn’t have this new book yet, and needless to say now that I have it, my reading of the Harry Potter series has taken a backseat!), and we waited for Jack to finish at the lunch tables upstairs.Â  He came downstairs, there was just a few minutes wait, and then we met him AGAIN and he signed my new book, plus ALL of the books of his that I had brought along – and I had a huge purse full.Â  We explained to him that he is our favorite celebrity (“Oh, I’m not a celebrity!”Â  he said.), and the nice guy behind us took this picture (note that Hubby still has on his safari hat!):

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/Jack-Hanna-and-us-10-8-10.jpg)

Not sure what to do with ourselves after our autograph session, we were SO tempted to get back in line.Â  After all, JackÂ  Hanna, our favorite ~~celebrity~~ animal conservation personality was sitting within 10 feet of us!Â  But we wanted to give other people a chance to meet him, and I’m glad we chose to just stand there and gawk at him from the sidelines for 25 minutes rather than getting back in line – turns out that some people didn’t get a chance to get his autograph since he was whisked away to get ready for the stage show.Â  It just wouldn’t have been fair for us to be in the line twice.Â  He announced later that people who didn’t get a chance to get his autograph could just email his website and an autographed pic would be sent out.Â  No offense, Jack, but that’s just not the same as meeting you in person!Â  I am SO thankful that we got to meet him, and he is even more humble and down-to-earth than he seems on tv!!

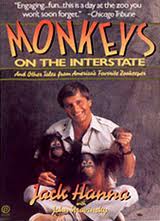
Well, this blog post got lengthy, and I haven’t even talked about the stage show yet, so I think I will cut this into multiple posts as my little guy is finished with his ‘quiet time’.Â  Unfortunately for me (and my ever-growing list of housework), my 2-year-old has outgrown his naps so I don’t have nearly as much free time during the day as I need to get everything done.Â  So you’ll have to wait until my next post (or two or three) to read about the actual Jack Hanna stage show (best show I’ve EVER seen!!!) and the other stuff we crammed into our jam-packed super-fun Illinois weekend.Â  Until then…

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Agreed, I would have done the same! :lol:  
**derek**Agreed, captivating. I'm glad you got a chance to talk to him. Good of him to sign all your books, I must say! And don't worry, you're kids at heart, so you were okay there. ;)  
**jamiahsh**LOVE THE POST! Maybe lengthy to you, but extremely captivating! It sounds SOOOOO FUN! Anytime you need to get Beebs off your hands on my day off (Monday)... HOLLAR!

# Jack Hanna!!!

While my girls are counting down the days until they get to go to their Grandma’s house, I am counting the days until I get to see a LIVE JACK HANNA SHOW!!!Â  Don’t get me wrong, I’m really excited to see family too, but I’ve been waiting to see a live Jack Hanna show for over a decade!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/monkeys-on-the-interstate.jpg)

I’ve had the show tickets in the car for about two weeks now, since I was so sure that I’d forget them.Â  I’ve already packed my glasses too, so I can actually see Jack and the animals from my seat.Â  And I’ve been “cramming” all week – trying to quickly re-read my favorite book, Jack Hanna’s *Monkeys on the Interstate*.Â  If all goes well, I should be finished with it by Saturday when I see Jack.Â  Because we have tickets for a pre-show event called a Jamboree Lunch, I’m hoping for maybe an autograph or even an opportunity to chat with Mr. Hanna!Â  I know it’s a shot in the dark, but I’ve made a mental list of things I’d bring up just in case; many of them are from the *Monkeys* book.Â  Even if I don’t get an opportunity to talk to Mr. Hanna, I am ecstatic just to be able to see his show!!!Â  I really enjoy his appearances on Letterman every month, and I’m beyond excited to see Mr. Hanna live!!Â  Just in case, I’m bringing an array of my Hanna collection in case I get a chance to seek an autograph, but I’m not expecting it or anything – don’t want to be disappointed.Â  It would be nice, however, to replace our autographed Jack Hanna honeymoon memento.Â  Now I have to tell that story…

When my husband and I took our honeymoon to Florida in 1999, we were driving from where we lived in Illinois to Florida (which is a very LONG drive…Â  but for some reason, I cannot remember exactly what it was like to do that WITHOUT KIDS along…), and we were talking about all the things we would do.Â  One of the things that came upÂ  was celebrities we would like to run into, and Jack Hanna was the only one we both decided we would really care about running into.Â  Once in Florida, we visited Sea World, and we were going to go into the underwater viewing area forÂ  the dolphins, but it was roped off – “TV show taping in progress”.Â  Just before we turned away to head to something else, a worker lifted the ropes, so in we went, and the crew was packing up the cameras, and THERE WAS JACK HANNA!!!Â  And we were all alone since the area had just been closed off – no mob of fans to compete with.Â  Ok, so maybe JackÂ  Hanna isn’t the type of celebrity to have fans mobbing him wherever he goes, but to me, he is an animal hero.Â  His *Monkeys on the Interstate* book chronicles his creativity, his strength through adversity, and his triumphs (and failures!) he went through as he was building the once unheard of Columbus Zoo into the world famous, state-of-the-art zoo facility it is today – a fascinating read for anyone who loves animals, zoos, Jack Hanna, or who just likes funny stories!!Â  Jack Hanna is a marketing and animal genius!Â  But I digress – back to my story…

So we got to meet Jack Hanna, right there at Sea World.Â  I was not expecting it, so I gummed up and let my husband do the talking, and Jack whipped out an 8×10 glossy picture and autographed it, putting our names on it and everything.Â  Unfortunately, this picture was one of a few irreplaceable items that were entrusted to so-called “friends” during a move we had, never to be seen again…Â  but that’s another story and nothing I want to dwell upon now.

So yeah, IF I actually get to talk to Jack again this time, I have my list of things I want to talk about…Â  though it’s quite lengthy, and my brain will be swimming with basically EVERYTHING from the *Monkeys on the Interstate* book, as well as things I want to know about starting my own zoo – hey, that shouldn’t come as a big surprise to any of my readers, so lift your dropped jaw.Â  Those of you who know me realize that I have a pretty good start on one already, don’t you?Â  

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/jackhanna.jpg)*This is Jack at one of his Letterman appearances.Â  Each of his appearances on Letterman has moments of hilarity as Jack tries so hard to get in his animal facts while Letterman is busy making jokes and heckling him.Â  After decades of monthly appearances, the two have built a relationship of sorts, and Jack now brings animals that sometimes shock, awe, and even scare Letterman!!Â  Never a dull moment when Jack’s around…*

### Comments

**derek**I hope you get a chance to talk to him again. Who knows? Maybe he might even remember you from '99- after you bring it up and remind him at least. I'm sorry I'll miss you on your IL visit this time around, but we'll get together again sometime. :)  
**jamiahsh**YES! I love the monthly Hanna alerts. One should be around the corner, but seeing him in person I'm sure will be exciting for you both! Hopefully your Jamboree Lunch is super! Have a safe and SUPER trip. Wish I was there! Look forward to hearing/reading about it all!

# The Office - Season 7!!

I am behind on blogging about my favorite tv show (and the only one that’s left that is good enough for me to watch these days!), The Office!Â  Time flew so fast that the season premiere was a few weeks ago now, and it’s been a great season so far!

The Office is on Season 7 already, and unfortunately for us fans, this is reportedly the last season for the show’s lead actor, Steve Carell.Â  As a huge fan of the show, IÂ  personally don’t see how it will work without Carell’s lovable idiot boss character, Michael Scott, and I’m hoping that he will change his mind about leaving.Â  Although he has yet to win an Emmy for his performance as Michael Scott (darn Alec Baldwin on 30 Rock takes it every year!), episode 2 of season 7 of The Office saw the best performance I’ve ever seen Carell give and probably the best acting I’ve ever seen on a tv sitcom!Â  If you’re a fan, I’m talking about the scene where he is in a counseling session with Toby, and Toby is kind of manipulating him to actually talk to him.Â  For a few minutes, Michael is actually talking and playing cards with Toby – a man he simply cannot stand.Â  He even has an “I loathe Toby” face that is priceless.Â  So anyway, he’s playing cards with Toby, and Toby is actually making some valuable psychiatric headway with Michael…Â  until Michael realizes it.Â  Within seconds as he’s realizing what Toby has done, his transformation back into his “I loathe Toby” mode is just…Â  WOW.Â  Emmy-worthy material, for sure in my opinion, but only time will tell.

Unfortunately, if you are not already watching this great show, then I can’t recommend you start now in the 7th season – nowadays the show seems to be written for its fan base, and newcomers might not be able to follow the plots which are seemingly being developed around the already established characters.Â  But I do highly recommend you check out the show beginning in Season 1 – you can do this on dvd or perhaps even on NBC’s website?Â  That way, you can watch the The Office characters hilariously evolve yourself.Â  If you work in an office yourself, are looking for a new tv show to watch, or are simply a fan of good tv, talented script-writing, try The Office!!

I cannot wait to see what the 3rd episode of this new season will bring us on Thursday!!

One of the Michael Scott’s (aka Steve Carell’s) famous “I loathe Toby” faces:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/michael-scott.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**It's sitting on my hard drive right now. Oops- should I have admitted that? ;)  
**jamiahsh**I too found that the season premiere was a bit lacking but with moments of greatness! Kathy Bates always brings hilarity even if it is a short bit. But "Counseling" was indeed FANTASTIC! We need another Slater video to top the first one.  
**taylhis**@derek - I agree with your "two years in a row" rule, unless someone I like (like Steve Carell) starts to win - then it's hard to say that :) You've GOT to see the 2nd episode - it's in 2nd place for my favorite Office episode EVER! I struggled for a little bit, but then I realized that nothing can top the episode with Christian Slater doing the Sabre intro video - that still makes me giggle just thinking about it. Plus that episode had LOTS of other funny stuff as well - yep, the 2nd episode of the season was great, but it just couldn't topthe Sabre episode. Thought about it though. And don't be discouraged - if you're like us, then you might have found the season premiere a tad disappointing. Don't worry, it gets better!! Though I did love the "Nobody But Me" lip sync intro. And Jamiahsh you're right - the "Thank you doctor..." bit is hilarious!! I would have posted it, but this is a family blog... ;)  
**derek**Perhaps there should be a rule in place that the same actor can't win the award two years in a row? Especially for the same role! I have watched the season premiere so far.  
**jamiahsh**HEHEHEHE! Loved it! And yeah, I think it is being written more for the fans. Maybe Carrel's exit will be Emmy worthy. Alec Baldwin.... BOOOO! But hopefully, they have something up their sleeves for next season. Better be good, but I'm sure a decrease in viewership will result. Of course, the season is just underway. Can't wait till tomorrow night! "Thank you doctor. Take two of these and call me in the morning." Priceless :D

# Fun On The Farm

I think most people have fond memories of visiting a special family fun place in the fall.Â  The pumpkin farms that my husband and I grew up going to are much different now – his has closed down, and mine has expanded beyond the family-owned small operation into a little carnival of sorts; I visited a few years ago.Â  It was fun, but not the same.Â  We’ve since moved away from the place of our youth, and we are happy to have found a fun place in NW Ohio to make memories with our own kids: [Leader’s Family Farms](http://leadersfamilyfarms.com/" \t "_blank).

Leader’s has something for every age group: 2 haunted attractions for the older crowd, and for the family: mini-golf, a petting zoo (complete with exotics –Â  more on that later!), hayrides, a hay maze, slides, chicken coop shooting, and a corn maze.Â  For the little ones, there are bouncy castles, a moo-train, a hay-climber with tunnel, and a corn box.Â  The under 5 kids area is really fun, and it’s all free!Â  My 2-year-old and my 3-year-old had a blast over there for hours, even if my son came home with a diaper full of corn – it was worth it!Â  Actually, he still had corn coming out of his coat the next morning at church but again, it was well worth it!Â  Here is a video of him playing in the corn box in case you’re wondering what I’m talking about.Â  The video pans to the rest of my kids, and finishes with my 3-year-old crawling through the little kids’ tunnel:

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.

My husband took my two oldest girls and their friend into the haunted corn maze.Â  This was a big deal because this thing is SCARY!Â  It is the best (read: scariest) haunted house in the area, and my daughter’s friend wanted to go in it, so we convinced our daughter to go as well (they’re both 10).Â  Thrill-seeker little sis (age 6) really wanted to check it out, so she went too.Â  They might have been REALLY scared, but they all made it out, and no one cried or tried to back out at the last minute!Â  I wish I could have seen them in there, but the little ones were WAY too young for something like that, so I stayed out with them.Â  I didn’t mind too much since the exotic petting zoo was free – I hung out there for the hour and a half or so that it took my family to get through the haunted house.Â  They had goats, sheep, alpacas, a teeny-tiny little pig, a camel (just a fuzzy baby, not his full height even though he was taller than I…Â  I was wondering how old he was, and I found out he shares a February birthday with a fellow tangenteer…), and some kangaroos.Â  They also had some other baby animals (a fox for one) and some parrots, but they could not bring them out because the weather was terrible – windy, cold, and rainy.Â  But I got to pet some kangaroos and even feed them – I think it was the first time I’ve ever touched a kangaroo!Â  They were good-tempered, soft, and really interesting to see up close and personal.Â Â  IÂ  think the petting zoo people got sick of me, and I would have hung out more by the country band which I also liked, except that the weather was so terrible that it was hard to even enjoy the band – we all just wanted toÂ  stay out of the wind and rain.Â  Look how little this pig is:

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

And here is more of the kangaroos and of the camel:

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The hayride goes out way back into the forest, and luckily we rode it in between rain showers.Â  The tractor even drove through a small creek bed that was partially filled – it looked like we were going to get stuck in the water:

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My kids all liked it, even if there were some concerns about tipping on the steep hills going down into the forest – but we didn’t tip.Â  I can’t wait to take myÂ  son on the hayride in our town in a few weeks -there are spooks that jump out from behind the trees there, and given his fascination with monsters lately, I know he’ll have a blast!Â  I brought out the Halloween costumes last night for the kids to pick through to find what they’re going to be for Halloween, and my son found a Friday the 13th Jason hockey mask and insisted on going to bed withÂ  it.Â  ðŸ˜‰

I must also add that Leader’s is a family-owned farm; we struck up severalÂ  conversations with the owners,Â  and they are extremely nice and caring for their customers.Â  The farm opened a little late when we visited because ofÂ  the rain, so they gave us free passes to come back again – as busy as our Octobers are (this one being no exception), I think going back to Leader’s when the weather is better is a MUST!!Â  By the way, I was *this close* to taking home a straggler from the petting zoo.Â  Only time will tell if I am able to resist next time we visit…Â  ðŸ˜‰

My men on the hayride:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/Leaders-Farms-10-2-10-010.jpg)

And my girls…Â  note the beautiful NW Ohio countryside in the background.Â  The scenery will only get better as the leaves change a little more and the sun comes out:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/10/Leaders-Farms-10-2-10-009.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Ah, makes sense then. Indeed it does sound just like you! :)  
**Taylhis**OH! I should have clarified... the petting zoo was just an independent traveling little zoo that leases space at places like this. Gives me an idea for a business I might want to start someday... :)  
**derek**Looks like you found a great spot out there. As a midwestern farm it was kind of odd to read about a camel and kangaroos though. Thanks for the e-card, BTW!  
**jamiahsh**A new pet, eh?! Beeber as Jason. Just as long as we don't introduce the slasher films until he is at least 5. But then again...  
**Phyllis Beyer**How fun!!!!!!!!!! It looks like a great place. Thanks for sharing the videos and pictures.

# Meet Marty

Question:Â  What’s the best way to dislodge me from a “case of the Mondays”?

Answer:Â  A surprise trip to the zoo on a work day, of course!Â  Hubby knows me so well 

Tangent:Â  If you have your own “case of the Mondays”, rent the movie Office Space – it’s hilarious!

So we took off Monday for the zoo, and we were torn between which side of the zoo to visit – Toledo Zoo straddles a major highway, the Anthony Wayne Trail, and we never visit both sides in the same day because it adds a TON of walking, much of it up long ramps pushing a heavy double stroller.Â  We usually park in the back and opt for the larger side of the zoo, but we have been visitingÂ  a lot lately, and since it was a work day and Hubby had to get home at a somewhat decent hour to get back to work, we opted for the smaller side of the zoo.Â  This side might not have many exhibits, but there is this almost-year-old baby polar bear that I’ve been wanting to see, so it seemed like the right choice – until we saw the sign at the gate that read, “Our baby polar bear, Siku, will not be on exhibit today.”Â  WHAT?!?Â  Well, we had already parked, unloaded kids, and walked into the zoo, so visiting the other side was no longer an option.Â  We trudged on, determined to make the best of it.

And lucky us, it all worked out wonderfully!Â  We may not have gotten to see a super-cute baby polar bear, but we got to see a full-grown male polar bear up close, nose to nose – I’m talking within inches.Â  Sure, there was a pane of glass separating us from the polar bear, but that’s a given – look at this:

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In case you’re wondering, Marty the polar bear (Siku the cub’s dad) has a bucket containing frozen fish in an ice block.Â  We watched him conquer the first bucket and devour the fish, and then he bullied the 2nd bucket away from the other polar bear and worked on it for a good 30-40 minutes – we had to leave before he got to the fish from the 2nd bucket.Â  I could not decide which video was best, so I’m just going to post all 4 – they’re all under a minute long anyway so they don’t take forever to unload off my camera.Â  All of the videos were taken while Marty was working on the 2nd ice bucket.Â  You can see how he dips the bucket in the water and evenÂ  dives into the water with the bucket in his mouth in order to let the water loosen up the fish ice block for him.

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.

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

In case you’re wondering, being up close and personal with a thousand pounds of polar bear (give or take a few hundred pounds) is really as amazing as it looks!!!

And my two little ones had a great time also – at first my son was afraid of the polar bear, but he got over that once he realized that Marty was much more interested in his bucket than some zoo visitors.Â  Here are the kids posing in an “arctic cave”:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Toledo-Zoo-9-27-10-017.jpg)

And the kids’ favorite part of the day?Â  Climbing on and posing on this mock dung heap near the giraffe exhibit.Â  Kids – gotta love ’em!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Toledo-Zoo-9-27-10-014.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**I think I remember that dung heap, either from a previous post or my own visit with you a few years ago. I might have been scared of the bear too in his place (and at his age), but as for the dung heap- Beeb's not scared of that, nope. Can't yet picture the size of such a creature to make that large a heap...  
**jamiahsh**And what a guy to take off a bit for a cruise to the zoo.  
**jamiahsh**Beeber, scared?! Never would have imagined it! So fun!

# Dropping Like Flies

It’s been really difficult to blog with a 2-year-old in the house, especially because mine is a boy.Â  He just seems to get into anything and everything, and this phase of his is lasting longer (and is much much messier and harder on my house) than was any of his 3 sisters’ terrible twos.Â  Complicating my schedule is the fact that he seems to be growing out of his naps, so now Mom’s daily time-out has been reduced to mere hopefulness for a time-out.

So anyway, this explains my blogging absence, and now you know why it’s taken me so long to blog that…

My 6-year-old daughter Samantha lost her first tooth last week!

She was SO excited, and of course the tooth fairy made her nighttime visit.Â  You might have read that I’ve been teaching 1st grade Sunday school (which just happens to be Sammie’s class), and that’s been going very well – I really enjoy it.Â  Sammie’s lost tooth prompted me to ask last Sunday how many of my students have lost teeth, and they were all full of stories.Â  One little girl (who is missing her two front teeth) told about how she lost *this* one and *that* one in the same day – and she was pointing to her missing bottom teeth, not evenÂ  the top two that were visibly missing!Â  So it seems that Sammie is just beginning – she has lots of teeth to lose, and because teeth seem to drop out of 1st graders’ mouths constantly (dropping like flies?Â  That doesn’t sound quite right now that I think about it), it makes me think that I had better bring a little container or two with me every Sunday just in case I need to send a fallen tooth home with its owner.

What an exciting time in a kid’s life, and it was neat to hear how enthusiastically all my first graders talked about losing their teeth and getting visits from the tooth fairy.Â  By the way, the going rate for a baby tooth seems to be around $5 these days – WOW!Â  Do you remember how much the tooth fairy gave you for your teeth?

**How much did the tooth fairy leave you per tooth when you were a kid? (Feel free to check all that apply and leave your comments in the box!)**

* I don't remember
* She paid me in silver - it was under $1
* Between $1-2
* Between $2-3
* Between $3-4
* $5
* Over $5
* Everyone loses teeth; it's not something I was ever paid for!
* I wish I could STILL be paid for losing teeth - now if I lose one, I have to pay the dentist!
* The tooth fairy paid more depending upon what type of tooth it was

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

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Congratulations Sammie!

### Comments

**derek**I voted that I don't remember, but I know for sure it was under a buck. Probably quarters as some already mentioned, but half-dollars could have been the going rate too.  
**mary911**I'm with jamiahsh....one shiny quarter! I wiggled a lot when I slept, so my mom said the tooth fairy asked if we could put the tooth on the table next to the bed.  
**Phyllis Beyer**$5.00 seems a bit much to me. I don't remember back to my tooth fairy days. In fact I don't even remember to yours and Kim's tooth fairy days. I'm thinking maybe you got $1.00. I know it wasn't $5.00 - we couldn't afford that. Congratulations to Sammy!!!!!  
**jamiahsh**Anything over a dollar seems ridiculous to me! Inflation hits everyone apparently, even tooth fairies ;) But FIVE DOLLARS! SHEESH! I got a rock..opps a quarter.

# Recycling Is Important...

Especially when you are this cute – my two youngest helped carry in the recycling bin on garbage day, chanting “Teamwork, teamwork” all the way!Â  Awww!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Disney-and-Beebs-recycling-9-16-10-002.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**What an adorable picture of 2 of my angels.  
**jamiahsh**AWW... What's gonna work? "Teamwork, teamwork." Where have I heard that before? AH.. the joys of having little nieces and nephews who can be sent home.

# Next On Dancing With The Stars...

One of those rare amusing email forwards caught my eye, so I’ll share.Â  Besides, my last post was kind of a downer; here’s something funny to counteract it:

Next Season on Dancing With The Stars:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/dancing-with-the-stars.jpg)

### Comments

**Taylhis**That's funny Derek, I'm glad you gave it a second look - though I am curious about what prompted the second look... oh maybe jamiahsh's comment, that makes sense. I don't watch the show either, I just thought it was a funny picture that was well edited.  
**derek**Heh. I didn't comment before because my interest in the show falls just above watching the weeds grow in the backyard, but this time I took a closer look at that photo. :D  
**jamiahsh**LOL! The irony of this is that Bristol is one of the twelve celebrity dancer. As well as the Hoff, and "Carol Brady" herself. Still won't watch.

# More Beautiful Than Ever

My husband was in bed last night waiting for me to come up because I was putting some finishing touches on my daughter’s school fundraiser and picture forms when we both heard a bunch of sirens.Â  We live pretty close to the fire station, so we didn’t think much of it, even if it was odd that they were allowing them to wail so loudly just before midnight.Â  This morning a friend emailed me with the bad news, and I went toÂ  the local newspaper’s website to see the details: our beloved community park, Imagination Station, burnt last night.

We still don’t know how it happened, but it’s obvious that this was not a natural cause – it was not lightning, and there is no electricity capable of sparking such a blaze at the park.Â  Unfortunately, this seems to be the work of people, and whether it was intentional or an accident remains to be seen.Â  At least no one was hurt physically in the blaze.Â  But many in the community are emotionally distraught, for Imagination Station was a wonderful park where citizens from throughout the area would spend warm summer nights, cool autumn evenings, and many a Saturday afternoon with their families and friends.Â  Funded by private donations and built by the hands of thousands of volunteers in 1994, it was a source of community pride.Â  Everyone came together to create Imagination Station; kids volunteered their cool playground ideas, while adults physically built the play equipment and still others provided thousands of meals for the builders.Â  The community worked together day and night, rain and shine for 6 days until it was finished.Â  The final product was amazing, impressing locals and out of town visitors alike.Â  And now much of it is gone.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/burned-out-imagination-station-9-16-10-004.jpg)

Many people came out tonight to walk past the charred ruins.Â  In a way, it was like paying one’s respects, and many people stared at the blackened splinters in stunned silence.Â  There were whispers, “Who would do such a thing?” and “How did this happen?”, and one woman walked by slowly, saying quietly, “We will build it again.Â  And it will be more beautiful than ever.”Â  I believe her to be right.Â  People came together in 1994 and built an amazing park, and people will come together again to replace the one we lost yesterday.

“The Greeks built an Acropolis – And Noah built an Ark  
The Russians built a SputnikÂ  But Bryan built a Park”  
(Bryan Times, 1957)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/burned-out-imagination-station-9-16-10-001.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/burned-out-imagination-station-9-16-10-008.jpg)

\*\*UPDATE\*\*

There was an update in today’s (9/17/10) newspaper saying that tons of people have stepped forward and created a volunteer organization to rebuild.Â  It was insured, and [Spangler Candy Company](http://www.spanglercandy.com/" \t "_blank) has stepped forward to cover any costs not paid for by insurance.Â  There is a [Facebook page dedicated to the rebuilding of Imagination Station](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bryan-OH/Help-Rebuild-The-Imagination-Station/147828665256241?v=wall" \t "_blank) where people can share their memories of the park or volunteer for the rebuilding.  
Unfortunately the fire investigation and the insurance company’s investigation will both take awhile, and nothing can be done until they are finished.Â  They hope to have the playground replaced by Spring, but that is still a long time, especially for those of us with kids.Â  Sure there are other parks in town, but Imagination Station was the favorite. Â  Â  The little town made the big Toledo news though, they had a nice story:

### Comments

**justj**I was going to write a blog about this, but with this one, I didn't need to. I remember working on that park back in '94. Move a lot of the mulch. They had fund raisers. People would collect outside of the local stores. I remember taking my girls to that park when it first opened. From the 3 year old to the 13 year old, there was something for all of them. Sad day for the area.  
**derek**Wow, sad news indeed. Well, now you have a chance to participate in the rebuilding since you weren't there in 1994. And time for a new (half-)generation of kids to use their imaginations to create IS 2.0. The WINGS store over here remains a charred ruin for now, but response in its case too has been strong and they will be opening a new store soon, albeit in a different location.  
**taylhis**Thank you all for your thoughts... Please note the update in the blog post.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Oh I am so sad. That was the greatest park I've ever seen. I hope it gets rebuilt. What a great loss!  
**jamiahsh**Maybe they should change the nickname to Park City. Where are the fountains? A good area to live with lots of places to enjoy nature. I have always thought the recreation park was a beautiful area.  
**taylhis**Good question Jamiahsh about the quote - I don't really know; I found it on the Parks and Rec website and have always liked it. I was assuming that it just meant all the parks in the city since there are a lot. Upon further research, I see that the quote was published in 1957, and at that time there was Garver Park (built 1909), Moore Park (built 1937), Mattie Marsh Park (built 1954), and Hitt Park (built 1956). I was thinking the quote was referencing the humongous Recreation Park (which includes Imagination Station), but the website does not say what year gave us Recreation Park.  
**jamiahsh**When I read that Imagination Station was completed in 1994, I could not believe that it had been that long. 10 years, maybe but not more than 15. WOW!  
**jamiahsh**I'm sure that the community will indeed band together and rebuild the marvelous park. Yes, many a good afternoon was spent in the park and surrounding area. Curious... to which park does your quote refer?

# Felonious Dishonesty?

What do you think about this: a guy goes to the drive-up window at his bank, and they accidentally give him $3350 that was supposed to go to another customer.Â  He drives off.Â  He is now facing felony theft charges.

I wanted to blog about this because I really disagree with it.Â  Morally, it wasn’t right of the man to drive off with money he knew did not belong to him.Â  Ethically, he should have notified the teller of his or her mistake, and the teller should have thanked him profusely.Â  But I believe that to charge this guy with theft is wrong.Â  Sure, he took someone else’s money, but it was a bad decision made in the heat of the moment.Â  He saw a lot of money, it had been given to him, and he made a mistake.Â  It was a bad decision, and a greedy one at that, but deserving of a felony?Â  I think not.Â  If convicted, this man will have a felony record.Â  He will have trouble finding employment, and he will lose basic freedoms that many people take for granted, such as owning a gun or being able to vote.Â  I believe it to be a bit severe to slap him with a felony record when his crime shows no premeditation nor malice toward another.Â  For all he knew, he was **given** the money and he might not have realized that his taking it would have hurt anyone.Â  He did not hold up the bank, and order a teller to give it to him or use a gun to get the money.Â  Again, clearly the wrong thing to do morally, but were his actions criminal?

What do you think?Â  Check as many answers as you’d like, and feel free to add any thoughts or opinions you have in the comments section.

**Does the punishment fit the crime?**

* Yes - this man knowingly stole money that wasn't his
* No - what he did was wrong, but not worthy of a felony charge
* No - someone else made a mistake, and this guy got lucky. He should not be punished for getting lucky!
* No - what he did was wrong, so charge him with a misdemeanor instead of a felony. Maybe he can take a class or do community service and learn his lesson
* Why isn't the bank teller being charged with anything?

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Loading ... Loading ...

If you would like toÂ  read the article before voting in my poll, below is a copy of the [original article](http://www.dailyherald.com/story/?id=402490" \t "_blank) that was printed on dailyherald.com.Â  Hmm, I see that his court date is only days away.Â  I will post an update to this story if I come across one.

A man who reportedly drove off after a bank teller mistakenly gave him $3,350 that was supposed to go to another customer now faces felony theft charges.

The teller at a drive-in window of Chase Bank, 2555 Golf Road, Hoffman Estates, accidentally sent the cash to the wrong customer and quickly told the recipient to come inside the bank, said Cook County Assistant State’s Attorney Moe Ahmad.

But the driver, whose name and address was known to the bank because of his transaction, drove away, Ahmad said.

Hoffman Estates police arrested Luis Villarreal, a 26-year-old stay-at-home father, Thursday in his home in the 600 block of Alcoa Lane in Hoffman Estates. Ahmad said police found $2,920 in a diaper bag.

Cook County Associate Judge John J. Scotillo set Villarreal’s bond at $25,000 and ordered him to appear at 9 a.m. Sept. 16 in room 108 of the Rolling Meadows Courthouse.

### Comments

**derek**No, I do remember you two mentioning to me back then how ridiculous it was that writing bad checks was considered a felony in Normal, whether by willful intent or error. I don't recall whether you yourselves were caught up in this law. I also remember you mentioning someone's community service in deplorable conditions, but that might be for something unrelated. Agreed that jails are overcrowded. Perhaps if this is his first offense he can be let off with a fine and community service, or at most house-arrest.  
**Taylhis**Oh yes, there was an incident in the town where I attended college with a bank messing with people's checking accounts, but then again, I don't remember if felonies were involved... perhaps you are thinking of something else. As a headline junkie, I've read about crime for years, and I've never been a supporter of tossing people in jail over non-violent offenses (drugs, financial, etc). I think the jails are way overcrowded, and based on the way prisoners are treated by the staff, each other and society when they get out, putting them in jail or prison for minor offenses can do more harm to society than people are willing to admit. Rehabilitation, classes, community service opportunities, counseling and probation are all things that could be utilitzed more effectively than prison in my opinion. Lots of good comments here, which is what I was hoping for, so thanks!  
**jamiahsh**Bad check writing... hmm... I believe I have heard of the incident as well. Unless it was something else.  
**derek**I can understand your sense of fairness here. I seem to recall an incident some years ago with someone at your then college getting caught up in a situation with an unfair law- writing bad checks as a felony... But yes, I am in agreement that willful intent was shown on his part. It will be up to the court to decide if what he is being charged with will be what he is found guilty of, so he could easily still end up with a misdemeanor.  
**taylhis**I didn't explain that I had started writing this post a month or two ago when this first happened, and I finished writing this post today. I found the draft, and I wrote my thoughts and feelings today before re-reading the story, not remembering that the man was asked to come in the bank after the mistake was made. That does indicate wrong-doing, so I don't think he should get off scot-free, however, I still think a felony is way harsh and that felonies should be reserved for violent, malicious crimes, etc. No wonder jails are overcrowded. There was intent of wrong-doing in this case, but not premeditation, and to me, that difference describes the man's character. His greed got the best of him in the heat of the moment, and he did something wrong, but he did not wake up that day plotting a way to steal over $3,000 from somebody else. I'm interested to hear what the judge has to say in a few days.  
**jamiahsh**The driving off when he was asked to come in to correct mistake went beyond ethics. Sorry for the confusion.  
**jamiahsh**The customer was morally and ethically wrong to begin with. When he was asked to come into the bank to correct the mistake, that did go beyond ethics. It was not very smart for him to simply drive off when the bank knew where he lived so he was sure to be caught sooner rather than later. However, I checked the "What about the teller option?" A $3350 mistake is awfully costly... even if they caught it immediately after sending the money to the wrong person.  
**justj**I was going to say charge him with a misdemeanor, but when I read the story and saw that they asked him to come into the bank, that is where he crossed the line to a felony charge. He was informed that something was amiss and left. That indicates intent. That intent indicates a felony charge.

# The Little Boy With The Black Eye

We took the kids to the county fair on Saturday, and we had lots of fun.Â  It may have rained most of the day,Â  but we stayed comfortable usingÂ  an umbrella and our stroller awnings for the little ones.Â  There was only one or two major downpours, and we spent those in the animal barns, looking over the fair kids’ 4-H projects.

It’s always amazing to us how much our 6-year-oldÂ  loves going on all the most extreme carnival rides, and my husband and I took turns with her on 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.

and 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.

To her disappointment, she is not yet tall enough for this, but maybe next year:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/ring-of-fire.jpg)

My little guy took his nap at the fair, and when he woke up, we stopped for a snack.Â  He began to cry; at first we thought he was just crabby from his nap and that his sister had taken his cookies.Â  But then his cheek up near his eye began to swell up and turn black and blue.Â  When he said, “Bug hurt me”, we knew that he must have gotten stung.Â  We made a precautionary visit to the fair’s EMS squad, and they were excellent with him, evenÂ  though he wanted no part of it.Â  He soon got over his ow-ie with the help of some fair rides, but if you look at his right eye, you can see that he was sporting a minor shiner:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Williams-county-fair-9-11-10-011.jpg)

I know, the clowns are scary enough, but our son loved this ride despite how upset he looks – it was just his swollen eye.Â  When the ride stopped, he got off the clown and immediately climbed into another one.Â  Hey, you can’t expect a 2-year-old to understand the concept of fair tickets being $.75 each!!

I’m happy to say today that the swelling on his face is down a little bit, and good thing too – I got tired of the scrutinizing looks from people who were wondering, “How did that cute little boy get that black eye?!?”

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Poor Beeber. Dad got stung yesterday on his wrist.  
**jamiahsh**Strange... she was tall enough to ride the bullet looking thing but not the ring of fire.  
**jamiahsh**AWWWWWW BEEEEBER... poor little guy. At least he wasn't allergic. That ride looked AWESOME! Sorry that Sammie wasn't tall enough for the Ring of Fire. Looked like the Super Loop. I see they had some different rides this year. Unfortunately, don't think I'll be able to make the trip this year.  
**derek**Better watch out for that girl when she gets older- a regular thrillseeker... Poor Christopher- but you survived! I can imagine what a least a few people were thinking with abuse in the news on a regular basis. :o

# In Remembrance

9/11/2001

September 11, 2001 was day we won’t forget, a defining time in our nation’s history, and the first of its kind for the generations who hadn’t been exposed to such feelings of terror nor national vulnerability before that day.Â  This blog post is a day late, but I spent some time yesterday reflecting on the sacrifices made and the lives forever changed on that September day in 2001.Â  Alan Jackson wrote a poignant song about September 11, 2001 that asks, “Where were you when the world stopped turning that September day?”, and I think that everyone remembers where they were and what they were doing when they learned that the United States was attacked nine years ago.Â  I remember receiving emails from my friend who was serving in the Air Force at the time:

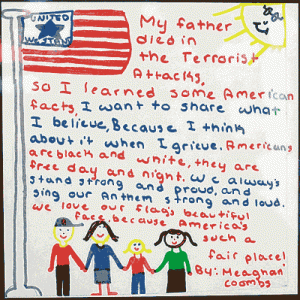
*To All My Friends and Family:  
I just wanted everyone to know that I’m okay.Â  We are not going anywhere.Â  Our jets are on standby, but that’s it.Â  Also, Jerry made it home okay, for those of you that were worried.Â  I love you all, and I miss you.  
Love,  
Kel*

*Hi Everyone,  
Things are still going as well as can be expected.Â  We are currently  
working 12 hour shifts, 7 days a week.Â  Please, I’m asking everyone,  
do not call me during the day, because most of you know that’s when  
I sleep.Â  I’m working 7:00pm to 7:00am.Â  If you absolutely need to get in touch with me,  
you can call me at home between 5:30pm and 6:00pm, or in an  
emergency I can be reached at work. (Mom and Dad you  
can call me anytime, even at work if you want)Â  Also I check my  
e-mail a few times a night, so I will respond to everyone as quickly  
as possible.Â  If you have any questions, feel free to ask, but I  
only have limited info at this time.Â  For everyone wondering, we  
currently have 1/3 of our jets standing by with a full load of fuel  
and equiped with armed missles.Â  If anything else happens, the jets  
will take off and patrol from South Carolina to the Southern tip of  
Florida (the Keys)Â  They will shoot down anything that comes within  
that area.Â  They will give the planes one warning and if they don’t  
turn back, our jets will shoot them down without hesitation.Â  We are  
very tired and will be even more worn down by the time this is all  
over.Â  Working 12 hours a day, 7 days a week will do that to you.  
Again, if anyone has any questions, please e-mail me.Â  I love you  
and miss you all.  
Love, Kel*

Her emails illustrate the widespread uncertainty coursing throughout the nation at that time as well as the need to keep close contact with friends and family.

One of the most moving experiences I’ve had was visiting the 9/11 museum in New York city a few years ago.Â  It was a somber experience, and there was scarcely a dry eye left amongst those who came to learn, reflect, and pay tribute to the victims of 9/11.Â  The victims, their families, and those who were affected in other ways by the infamous September 11, 2001 were in my thoughts and prayers yesterday, as well as they are today, and I’ve included the following video if you’d like to reflect as well.Â  God bless America.

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.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/9-11.gif)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I really appreciate when comments (as well as our postings) come from the heart and express our inner feelings. I think those are the best and most insightful even when the topic is less than cheerful.  
**taylhis**Hi Mary, Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts on my blog - I really appreciate the feedback. First, let me say that I have changed the video. I meant no harm by sharing footage of the devastation of 9/11; sadly it's all over the internet as you know, so I mistakenly figured that one more place having it would not mean anything to anyone - I certainly did not foresee any negative repercussions. My main purpose of doing this is because I wanted to share Alan Jackson's well-written song, "Where Were You When the World Stopped Turning", and when I went to look for the song on youtube.com, I came across versions that contained the footage which I thought would have the potential to make readers stop, think, and reflect more than if I had just put a video of Alan Jackson sitting there playing his guitar. However, I think you make a good point, and I have changed the video per your request. I'm happy to read that you consider my blog a 'family blog'; I've always thought of it as a Mom's PG-rated blog about my family and anything else that I feel like writing. I'm happy to read that other people might read it and share its contents with their families. Thanks again for stopping by, for reading, and for commenting. Most of all, thanks for bringing my unintentional lack of sensitivity to light. Best wishes to you, Mary. God bless you.  
**Mary**Please - why do we need to see the devestation of 9/11 on a family blog??? Think of the children who lost a parent that day. If your loved one died in a car accident, would you want to see the moment of impact played over and over again - to music???? I am sure your intentions were good, but please have some sensitivity. We have seen it. We have lived it. We are never going to forget it. The visuals need not be played over and over again. They are imprinted in our minds forever. Thank you for allowing me to express my feelings. God Bless.  
**jamiahsh**Beautiful post, taylhis! It will be very difficult for me to remember this day, either! THANKS! I remember the melancholy feeling after visiting the memorial, also. I love the little girl's memorial.

# Not THAT MGM Lion...

Have you seen that MGM lion video?Â  When I asked a friend about this the other day, he apparently thought I was referring to the lion that roars at you from the screen in the beginning of some movies – not THAT MGM lion!Â  I’m talking about the shocking video of the lion turning on his trainer at the lion exhibit in the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.Â  Notice I didn’t use the word “attack”.Â  Animal experts (including Jack Hanna, my favorite animal expert) who have reviewed the footage have agreed that it wasn’t an attack, but rather retribution or perhaps rough play from one grumpy lion.Â  The fact is, had the lion been attcaking, it would have been over in a matter of seconds with a tragic outcome for the trainer.Â  The trainer escaped uninjured, and watch how the lion follows him out of the enclosure, giving him “yeah, you’d BETTER run” looks all the way out:

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

Personally, I do think the lion was playing rough.Â  He might have gotten a bit irritated at the trainer, but if he had truly wanted to hurt him, he could have killed him in seconds flat, which is why extreme caution should always be used when handling exotic animals.Â  I wish the video showed what was occuring between the lion and his trainer just before the incident.Â  Seconds before, the lion seems relaxed, but then the camera pans away until the lion lunges for the trainer’s leg.Â  What I find truly amazing about the video is the female lion’s reaction.Â  She follows the male lion around the enclosure throughout the incident, seemingly trying to get him to stop stalking the trainer.Â  Just after the male lion’s first lunge, the female even jumps on his back and gives him a little nip.Â  A penny for…Â  scratch that – I think I’d pay aÂ  lot of money for the thoughts of these lions!

Scary as these incidents are, I’m happy to report that this one had a positive outcome – the trainers are fine.Â  I wonder if that trainer will be working with that male lion again?

### Comments

**Taylhis**@mysmichelle - interesting perspective. I sure wish the video showed the interaction between the lion and the trainer just before the incident - the camera kind of pans away so you can't see exactly what occurred. I guess we'll never know what that lion was thinking! How is the flood cleanup coming in Nashville? I heard just about a month ago that there is still much to do, even now, months later! Take care, good to see you commenting again!  
**Mysmichelle**It seems to me something was going on before this. Why are those guys standing like that around the lion. There was something up to begin with I think  
**derek**I hadn't heard of this video either. Thanks for sharing. I'm glad all involved are fine.  
**jamiahsh**Yeah, I could feel the tension during that one. The bear spray was hilarious.  
**taylhis**There are at least 5 other surviving cast members from the 1939 WoZ, and yes, they are all munchkins, probably because besides Judy Garland, the Munchkins were the younger cast members. That was a good Hanna appearance on Letterman (when isn't it?). Letterman wanted to go off about how there shouldn't be exotic animal exhibits for solely tourism purposes in places like Vegas, and Jack seemed to hold his tongue - he gets under fire a lot by animal rights groups. There are some complicated issues.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, Leo.... the last surviving member of the Oz cast. Unless there are some of those devilish munchkins we have all heard about. Seriously, amazing video. And you were right, Jack and Dave did discuss it the other night.

# Disney's First Day Of School!

My almost 4-year-old daughter Disney joined her sisters in the profession of “student” the other day- it was her first day of prechool, and she LOVES it!!

Here is the cutie on her first day:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Disneys-first-day-of-school-9-7-10-001.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Disneys-first-day-of-school-9-7-10-002.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Disneys-first-day-of-school-9-7-10-003.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**WHAT A CUTIE! And yes... WOW! It hasn't been that long, has it!  
**justj**They grow up way too fast.

# BLACK Raspberry - A New Meaning

Labor day weekend was a busy one, but it was packed with lots of fun family time.Â  On Saturday, we packed up the kids and drove out to South Bend Indiana which is kind of a hike but worth it as you’ll see in a minute.Â  They have a nice little zoo there, the Potawatomi Zoo, and our Toledo Zoo membership gets us in free in South Bend also.Â  There is also [Megaplay](http://www.mega-play.com/" \t "_blank), a fun place for the kids (and adults!) to play.Â  But this is the first time we’ve been to Megaplay when my son is old enough to play there, and he thought the ball pit (perhaps one of the last remaining in the world?) was just about the best thing he’s ever seen!Â  After Megaplay, we were all starving,Â  and some research on the internet before we left told us that a favorite place of ours on the way back from South Bend (Dakota’s in Elkhart Indiana) had closed.Â  So we were left to find something new, and that we did – there is an excellent BBQ place right across the street from Megaplay.Â  They had the best dessert I think I’ve ever had: pig ears, which is some kind of fried dough with butter and brown sugar or something else yummy sprinkled on top.Â  I’m not normally a dessert person, but I probably would have taken on all 4 of my kids for a pig ear.Â  It wasn’t necessary though, since I ate theirs while they were in the bathroom ðŸ˜‰

Last time I blogged about Megaplay, I think I mentioned how the strip mall where it’s located looks like it’s from the 80’s.Â  I don’t know how else to describe it, but every time I’m there, I feel like I’ve been in a time warp.Â  It’s difficult to explain, so I tried to take a video, but it didn’t turn out.Â  Next time…

Sunday was kind of a restful day, and each of our two oldest daughters had friends over.Â  They were well behaved friends, and we had fun.

On Monday, my husband had to work unfortunately, and rather than try to pass all day with all 4 of my kids at home, we took off for the Toledo Zoo.Â  I know, 2 zoos in 1 weekend?Â  But what can I say, I am a zoo addict.Â  The only problem was that the zoo was MOBBED – probably the most crowded I’ve ever seen it.Â  Good for the zoo, but not for the mom there by herself with 4 kids trying to navigate a large double-stroller through the crowds.Â  We couldn’t get near the great apes to see them, and the rest of the animals weren’t doing much of anything except for the hippos.Â  Toledo has an underwater viewing glass on the hippo exhibit, and their two extremely large hippos kept swimming past.Â  One opened his mouth underwater, and the other one rose out of the water, opened his mouth REALLY wide and shook his head back and forth; it was great.Â  The hippos made the entire trip worthwhile.Â  Not that a trip to any zoo could ever be a waste of time for me.Â  EvenÂ  if I can’t see that many animals, there is just something about zoos that make me feel happy and peaceful.Â  Besides, the kids got to play on the playgrounds for a long time, so they were happy too.Â  The only problem was we had such a big day that all of the kids fell asleep on the way home.Â  And the 4:00 nap did not set them up to go to bed at a decent hour to get enough sleep for school on Tuesday after their long weekend.Â  Oops…

We got back home only 10 minutes late (there was traffic!Â  Labor Day, who’d a thunk?) for our dinner date with Dad.Â  Last week we discovered that Friendly’s restaurant has kids’ nights, which means that kids eat free with purchase of adult meals.Â  That means for our family of 6, we leave with a bill of just over $20 to eat out, and that includes all we can drink (kids too, and they don’t have to get water – they love this!) AND dessert for all of us.Â  But while we were eating, the lights kept flickering; they went out but came back on again.Â  But then they flickered again and went out for good (we still don’t know why, there was no storm or anything).Â  But luckily we had already eaten, so we didn’t really have anything to worry about.Â  The kids were a little frightened, and of course all of a sudden the 3 girls had to use the bathroom, which had the employees scrambling for a flashlight for us to use.Â  As I held the flashlight for my kids in the bathroom, we had a little talk about Amish people and how they live and how maybe the rest of us are too dependent on electricity.Â  I made a bad joke about my black raspberry sundae since I was eating it in the dark, and that’s where I got the title for this post.

So overall, a great weekend, though I should add one thing.Â  At Friendly’s, my husband overheard a college-age kid at the next table mutter something rude after our family prayed before our meal – “Jesus freaks”.Â  I feel badly for him that he has to think that about people who appreciate taking time to thank God for their blessings throughout their days.Â  We were quietly minding our own business, so his comment was completely unnecessary.Â  We do our thing, he can do his.Â  I didn’t even say anything when he and his friends were casually tossing around the f-word during their meal, even though my kids were sitting right next door.Â  But people are people, and as I said, I feel badly for him.Â  Besides, God gave us an opportunity to really help someone before we left the restaurant, and I hope that maybe our kindness can show the light of God to others.Â  Maybe the mutterer was still there to witness God at work.

Hope your Labor Day, your “last hurrah of summer”, was safe and happy.Â  Here are some pictures from our wonderful weekend:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Potowotamie-Zoo-9-4-10-001.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Potowotamie-Zoo-9-4-10-005.jpg)

Ok, and I have to include the following pictures for the Star Wars fans.Â  Megaplay has all these life-size cardboard cut-outs of Star Wars characters hanging up.Â  Sorry the pictures aren’t better, but I took them from far away since I was trying to fit as many into the pictures as possible.Â  Look for them high on the walls, near the ceiling:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Megaplay-9-4-10-005.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Megaplay-9-4-10-006.jpg)And my favorite of the cut-outs – I’ve always liked Marvin the Martian:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Megaplay-9-4-10-007.jpg)

### Comments

**justj**Sounds like a good weekend. I spent a good day at the Fulton County Fair. I was introduced to a wonderful food booth.  
**jamiahsh**OOPS... That's, Bobba Fett (not Vett)  
**jamiahsh**Marvin ROCKS! Right up there with Yosemite Sam! And I see Luke, HAN (WHOO HOOO!, R2-D2, C-3PO, Darth Vader, Bobba Vett, an Emperor' Royal Guard, and is that Chewie? Glad you had an exciting weekend. Z-O-O-A-D-C-T? ;)

# Exporting Fun

Here in 2010,Â  everyone knows that it’s becoming more and more common for the United States to export jobs to countries where the labor is cheaper in cost.

Locally, my area used to be well known for producing no less than three types of goods: automotive products, toys, and candy.Â  Because of the free-falling economy and other things, the demand in the automotive industry has plummeted, and I don’t have a desire to go into further detail about that in this blog post.Â  Fortunately, all seems to be well in our local candy factory, and the sugary sweet aromas still float upon our breezes every day.Â  But much like many of our automotive-oriented factories, business at the local toy factory is not going so well.Â  What once was a thriving complex of bustling office buildings, manufacturing facilities, and distribution warehouses crisscrossed with train tracks and semi trailers for shipping has become an almost ghostly graveyard of quiet emptiness.

Recently, I had the opportunity to glimpse the inside of one of the old manufacturing facilities for a company called Ohio Art, who is probably best known for creating the timeless toy (or so it was once thought to be) – the Etch-A-Sketch.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/etchasketch.jpg)

Who can blame a struggling company for trying to cut costs just to stay above water, and Ohio Art cut its costs (and almost a hundred jobs) about 10 years ago when they moved their production lines to China.Â  Now the sprawling complex, split down the middle by the aptly named “Toy Street”, sits mostly empty with the company leasing some of the large space to other companies while other areas are used by local organizations.Â  I couldn’t resist the opportunity to snap a few pictures, especially for those of you who are ghost hunters.Â  I’m not really inclined to believe in paranormal phenomena, but for the two days I worked in the abandoned Ohio Art warehouse, I could have convinced myself that we humans were not alone.Â  Beyond the creepiness that comes from being in a humongous (and I mean HUMONGOUS) abandoned manufacturing facility, there were plenty of strange noises: creaking, clanking, dripping, whooshing, you name it.Â  There were random tickles on my arm, brushes on my back, and taps on my shoulders (many of which were later attributed to rogue cobwebs and the like, but those explanations ruin my ghost story don’t they).Â  Not only that, but when production was moved across the globe to China, many old machines, mechanical parts, and things like employee safety signs were left behind, seemingly testaments to the millions of toys that were birthed here and long forgotten.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Ohio-Art-factory-empty-9-2-10-001.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Ohio-Art-factory-empty-9-2-10-002.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/09/Ohio-Art-factory-empty-9-2-10-003.jpg)

The emptiness of Ohio Art is a sad thing; not only for the surrounding community who lost all those jobs and for the executives who had to make those tough decisions, but also as a sign of our country’s fledgling economy.Â  If you’d like to read more about how Ohio Art’s production line was moved to China (and about how conditions aren’t always what they seem for Chinese workers), I found [the following article](http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/07/world/ruse-in-toyland-chinese-workers-hidden-woe.html?pagewanted=all" \t "_blank) pretty interesting, and you might also:

***Ruse in Toyland: Chinese Workers’ Hidden Woe****By JOSEPH KAHN  
Published: December 7, 2003*

*SHENZHEN, Chinaâ€” Workers at Kin Ki Industrial, a leading Chinese toy maker, make a decent salary, rarely work nights or weekends and often ”hang out along the street, play Ping-Pong and watch TV.”*

*They all have work contracts, pensions and medical benefits. The factory canteen offers tasty food. The dormitories are comfortable.*

*These are the official working conditions at Kin Ki as they are described on paper — crib sheets — handed to workers just before inspections.*

*Those occur when big American clients, like the Ohio company that uses Kin Ki to produce the iconic toy Etch A Sketch, visit to make sure that the factory has good labor standards.*

*Real-world Kin Ki employees, mostly teenage migrants from internal provinces, say they work many more hours and earn about 40 percent less than the company claims. They sleep head-to-toe in tiny rooms. They staged two strikes recently demanding they get paid closer to the legal minimum wage.*

*Most do not have pensions, medical insurance or work contracts. The company’s crib sheet recommends if inspectors press to see such documents, workers should ”intentionally waste time and then say they can’t find them,” according to company memos provided to The New York Times by employees.*

*After first saying that Kin Ki strictly abides by all Chinese labor laws, Johnson Tao, a senior executive with the privately owned company, acknowledged that Kin Ki’s wages and benefits fell short of legal levels and vowed to address the issue soon.*

*He said that the memos might have reflected attempts by factory managers to deceive inspectors, but that such behavior ”did not have the support of senior management.”*

*William C. Killgallon, the chief executive of Ohio Art Company, the owner of Etch A Sketch, said that he considered Kin Ki executives honest and that he had no knowledge of labor problems there. But he said he intended to visit China soon to ”make sure they understand what we expect.”*

*Etch A Sketch is the same child’s drawing toy today that it was in 1960, when Ohio Art first produced it in Bryan, Ohio. But efforts to keep its selling price below $10 on shelves at Wal-Mart and Toys ”R” Us forced the company to move production to China three years ago.*

*Today the same toy is made not just for lower wages, but also under significantly harsher working conditions. Kin Ki’s workers, in fact, are struggling to obtain rights that their American predecessors at Ohio Art won early in the last century, though the workers are without the aid of independent unions, which remain illegal in China.*

*China now makes 80 percent of the toys sold in America, according to United States government figures, and no industry here has come under greater pressure to adhere to global labor codes. Kin Ki and most other big producers open their doors to foreign inspectors to assuage concerns that products used to entertain children in rich countries are not made under oppressive conditions in poor ones.*

*But that goal conflicts with price pressures in commodity industries like toys, where manufacturers command no premium for good labor practices. China alone has 8,000 toy makers competing fiercely for contracts by shaving pennies off production costs.*

*Kin Ki stays competitive, workers say, by paying them 24 cents an hour in Shenzhen, where the legal minimum wage is 33 cents. When the Etch A Sketch line shut down in Ohio just after the Christmas rush in 2000, wages for the unionized work force there had reached $9 an hour.*

*Chinese workers say the company also denies them legally required nonsalary benefits and compels them to work 84 hours a week, far more than the legal maximum, without required overtime pay.*

*”I keep this job because my parents and my daughter depend on the money I earn,” said one migrant worker, who if named could lose her position for talking about the company. ”No one likes to work in these conditions, but I have no choice.”*

*Etch A Sketch has had rare longevity in the toy world. Baby Boomers used them as children and now buy them for their own families by the millions.*

*The toy survived into the electronic age because of nostalgia and clever promotions. But its appeal has continued, in part, because it keeps getting cheaper to own. It sold for $3.99 when it was introduced. If it had kept pace with the consumer price index over its 43 years, it would retail for $23.69 today instead of $9.99.*

*Mr. Killgallon and his brother, Larry, who is president of Ohio Art, said in an interview that their efforts to reduce costs ran out of steam by the late 1990’s, in part because of soaring health care expenses.*

*The logic of overseas production grew irresistible, as wage rates and shipping costs fell and quality improved, they said. An Etch A Sketch made in China and delivered to the company’s warehouse in Bryan was found to cost 20 percent to 30 percent less than making it in Bryan. Moving the full line to China meant laying off about 100 people.*

*”We tried hard to make this work in Bryan,” Larry Killgallon said. ”But we looked at the numbers and we realized that we had to move.”*

*Since early 2001, Etch A Sketches have been made in the village of Da Kang, a dusty enclave on the outskirts of Shenzhen, near Hong Kong. Once a farm region, the area has been overtaken by white-tiled factories and itinerant laborers. Landlords scrawl their phone numbers on the walls of old farm homes, like commercial graffiti, for workers who want to rent rooms. The village planted roses and marigolds to beautify the roadside, but the fallout from factories and construction sites has colored them gray.*

*High walls surround Kin Ki’s production lines and warehouses. Dormitory windows are covered in chicken wire. Workers must enter and leave through the guarded front gate.*

*The factory, workers say, operates with the intensity of a military campaign. Production starts at 7:30 a.m., and, breaking only for lunch and dinner, continues until 10 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays are treated as normal workdays, so a work week consists of seven 12-hour days.*

*That far exceeds Shenzhen’s regulations. The authorities have set a 40-hour, five-day work week, like the United States. Local rules allow no more than 32 hours of overtime per month, which must be compensated by paying time and a half on weekdays and double time on weekends.*

*Kin Ki set a much lower pay scale, workers said. It pays just 1.3 times pay base for any overtime, weekday or weekend. Workers say their monthly paychecks would more than double, to about $200 from around $85, if the company paid legal wages.*

*The work itself can be draining and tedious. Unlike Ohio Art’s factory, Kin Ki uses few machines to offset manual labor, and it needs three or four times the number of workers casting plastic molds, painting parts, and attaching the strings and rods that operate the drawing mechanism of the Etch A Sketch. But Kin Ki workers say it is the pay, not the task, that upsets them.*

*”Most of us would work long hours willingly if we were paid according to the law,” said one employee. ”The way things are now, we can shut up or leave.”*

*Some workers took action against the factory last June and July, refusing to work unless the company raised wages. They also demanded that the daily diet of boiled vegetables, beans and rice be improved and supplemented more often with pork, fish or some other meat, which they say is served just twice a month.*

*The company responded by raising wages by a few cents a day, workers said. The canteen allotted each worker an extra dish each day, though no more meat.*

*But managers made ”fried squid” of two workers they singled out as strike leaders, workers said, using a popular term for dismissals.*

*The company acknowledged having significant labor problems. ”I know that I need to increase wages and to comply with the law,” Mr. Tao said. ”I have the intention of doing this and will raise all wages in 2004.”*

*He also acknowledged that workers had gone on strike. But he denied that Kin Ki had dismissed the two ringleaders. He said they ”were well known troublemakers” who left the factory of their own accord.*

*Whatever Kin Ki’s intentions are now, company documents show that it has been paying below-regulation wages — and seeking to fool foreign clients — for years.*

*One memo preparing workers and supervisors for an inspection in September 2001, urged workers to help the factory ”cope with clients.”*

*”Foreign clients made unattainable demands during previous inspections, including on limiting overtime,” the memo said. ”But when you think about it, you come from all over the country to make money, not to rest.”*

*A more recent memo, issued to prepare for an inspection that took place on Nov. 26, urged workers to memorize false numbers for wages and working hours to reflect Shenzhen’s regulations. The memo promised bonuses to workers who responded as directed when approached by inspectors.*

*Workers said the elaborate ruse had one happy result. Because few of the employees have legal work contracts on file, the factory must pretend that its work force is smaller than it is when inspectors visit. On such days most of the factory’s 850 workers get a rare treat: a day off.*

*On Nov. 26, with an inspection under way inside the plant, workers congregated in their rented homes or food stalls to eat, chat, smoke and gossip.*

*”I thank the inspectors for one thing,” said a Kin Ki worker from rural Sichuan. She was crouching over a bucket of cold water in the warm afternoon sun, washing her hair. ”I needed a rest,” she said.*

### Comments

**derek**I left the Ohio in there just because they are still based there (they are, right?), but Shenzen would be better. O'Shenzen then? :D  
**taylhis**@derek - creepy. Glad I didn't read your comment before I had to go back in there. And Shenzhen Art, maybe? :)  
**derek**There most certainly is paranormal phenomenon. However, it is not the souls of people as many believe but rather demonic activity. I wa listening to Dr. Irwin Lutzer this morning and he mentioned how it can often be attributed to a person deeply ingrained in the occult passing on and leaving behind demons that had been called up by said person. Anyway, to the topic- it is depressing. Who'da thunk Ohio Art was based in Ohio of all places? :o Perhaps they should rename their company Ohio-China Art...?  
**jamiahsh**It was very depressing to see what was once a thriving building almost totally deserted. Tracks with nothing on them... WOW!

# Could This Be... Boredom?

The word “bored” has not been in my vocabulary for years – I always have too much to do with not enough time to do it.Â  Such is still the case, but with the kids (half of them anyway) back in school, I’m finding myself with 45 minutes to an hour of time on the weekdays when I am alone, by myself and without kids.Â  Problem is, I don’t FEEL like doing any of the things I once thought I would do if I had spare time.Â  I could put aside the lack of motivation, except that the household projects I want to tackle can’t be completed in an hour, so I’m reluctant to begin big projects just to have to pack up after 45 minutes so I can pick up kids at school or have one awaken from a nap.Â  Other things I might feel like doing seem pointless or not productive enough for me to waste my time doing them.

I always thought boredom meant lack of things to do, which I don’t think will ever happen to me.Â  But if boredom can also mean having a ton of things to do and not feeling like doing any of it, then I am actually bored!

### Comments

**derek**Just like me feeling "bored" about blogging. :D  
**jamiahsh**I think it is "need to take a breath" time. I don't imagine you will feel that way in a few years when you have all four in school all day. Just enjoy those 45 minutes.  
**justj**Not sure boredom is the correct term. When we figure out what it is, maybe it could dealt with.

# It's My First Day

Today marked an important day at church for our family – transition day, when the kids move up to their next classroom!Â  My son, who is also our youngest, moved from the Toddler Room to the 2-year-old room.Â  He seemed to really like the new toys: the wide array of trucks, the bubble window, and the slide.Â  His next sister moved from the 3-year-old room to the 4-year-old room, and she really liked her new digs also.Â  Our 6-year-old moved buildings all together, and she is now with the big kids on the north campus for a more school-like vs. a nursery / playroom setting.Â  She really seemed to enjoy herself in the new building.  
Today also marked a first for my husband and I – it was our first day trying our new positions at church.Â  I am the first grade teacher during our 2nd service, and my husband is the large group storyteller.Â  For me, things went quite well.Â  I had 5 little girls and 4 little boys in my group today, and unlike when I substitute taught over the summer, there was no clinging to the parents’ legs or fights to referee in this age group – at least not yet.Â  My daughter was in my class, and she was one of the best behaved kids, for which I was thankful because when I substitute- taught her 5-6 year old class over the summer (before she transferred to the first grade class), she was one of my trouble makers as she had trouble listening to mom.Â  But today things went smoothly, and one of the activities went so well that we actually ran out of time to do it again!Â  The activity was for each kid to take a word from Luke 6:31 (Do to others as you want them to do to you) and say it on their turn so that the verse is completed.Â  I altered the game a little bit, giving each kid a slip of paper with the word on it as a reminder and also walking around the room and touching their heads when it was their turn.Â  This way, there was less freezing on the kids’ part, and more control on my part since anyone who has worked with kids will tell you that any sort of down time will lead to chaos in a matter of seconds.  
Shortly after the kids arrived, we made our way to the Wherehouse, a fun gathering room for the kids.Â  This is where we got to hear the storyteller (my husband, who did a great job even if he had to adlib when the “boss” forgot the charades cards) and where we got to “get our wiggles out” by dancing to some fun Christian music.  
My favorite part of the class was the snack prayer – I kept it short and sweet because the kids were really hyper, and I didn’t want them to be disrespectful during the prayer.Â  After we prayed, a little boy said, “Are you an angel?”Â  I chuckled and asked him what he meant.Â  “The prayer was really short,” he said, smiling.Â  I guess he was hungry   
All in all, it was a great first day, and I’m looking forward to not only the rest of this year, but also to moving from grade to grade with these wonderful children and watching them grow!

And by the way, saying “it’s my first day” reminds me of an hilarious scene from a Simpsons episode.Â  I tried to find the clip so that I could embed it on my blog, but I could not find it without having to post the entire episode, so you can read the transcript and visualize it if you’re a fan – I guarantee at least a chuckle!Â  If you want to try to find the clip yourself, it’s from the episode called “Simpson Tide”, which is the 19th episode of the 9th season.  
Mr. Burns: You did this? How could you be so irresponsible?  
Homer: Eh… it’s my first day!  
Mr. Burns: Since I’ve never seen you before, maybe it is your first day. Very well, carry on!  
[Mr. Burns begins to walk off, when Smithers catches up with him.]  
Smithers: Sir, that’s Homer Simpson. He’s been working here for ten years!  
Mr. Burns: Ohh, really? Why did you think you could lie to me?  
Homer: It’s my first day!  
Mr. Burns: Well, why didn’t you say that be…[realizes] Yawoo! You’re fired!

### Comments

**derek**Sounds like a good start! I can easily see C as a storyteller as actors tend to do well at such things. I know that people would be impressed just by my reading the Bible- just comes naturally to an actor. :)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Sounds to me like you are a "natural" teacher. Glad it went well for you and that you enjoyed it.  
**jamiahsh**HAHAHA! Too cute.  
**taylhis**Yes, growing up too fast Jamiahsh... check out the paragraph about my favorite part that I forgot in the original post that you read - oops.  
**jamiahsh**Hilarious reference! Glad you enjoyed your first day! They are growing up fast, aren't they?

# Kidstuf!!

Four times per year, our church puts on a family program called Kidstuf.Â  This time around, my two oldest daughters were chosen to be Kidstuf dancers, and they did a GREAT job!

Kidstuf is energetic and fun for adults and kids alike, so my husband and I were pleased to be offered the opportunity to direct the skit portion of the show.Â  We accepted the position, and we enjoyed preparing and rehearsing over the past month or so.Â  I can’t say the actual show went off without a hitch since the tech crew missed a few cues and sound effects.Â  But then again, we had only one rehearsal with the tech crew before the actual production.Â  I’m not really sure if anyone noticed the technical gaffes, and I made sure to keep a big smile on my face for the nervous cast to see as a sign of encouragement throughout the show.Â  And I should mention that this edition of Kidstuf was unprecedented in that families sat together in the audience.Â  Normally we have kids up front, and parents with wee little ones sit in the back.Â  But this time, there was a family activity to be done – eachÂ  family was given poster board, colored note cards, and glue sticks.Â  Throughout the skit, families were directed to write different words on their note cards pertaining to either God or their loved ones.Â  At the end, they were to paste their note cards to the poster boards in the shape of a flower.Â  Being the first time we’ve attempted a family craft during Kidstuf, we didn’t know what to expect…Â  But the jubilant feeling I felt when I looked around and saw that the families had done the craft was indescribable.Â  Not only did their flowers look great, but they had also together created something to take home that will remind them about how important familial and Godly relationships are in life.Â  It was probably the most accomplished feeling a director canÂ  have, and that made the distraction of the tech problems disappear from my mind!

As I mentioned before, my kids were excellent Kidstuf dancers!Â  They had rehearsed together every day before the production, had fun at their rehearsals, and then when performance time came, they were naturals on the stage!Â  Here is a clip (my lovelies are the two on the left –Â  my oldest is in green, and her little sis is in yellow behind her):

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.

Kidstuf had something for everyone: a great Bible lesson (Philippians 4:8 complete with “not borin'” tips on how to memorize it), dancing, singing, a fun skit, comedy, and audience participation – Hubby was one of the adults that was called up to participate to be a “cow”.Â  From the show: “you know that cows are known to bounce around on the range….”Â  We had six adults on the stage bouncing around on (child size) hippity-hops, 3 of whom got roped by the ‘magic lasso’ – it was classic!Â  Here’s a clip:

Actually never mind…Â  while it was fun at the time, those adults might not appreciate being on the internet on their hippity hops, getting roped by the ‘magic lasso’, so I will just save that one for memory – hilarious, and the kids LOVED it!!

And I must add that our other audience participation scene went quite well also, but this one involved kids acting like a fire brigade.Â  Things got crazy, and before the audience knew it, a real bucket of water was thrown upon a cast member.Â  Before the production, much discussion was held on how not to mess up the stage (Kidstuf is performed in our Worship Center, so keeping things clean was of utmost importance), and thankfully we decided to remove one of the Worship Band’s monitors from the stage before “Scottie’s” dousing.Â  Because we had never used actual water during rehearsal, the physics of the soaking was as much of a surprise to us directors and to the cast (especially poor “Scottie”) as it was to the audience – “Tyler” got “Scottie” right down the front of her bib overalls, and the look on the actress’ face was priceless!

All in all, we experienced an extremely fun and successful Kidstuf; we couldn’t have asked for a better show!Â  Afterward, there was a carnival with games, activities, and carnival food, and it was all free, which was great for many community families – hope we got a lot of new people to come check out our great church!Â  I know many families had a fun-packed day, and I was very excited to be part of such a wonderful event.Â  I’m really glad that my Illinois family (most of them anyway) were able to join us, and I know it meant the world to my kids to have some fans in the audience, so thank you!!

For those who were not fortunate enough to be able to see the show, Philippians 4:8 reads:  
*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirableâ€”if anything is excellent or praiseworthyâ€”think about such things.*

### Comments

**derek**I'll do what I can then once I have a little time. :)  
**Taylhis**@derek - I wouldn't say your recording isn't needed - I only recorded a few short snippets of the program, one of which is posted here. If you could easily and cheaply make me a copy of your recording, I would REALLY appreciate it! THANKS for recording, and THANKS again for making the trip to see it - it means a lot!  
**derek**I don't recall noticing any technical glitches, but then I was consumed in recording everything, which I see wasn't needed. It was a good test of the camera though. Yes, the girls did well- it was a good time.  
**justj**Looks like the girls had fun doing this. I imagine that the kids had fun and learned a few things as well.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I am sooooooooooooo glad I was there. Taylor and Samantha were awesome. The whole event was alot of fun.  
**jamiahsh**THAT SOUNDS SOOOOO FUN! What a great way to worship and get the young to appreciate the Word. Now why would the adults be embarrassed to be seen hopping around on stage? I wouldn't be at all :D

# Disney World Fairy Tales (Not Quite)

I came across a really fun article awhile ago called:Â  Confessions Of A Disney Cast Member.Â  The article was written by a guy who spent 5 summers working at the Walt Disney World resort as a Disney cast member.Â  If you’re like me and a frequent visitor toÂ  the Magic Kingdom, then you will appreciate the following not-so-tall-tales.Â  Even if you’ve never been to WDW, the following stories are fun to read.Â  Among the entertaining stories he has to share:

Excuse me man, are you pregnant?  
What’s more terrifying than the 38-foot drop on Disney’s Big Thunder Mountain Railroad? Having to ask women in line if they’re pregnant. It’s for their own safety, but forget a woman scornedâ€”hell hath no fury like a woman who’s been mistaken for being pregnant. Once, when I was in training, I watched a coworker approach a larger female park visitor and ask, “Excuse me, ma’am, but are you pregnant?” “Pregnant!?!” the woman screamed, her voice turning heads at the happiest place on earth. “No! What are you saying? Do I look fat to you?!” She turned to her friend and screamed some more: “They think I look fat. Let’s get out of here!”Â  I was so traumatized by that incident I crafted a plan to avoid offending anyone. Whenever I spotted a “suspect,” I asked everybody in the vicinityâ€”including teenage boys and women in their 70sâ€”if they were with child. If the woman I suspected was actually pregnant, she left the ride quickly. If she wasn’t, she just thought I was working a gag.

I sure am Randy today.  
Disney made the “first name” name tag famous, but the tag doesn’t always match the person wearing it. One day, as I was steering the raft to Tom Sawyer Island, my name tag dropped into the river, forcing me to get a new one. There wasn’t a single “Robert” left, so until a replacement could be made, I pretended to be “Randy,” a name that amused visitors from the U.K. to no end. Elderly English ladies lined up to have their picture taken with me. One screamed when she saw me, grabbed her friend, and yelled, “Is that really your name?” Being a good Disney cast member, I lied and said yes. The friend said, “You know, we love a good randy man back home.” But lady, even I’m not that good a cast member.

To get onstage, dress the part.  
A few attractions choose audience volunteers to be part of the show, but the selection process is far from random. Typically, you need to be a certain gender, size, and age for each of the different roles. You might even need to be wearing a specific item of clothing. On my off days from work, I used to go over to Universal Studios, and I would get picked all the time to play “Mother” in the old Alfred Hitchcock show. They needed a guy my height and weight who happened to be wearing the same type of plain white tennis shoes I always wore. Also helpful for getting picked: cuteness and enthusiasm. Curious kids who ask nicely and look excited often get extra attention, along with thrilling perks like riding up front and introducing shows.

Stroller relocation program  
Disney’s a family place, but the people who work there come to loathe strollers. It’s part of a cast member’s job to keep strollers in nice, orderly lines and to make sure they’re only left in designated areas. But park visitors keep their strollers in an appalling condition, loaded up with dirty diapers, rotting bottles of milk, and half-eaten PB&J sandwiches. Others see no problem with parking their strollers right in front of an attraction’s exit or entrance. Sometimes thoughtless individuals like this incur the wrath of the stroller police, and their precious Bugaboos and Maclarens are intentionally relocated to a place “far, far away”â€”at the very back of the area cordoned off for strollers.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/stroller-parking-at-wdw.jpg)

Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of (confiscated) rum  
On special Grad Nites, when Disney hosts loads of freshly graduated high school kids, the park puts extra staffers inside Pirates of the Caribbean and other rides as lookouts to monitor less-than-legal activities. Our focus was mostly on what the kids were consuming. Booze, cigarettesâ€”you name it, and a Disney cast member has confiscated it from a 17-year-old at one time or another. One clever kid, forced to hand over his bottle, noted the irony of getting busted in the middle of a ride that celebrates a drunken pirate orgy. “Hey, don’t the pirates have enough?” he asked. “They need mine, too?”

Please keep your happiness to yourself.  
This attraction has been camera monitored for your safety. That’s the spiel Disney broadcasts over its loudspeakers for many rides. But the cameras are also meant to protect you from yourself. One night, while most parkgoers were watching the fireworks display, a couple strolled over to Pirates of the Caribbean, where I was working. They not only had a boat to themselves, but empty boats all around them. The real fireworks display, it turned out, was visible on the security cameras to all of us working that night. Let’s just say the show the couple put on wasn’t exactly G-rated.

If you enjoyed the above stories, you might want to [read the article in its entirety here](http://www.themeparkinsider.com/flume/201005/1908/" \t "_blank), along with other theme park insider info.

### Comments

**Taylhis**Seems that way... I can't believe friendly Disney employees take it upon themselves to exact revenge with their stroller placing. Though I remember being a victim of this once, so that one hit home for me. A ride was boarding, we were in a hurry, couldn't find the stroller corral, so in our frenzied haste, we grabbed the kids and ditched the stroller, only to be left searching for it for over 10 minutes! Finally found it in the very BACK of the not-so-nearest stroller corral... But I will say it wasn't loaded with spoiled milk nor dirty diapers, so they could have been a little bit nicer in their choice of a stroller parking place. I mean, they are getting PAID after all...  
**crazy3rdshiftretailworker**It seems customers are the same all over the place! At Disney World or Wal-Mart people are still rude and obnoxious.  
**jamiahsh**HAHA! GREAT! How about the curse of the stopped ride causer? That would be a good one.

# C(hair)ity

I’ve had really long hair ever since I was a little girl.Â  I wasn’t particularly attached to it, but I’m just a busy person, so I always liked the idea of hopping out of bed and simply running a brush through my hair if I needed to be quick and put off the shower untilÂ  later in the day.Â  About a month ago, I took my kids to the South Bend zoo to meet my mom so she could take the girls for their week with Grandma, but it was one of those 100Âº+ days, and I could not get my long hair off of my neck.Â  Since I had a fun trip planned days later to another zoo and an amusement park (2 long days outside!), I decided to chop off my hair.

The hairdresser made a big deal of it, asking me if my husband was going to be shocked, but I told her not really since he knew I planned to get it cut and isn’t really concerned with what I do with my hair.Â  I told her I wanted my hair cut all one length since I’m not a big fan of the reverse mullet look that seems so popular these days.Â  But when I looked in the mirror after she was finished, she had kind of left the sides longer than the back, giving me an involuntary reverse mullet.Â  Sure, the hairstyle looks great on most people, but I just don’t see it for me.Â  Besides, I don’t want to be just another I’m-in-my-30’s-I-have-4-kids-and-a-reverse-mullet-type housewife.Â  So I told her toÂ  please even the sides out, and she (begrudgingly? did so.Â  Is it this woman’s mission to spread the reverse mullet around the worldÂ  like a virus?)

But that brings me to an interesting conundrum – if you have someone really bad doing your hair, would you tell them?Â  Probably you would – it’s your hair and you are stuck with your new hairstyle every day, 24/7!Â  What about when the hairdresser asks you, ‘How does it look?’Â  You would say, ‘not soÂ  good’.Â  So she would even it out.Â  ‘How about now?’, she would ask.Â  ‘Still not really very even’, you say – and still she would attempt to even out your hair, finally sticking you with that reverse mullet look that’s oh-so-popular these days, even though it’s a reverse mullet against your will – a reluctant reverse mullet.Â  Worse, an untalented hairdresser could keep attempting to even out your hair until you have nothing left!Â  Maybe you could keep quiet during the incident if you were getting a bad haircut.Â  You could return days later for a refund and try to endure another stylist’s attempt on your hair.Â  You could also try to fix it yourself at home.Â  Well anyway, by the time she was through with me, my hair was just a little shorter than I had intended, but in that heat, I really didn’t care.Â  Besides, I was given a super long ponytail that I could donate to Locks of Love, a charity group that collects hair to make hairpieces for kids who lose their hair because of cancer and other medical conditions.

Better yet, when my oldest daughter returned home from her trip to Grandma’s, she wanted to cut off her long hair too.Â  Luckily for our family, my husband has gotten quite good at cutting the kids’ hair, which saves us tons of money.Â  I’m not brave enough to let him tackle my hair yet (though he might have been better in this case, but if he didn’t do well, it’s much better to be mad at a stranger hairstylist than my husband), but he cut off our daughter’s long ponytail, giving us another donation for Locks of Love.

My daughter and I walked over to the post office one day to send our donation, and I decided to send our picture in to the local newspaper since I’ve seen them print pictures of Locks of Love donations before.Â  Yesterday they printed our picture!Â  I can’t link to the actual newspaper since you have to be a subscriber to see it anyway, but here is the picture I sent:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/Taylor-and-Mom-lock-of-love-Aug-4th-2010.jpg)That reminds of a question I had regarding hair donations – what would happen if someone left hair DNA evidence at a crime scene, and you became a suspect because the DNA evidence hair was somehow taken or dropped from a Locks of Love hairpiece made from your hair donation?Â  If written well, it could be a stage play or movie…Â  or maybe just a far-fetched CSI episode.

### Comments

**Taylhis**Ah yes, another interesting CSI scenario. There are many things that are CSI-esque these days, even if I have to hear about how inaccurate the show is from my brother-in-law who is in forensics and gets frustrated by the general public's (and oftentimes the jurys') misconception of how they think his job should be done. Nobody ever said all forms of entertainment were 100% accurate about their subjects. Entertainment is just that - entertainment.  
**crazy3rdshiftretailworker**You never know about the DNA thing. There was an episode of CSI where they almost got the wrong guy because he used his own hand to make Halloween props and his finger prints where found at a crime seen, because of it.  
**jamiahsh**VERY nice... and to think I almost missed the picture in the BTs. I could be so lucky to have enough hair to donate. ;)  
**taylhis**Looks good, derek, thanks! The red-eye crossed my mind when I sent it into the paper, but it was printed in black and white, so no matter.  
**taylhis**Not always the case justj - mitochondrial DNA testing is be done on hair without the root. Probably won't build the strongest case in court, but then again, the idea was basically just a vague afterthought to begin with.  
**derek**Like the pic. Fixed it for you, though it's not quite perfect: [LINK TO PIC WITHOUT RED-EYE](http://home.comcast.net/~qunmang/l_t.jpg)  
**justj**Cute picture, wonderful cause. Yeah, I'd complain if I didn't like my haircut, but I don't think the guy that does my hair would listen. DNA evidence, not likely. That comes from the hair root, and since hair donations are cut...  
**Phyllis Beyer**Cute picture. I could have had Dawn cut Taylor's hair when she was with me. But it looks cute - Chris did a nice job.

# What Are The 3 Largest Cities In Nebraska?

A few weeks ago at a family birthday party, a friend posed an interesting trivia question which I thought I had a fair chance at since it involved a state where I once lived: the great state of Nebraska.Â  DoÂ  you know what the 3 largest cities in Nebraska are?

Answer: Omaha, Lincoln (everyone knows those two) and…Â  Bellevue.Â  I’ve heard of Bellevue, but it wasn’t my guess for third place.Â  IÂ  was thinking of the western city of Scottsbluff, which is actually on the western side of Nebraska near Cheyenne Wyoming.Â  I guessed Scottsbluff since it has a zoo that I always wanted to visit when we resided there, but we never made it there since Scottsbluff was almost as far away from our home in Lincoln as was our family 2 states over in Illinois!Â  But anyway, my point is that Scottsbluff didn’t even make the top 10 of Nebraska’s largest cities.Â  The city of Kearney (pronounced Carnie) crossed my mind since it was always advertised as a nearby tourist attraction when we lived in Lincoln, but it was #5 on the list.Â  And by the way, #5-10 of the largest cities in Nebraska only have between 20-30,000 people!!

I found this info while I was looking up the answer to my friend’s trivia question, and I found it interesting, so I decided to pass it on.Â  Then again, it was probably only interesting to me because I used to call Lincoln Nebraska home.Â  Well anyway, if you come across the ‘3 largest cities in Nebraska’ trivia question, you can now impress your friends by correctly saying Omaha, Lincoln, and Bellevue!

### Comments

**derek**The only Bellevue I've ever heard of was some mental institution, though whether real or fictional I am not sure. Hmm.  
**jamiahsh**Ok... the next time a trivia game is played at a game night I can actually be on time to... I'll remember that! ;)

# Disney's Driving Lesson

My daughter Disney is 3 years old and full of questions.Â  Today was her first dentist visit, and she had questions about every aspect of going to the dentist.Â  On the way home, she had more questions: Can I still sneeze?Â  Can I still drink?Â  Can I still eat?Â  She had no idea what life would be like with clean teeth.Â  Before the appointment, she was a bit scared, but in the end she found getting her teeth cleaned fun and tickle-y.

After the dentist, something happened that will have me laughing for a long time.Â  A stoplight turned yellow, and it was one of those with the pedestrian’s crosswalk really far in front of the light, so I had to hard-brake, which for some reason prompted little Disney to pipe up from the back seat and ask me, “What the h\*\*\* are you doing?”Â  I turned around and asked her where she learned that word, and her sisters looked terrified that they were going to somehow get blamed for this – the looks on their faces were priceless.Â  “From Kirsten”, said Disney, referring to her little friend at the babysitters.Â  I was relieved to know that it wasn’t something she had picked up from home, and we had a little chat about some words not being appropriate to say.

Kids will be kids, and I’m not worried in the slightest about my sweet little 3-year-old becoming as foul-mouthed as a trucker’s reputation.Â  Actually, I will think of this little episode every time I need a smileÂ  – it was so funny how she just blurted it out that way, it makes me laugh out loud just thinking about it!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/Nashville-IN-July-2010-38.jpg)

my sweet little Disney

### Comments

**Taylhis**I told the story to my babysitter, which is where Disney knows Kirsten. But I wasn't "telling" on Kirsten, I just thought my babysitter would appreciate the story. Whether or not she chose to mention it to Kirsten's parents was her decision. :)  
**derek**Yes, hilarious! I hope you didn't go too hard on Kirsten's parents...  
**jamiahsh**I'm shocked! HILARIOUS. I remember my first time as a kid blurting something out in front of my parents not to mention extended family since it happened in front of both. I was about Dis' age, too.  
**Taylhis**Luckily my foot was on the brake at a stoplight, so I didn't drive off the road and I was able to turn around - I just had to turn around after hearing that. Still laughing about it!  
**Phyllis Beyer**I, too, am laughing at the mere thought of sweet little Disney coming out with that. I probably would have driven off the road. I can't wait to tell this story tomorrow at work.

# Best Way To Spend 88 Cents

According to JJ my parakeet, the best way to spend 88 cents is on this little number:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/JJ-loves-his-new-toy-Aug-2010.jpg)I saw this little bird toy at Walmart the other day, and even though I knew it would scare the heck out of my scaredy-cat parakeet, I bought it anyway.Â  It’s a piece of plastic in the shape of an upside-down T –Â  a perch for the bird to sit on, while the part that sticks up hold millet spraysÂ  – a favorite treat for parakeets.

I adopted my little guy JJ (short for Jungle Jack Hanna named after my favorite celeb) back in January, and he hasn’t ever been interested in playing with any of the toys in his cage.Â  My 2-year-old son used to bang on JJ’s cage, and so the little bird became afraid of people, and I haven’t been able to pet him in months – he flies away from me.Â  I was so afraid that he led a miserable existence locked away safely in my bedroom – until about a month ago, when I moved him from our bedroom (where he was by himself most of the time) to the living room (the centerpiece of most of our large family’s traffic patterns).Â  JJ has been SO happy to be a part of the action!Â  I’ve been happy to see him happy, but he still wasn’t playing with toys – until I bought this 88 cent Walmart Wonder on a whim.Â  At first, JJ kept his distance, and I feared I was right – he WAS afraid of everything!Â  I had to leave the house for awhile, and when I returned, the millet was gone from the toy – I was ecstatic!

The next day, I snapped the above picture of JJ perched on his new toy, and ever since, he’s been in love with his 88 cent Walmart toy!Â  He sits next to it and preens himself, and he even gazes at it lovingly.

I reiterate – BEST 88 cents spent (on a pet) EVER!!

### Comments

**derek**Definitely a steal for something that would finally have a positive effect on JJ! Did I see JJ when I was there last? Well, there is this weekend if not.  
**Mysmichelle**Good for JJ.............he just needed a little time to warm up to things!!!  
**jamiahsh**88 cents! WHAT A DEAL! :D Glad JJ is acclimating himself even more with the big family.

# Playing Tourist In Toledo

It began with terrible news – my husband’s uncle had a massive heart attack and was in a coma.Â  His uncle was in Youngstown Ohio, on his way from Illinois to Washington DC where he was going to take his two sons for a vacation.Â  A week ago Sunday, we packed up our family and were ready to head to Youngstown to be with the boys since they didn’t have any other family in the area, but at the last minute, we found out that their mom was on her way.

We were all packed and ready to go, plus the summer almost got by without us taking aÂ  family vacation.Â  Sure, we had some fun excursions with extended family and friends, but nothing with all 6 of us, just the 6 of us.Â  So we changed our destination from Youngstown to Toledo, cut out a bunch of that driving, and were able to utilize a hotel gift certificate that had been burning a hole in our pockets.Â  Although Toledo is not our home town, we live only an hour away so we visit often, which is why I used the term ‘playing tourist’.

We went to the zoo (for the umpteenth time, but I could never get sick of the zoo, NEVER!), ate some delicious food, and swam in the hotel pool a bunch.Â  We visited a mall; something I haven’t done in probably over a decade (I don’t count our local mall – it’s more than half vacant, and its food court has only one restaurant left!), and I was disappointed to learn that the mall’s Dippin’ Dots store (which is the only one anywhere nearby) DOES NOT carry my favorite flavor – Root Beer Float!Â  But the Dippin’ Dots were still delicious, and besides, that’s just one more thing that makes Orlando that much more special – plenty of Root Beer Float Dippin’ Dots in the store near Disney World, how I miss that place.Â  We couldn’t believe how crowded the Toledo mall was on a Wednesday afternoon, and because I hadn’t been in one in years, there were all these new gadgets, gizmos, and what-nots that our family had to check out and play around with, probably making us look like total hicks.Â  But that’s ok, we had fun!Â  And not only do I love living in a rural area because we have no crime, crowds, or traffic, but it makes things like visiting malls or big movie theaters rare treats and fun vacations!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/our-Maumee-vaction-Aug-1-4th-2010-002.jpg)

4 party animals in the hotel

Probably the most fun I had on this vacation was when we rented a pontoon boat and took it into Lake Erie.Â  Now, don’t be fooled by stats – You wouldn’t know that Lake Erie is the second smallest of the Great Lakes in surface area when you’re out there on a boat – you go out far enough, and you can’t see shore, like all of the Great Lakes.Â  When we looked at a map when we got home, we found that we had barely even gotten into the lake, yet it took us about 30 minutes to get there and there was water asÂ  far as the eye can see.Â  Setting Lake Erie apart from the others is its relatively shallow depths, at least on the west side of the lake where we were visiting – the water averaged 1-3 feet in depth!Â  It looked really strange to see people *standing* in the lake, really far from shore, with water only up to their knees!

There were some interesting and fun islands to explore; we anchored our boat near the Woodtick Peninsula and waded onto the beach for some sea shell hunting and sand playing.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/our-Maumee-vaction-Aug-1-4th-2010-027.jpg)

My kids were well behaved on the boat, and they enjoyed themselves, with the little guy even finding time for his afternoon nap.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/our-Maumee-vaction-Aug-1-4th-2010-028.jpg)

(Note the can of precious Coke Zero clutched in his hand.Â  He stole it from his dad, but apparently it didn’t help keep him awake!)

We wanted to dock at a cool looking place called Turtle Island, but it didn’t seem very kid-friendly – maybe next time if Hubby and I can get back for date night.Â  [Turtle Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turtle_Island_%28Lake_Erie%29" \t "_blank) (click the link for more history) was once destined to be a great resort island, but plans fell through, and it remains abandoned.Â  There are some abandoned structures that remain onÂ  the island, including an old lighthouse and an old-fashioned crane (on the right of the island in this picture).

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/turtle-island.jpg)

Since Turtle Island is way out in the lake, you wouldn’t expect there to be wildlife, but we saw this fox looking for fish on the beach – so cool to see!!Â  Perhaps because of the shallow nature of this part of Lake Erie, animals can just walk out to the islands, or maybe the fox was a stowaway.Â  Pardon the bumpiness of the video – taking pictures and video was something I struggled with the entire time on the bobbing boat!

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.

There is also a “haunted lighthouse” (in reality it’s called the [Toledo Harbor Light](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toledo_Harbor_Light" \t "_blank)) that looks very cool and emits a ghostly warning horn every few minutes.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/08/our-Maumee-vaction-Aug-1-4th-2010-019.jpg)

As we were floating nearby gaping at it, a Coast Guard boat came speeding up to us, lights flashing and all.Â  What the…?Â  There were four Coast Guard officers on the boat, all armed, and the one in charge informed us that they “had the authority of the US government” and were going to board our boat and search it.

As serious as it seemed, they must have liked what they saw because we were awarded a “good as gold” form, which means that we had been following all the maritime laws and regulations.Â  But it was kind of a strange experience to be all alone floating in the middle of Lake Erie one minute, only to have a boat full of gun-wielding government agents on your case the next…Â  They were nice enough, I suppose, but sheesh, why our boat?Â  Later when we returned to shore, the owner of the boat rental place said that in all their years of renting out their boats, none of their clients had ever undergone a boarding inspection by the Coast Guard.Â  Lucky us.Â  Perhaps with all my kids on board, they were suspicious of some illegal Canadian smuggling, eh?

Despite all the high-seas adventure, the vacation was fun and so refreshing to be able to spend time together as a family without distraction, not having to worry about household chores, responsibilities, or Dad’s work for a few days.Â  Just what I needed to get out of my kids-are-fighting-constantly-rut at home, and hey – I even lost track of that back-to-school countdown I had been swearing by before the vacation!

And the best news of all this?Â  Hubby’s uncle has been released from the hospital and is now recovering at home.Â  Time will tell us what he will need to make his heart healthier, but for now, he is out of immediate danger and for that, we are so thankful!

### Comments

**derek**Sorry, I don't have time right now to read this entire post, but I am glad to read Uncle is recovering okay.  
**jamiahsh**Ditto... glad a bad news trip turned into a fun "famcation"!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Oh what fun!!!!!!!!!!!!! You guys come up with the neatest trips. Glad Chris's uncle is okay.

# My Favorite Movie At The Drive-in

I was so excited to receive the newsletter from my local drive-in movie theater this week, and I’m so glad I checked it when I did – tonight there is a special showing of Wizard of Oz (which just happens to be my favorite movie of all time) at the drive-in!Â  I can’t wait to watch it under the stars!Â  I am so glad that I didn’t wait to open the newsletter; I can’t imagine how disappointed I would have been if I had missed the email or had something else planned!Â  I only checked it yesterday otherwise I would have put together a costume.Â  But that’s ok, I’m just happy to be going, and I will bring along my hard-cover coffee table book that just happens to have the full script printed inside it.Â  Boy, will that drive my fellow drive-in friends nuts, but then again, it’s not like IÂ  need the script in front of me to recite the movie.Â  ðŸ˜‰

I am so excited!!

### Comments

**taylhis**Yes - it did not disappoint, and the kids loved it!  
**derek**You were off to see the Wizard- I hope he sufficiently entertained you! :D  
**jamiahsh**I would not have needed it, either! But BOY what fun! So glad you let me know and rehearsal allowed me to arrive before you did... even if the GPS told me to turn into another field of dreams (or nightmares if I had taken her advice). I think you have a two-year old Ozian. He sat on my lap and conducted every song! Of course, I might have encouraged him just a bit ;) WHAT A BLAST!  
**Nightwing #135 : The Gang (DC Comics) Reviews | Best SciFi Books**[...] My Favorite Movie At The Drive-in | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# SURPRISE!!!

Last weekend, we had a birthday party for my “boys”.Â  My little guy turned 2 at the beginning of the month, and his father turned 35 in June.Â  Since my husband had mentioned that he would like a party, I decided to tell him that we were having my son’s birthday party, but I also made it a surprise party of sorts for my husband.Â  Having the party a month and half after his actual birthday helped to add to the surprise, th0ugh it wasn’t entirely my choice.Â  A friend had had a party at a local park’s shelter house in May, and it was a perfect place for a party, and the rental fee was quite reasonable.Â  The only catch was that the last Saturday in July was the only Saturday that it was free.Â  But I booked it anyway, and we ended up getting great weather, especially for this time of year.Â  Lots of friends came, and many helped bring stuff and to set up the party which was necessary to keep Hubby in the dark about our real plans.

There were a few bumps in the road before the surprise was unveiled though; especially Saturday morning which had me vowing to not do another surprise party for a long time…

A few days before the party, I slipped and told my husband that he couldn’t plan anything for Saturday “because of your party”.Â  He knew that it was our son’s birthday party, but I had said “YOUR party”.Â  I agonized over that one for a few days –Â  sure that he had caught on and didn’t ask me what I meant because he didn’t want to let on that he knew about the surprise because he didn’t want to ruin it.Â  But after the party, we talked about it, and it turns out that he had no idea that the party was also for him!Â  It went well, and it was a fun party, but I was frustrated Saturday morning – I awoke to the sound of the front door slamming, so I ran downstairs and started waving like a lunatic at our car which was pulling out of the driveway.Â  Turns out, my husband was going to let me sleep in, and he was going to take the kids to Walmart to pick up snacks for the party.Â  I had been mulling this over Friday night – perhaps I planned the party TOO well, and maybe I was having my secret party preparer (thanks Jamiahsh) doing too much of the work.Â  Turns out, I was right – Hubby was not suspicious, but he was thinking that we wouldn’t have enough food (we did), so he figured he’d pick up some snacks and even pick up the cake while he was at it.Â  In my half-asleep stupor, I thought about Hubby’s helpful nature and realized that he just might be leaving the house to go get the cake – the cake with HIS name on it next to our son’s!Â  Luckily I caught my family in the driveway, and tired as I was, we enjoyed a morning out together – even though I had to tell Hubby that someone ELSE was picking up the cake, and I also had to start putting on the rush when I realized that we just might run into said secret party preparer / cake picker-upper.Â  WHEW!!!

Oh, and then there was the party guest who calls my cell phone 10 minutes before we were supposed to be there and says simply, “Where are you guys?”Â  I did not know how to answer that, and the call thoroughly confused my husband.Â  He thought maybe I had told the guests the wrong time, which I guess I did, in a way – it really depends on what the “right” time was – when the party started or when the birthday boys arrived!Â  So I kind of stammered at my friend on the phone, and I resorted to lying to Hubby about what time the party started (I am ashamed) – which is another reason why I probably won’t do the whole surprise thing again; lying to Hubby was awful.Â  But when we got to the party, he didn’t recognize anyone’s car, and when we walked into the shelter house, everyone was gathered in there and shouted out SURPRISE!!!Â  That was fun, but it was also kind of funny because again, my husband was confused – he knew that it was our son’s party, and he was thinking that my son wouldn’t understand a suprise party…Â  We sorted it out and the fun commenced and that reminds me, there was one other bump in the road to the surprise: my daughter had been trying to get ahold of her friend to have her come over, and I knew that her mother was bringing their family to the party.Â  So I let my daughter in on the secret, but when she called her friend, my husband decided for some reason to stay on the line and listen to the phone call – which is when he heard my daughter’s friend’s mother tell my daughter that their family was coming to the party.Â  The simple thing to do would have been for me to just admit that I invited them to our son’s party, but I’m not really fast on my feet sometimes, so instead I just acted confused (I’m good at acting confused) about the “mis-communication”.Â  Sneaky, huh?

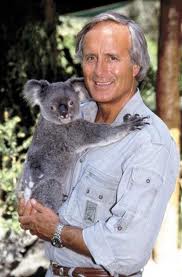
But my boys had a good party, and that’s what counts.Â  Thanks to everyone who helped with everything, and thanks to those who were able to come celebrate with us!

### Comments

**derek**I'll be there- I would guess I will head out there Saturday to avoid having to get up too early Sunday. Carpooling could work, though I suppose that would mean having to stay wherever they are staying Sat. night.  
**taylhis**Ooh! Is that a teaser or definite plans? Or do I have to wait to find out for sure? Let me know if you need help with any arrangements. And if you are for sure, let me know if I should talk to my family about carpooling - they're coming Sat, and I'm pretty sure they will have extra spaces in their car.  
**derek**There might be a little something when I visit in two weeks... ;)  
**taylhis**Yes they actually did! I was added to the happy birthday song, and a few people brought gifts for all of us, which was very thoughtful (and I had requested no gifts).  
**derek**Sorry again I couldn't be there. I still haven't gotten my oil changed, but I did add two quarts last weekend. I hope someone made it your party too since your birthday falls around the same time as C's. :)  
**jamiahsh**Anytime, anywhere! A bit chaotic the last few days for you with the worry but I'm so glad the Big guy was surprised especially with the amount of time involved from idea to party day. THAT in itself was a surprise!

# Been Waiting Over 7 Years For This!!!

I HAVE TICKETS TO SEE JACK HANNA!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/jackhanna.jpg)I’ve been waiting MORE than 7 years for this!Â  Mr. Hanna became a personal hero of mine and Hubby’s around 1998, and as we were driving down to Florida from Illinois for our honeymoon in 1999, we speculated on how cool it would be to run into Jack Hanna since we were going to Sea World (where he would and still does often appear).Â  And guess what happened?Â  We ran into Jack Hanna at Sea World!!!Â  We were going down to an underwater viewing area for one of the exhibits (don’t even remember which one, don’t care), and it was roped off with a sign, “tv show taping in progress”.Â  Just as we turned around, they took down the ropes, and so we went in, and there was Jack Hanna!Â  And we were the only fans in there with him!Â  I got tougue-tied, and I forgot every question I wanted to ask him, but luckily, Hubby was able to explain to him what big fans we were.Â  Jack Hanna autographed a special picture for us, even writing our names on it, but I’m sad to say that this honeymoon treasure was one of a few coveted items that was put in a special box and left with so-called trusted friends during a move when it wouldn’t fit into our car.Â  Unfortunately, the “friends” never sent the box to us as they promised, and who knows what has happened to our Jack Hanna autograph or other treasures by now?

But that’s not the point.Â  I’ve been hoping to replace it and to see Mr. Hanna do a show, but he never has appearances close to my corner of Ohio.Â  He came to Toledo once 7 years ago, but the ticket prices were kind of steep, especially since we didn’t know if our then 2-year-old would enjoy it, plus we had just moved to the state and didn’t know any babysitters.Â  I’ve regretted not going to Jack’s Toledo show ever since, especially when he hasn’t come close to the area.Â  But about a month ago, I happened to check his website, and Jack was going to be less than 2 hours away from us AS WELL as appearing in the town where my parents live – TWO opportunities to see him!Â  So anyway, long story short, we have tickets to see JACK HANNA in OCTOBER!!!Â  I can’t wait!Â  This is going to make it so much easier for me to have to forget about the MLB post-season this year (my team is terrible this year and essentially eliminated themselves opening day).

Before the show, we are scheduled to attend a Jungle Jamboree with Jack Hanna also!Â  Maybe I can find a way to get my honeymoon autographed picture replaced.Â  Hubby actually tried once to get me one for a birthday, but there was mis-communication, and Jack Hanna signed it to my husband instead of to me.Â  I actually thought that was pretty funny and classic Jack – totally something he would do as Jack tends to use his brain to store animal facts rather than organizational details.Â  I think I’ll bring my favorite book, Monkeys on the Interstate for him to autograph also; I just have to sneak backstage with all my things I want him to autograph somehow.Â  And I’ll have to read Monkeys on the Interstate again just so I can study up on it and write a list of questions down to ask Jack in case I get the chance again – I WILL NOT get tongue-tied this time!!!Â  I’ll have to take a break from reading the Harry Potter series, so now I definitely won’t be finished in time to get to see part one of the last Harry Potter movie while it’s in the theater – OH WELL!Â  I’m going to see Jack Hanna live on stage!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/jackhanna1.jpg)

A highly recommended read for any zoo lover - Monkeys on the Interstate by Jack Hanna

### Comments

**Mysmichelle**How awesome!! I'm jealous!  
**derek**I just read something involving Mr. Hanna in the newspaper, but now I can't remember what. No, it wasn't a celebrity-in-trouble article!  
**Ancient Voices of Children Sheet Music | My Top Toy Site**[...] Been Waiting Over 7 Years For This!!! | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**justj**Wonderful, I hope you have a great time.  
**jamiahsh**Congrats! Have FUN!

# Backyard Thrill Rides (Don't Try These At Home - Watch Youtube Instead!)

In the newspaper the other day, there was an article that caught my interest about a couple of college engineering students who built a homemade roller coaster in their back yard (with mom’s reluctant approval).Â  I figured there would beÂ  video of their creation on youtube.com, but I was unable to find the exact coaster from the article.Â  I did, however, find many videos featuring brave and creative souls fashioning their own various types of thrill rides and testing them out – some so amusing I had to put them together.Â  You can probably tell by the picture on the video if it’s going to be one you’ll want to watch in action.Â  And by the way, more than a few of these trials reminded me of that article I read and [wrote about](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/04/14/gods-strong-love-for-fools/" \t "_blank) a while back about reasons for common ER visits called: Don’t Laugh, It Could Happen ToÂ  You…

This guy rides his backyard roller coaster in a little chair, and it even has an inversion:

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.

This guy uses a little mining type cart, and he seems to achieve some pretty good speed:

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.

This one looks more like it’s on train tracks, but it’s a long ride, and he also looks like he hits some pretty decent speeds:

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.

This one’s not a roller coaster, but sort of homemade gravitron:

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.

Are you going to be as surprised as I was about the speeds this ATV uses to wind up this poor lady’s sling shot?Â  This is one heck of a human sling shot!!

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

And finally, this video begins with saying this kid’s parents were out of town…Â  uh, oh.Â  This guy builds a slip n’ slide off the 2nd story of his house.Â  Does anyone else find it funnily ironic that the test subject gets congratulated after his run by a guy with his arm in a sling?Â  The first tester, perhaps?

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**Yep, that last one was like the waterslide I went down at camp, if just a bit less safe! Did anyone else think "hamster wheel" with the homemade gravitron? Lastly, I had to laugh at the still at the beginning of the one rollercoaster video looking like a track headed into a brick wall- the injuries that would be sustained by running into a brick wall would be not unlike what would likely happen to me if I were to try any of these (well, except maybe the gravitron- just a heart attack there if I tried to be the runner).  
**crazy3rdshiftretailworker**That last video is so something that my brother and his friends would do given the time, materials and opportunity. Kids these days.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I seem to remember 2 little girls who tried to make an amusement ride using a red wagon and our dog, who was probably terrorized for the rest of her life.

# Cincinnati Kids

When I wrote about our trip to King’s Island (an amusement park near Cincinnati Ohio) a few blog posts ago, I mentioned how I have the behind-the-scenes Brady Bunch book written by the actor who played Greg Brady on the show, Barry Williams.Â  A few nights ago, I looked up the episode in the book where the Bradys visit King’s Island, and I read the synopsis (including the part about how the Bradys almost didn’t make it off The Racer roller coaster alive!Â  If you watch the episode, look for their terrified faces as they pulled into the station –Â  that was not acting!) and dug up clips of the episode on youtube.com

If you’ve been to King’s Island recently or in the past 10 or 20 years, then you will see how much the park has changed since this episode was filmed – 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

**Taylhis**I noticed how the kids were all grown up - they look kind of strange to be acting as cheesy as they do :) I really liked the aerial shot; I could see the similarities between the park then and now; especially the pond. I thought the flume ride looked the same, as did some of the carnival-type rides that you mentioned. And I love how Mr. Brady carries around his trademark "I'm an architect" tubes - hilarious! And then he loses his plans - no wonder they portray him as the means-well-but-terribly-incompetent-architect in the parody movies. I've got to watch those again soon - hilarious!  
**jamiahsh**Alice gets a 7 seven for her jump over the puny chain. I thought it was a fence. Wonder... was "Marge" an actual worker at the park or an actress playing the role? And there were some rides that are still there. Seemed more like a carnival in those days.  
**jamiahsh**Did you see Greg, Bobby, and Cindy all grown up at K.I.?  
**jamiahsh**nice plaid bellbottoms on jan  
**jamiahsh**the entrance looks familiar  
**jamiahsh**No more Yogi Bear poster to get mixed up with Dad's architect plans. No more barrels or old fashioned cars with fence for Alice to leap over... HILARIOUS! Sorry for the spoilers.

# 4 Down...

My husband fell ill over the weekend, and he had to leave a show early that we went to see together on Sunday.Â  By Monday night, my two littlest kids were throwing up, and Hubby and I stayed up late cleaning them up and comforting them.Â  Monday night, I had a dream that we were on a trip, and we were scheduled to leave our vacation, but I was sick and worried about the 3-4 hour car ride.Â  When I awoke, I was really sick – so this thing has struck down 4 of us, and my 2 oldest daughters remain unaffected as of yet.

We are busy people!Â  I already rescheduled the dentist appointment we won’t make, but I don’t know what to do about our church’s Kidstuf play Hubby and I are directing – rehearsal is tonight.Â  I don’t see how I’ll be able to make it, but I also don’t understand how to summon the energy to stay home with sick little ones when I’m feeling so incredibly lousy.Â  Complicating things is the fact that my two oldest girls are also in Kidstuf, and they had to miss the first rehearsal because they were at their Grandma’s.Â  There is a waiting list for kids who want to be in Kidstuf, and so the kids who are chosen to be in it are not supposed to miss even one rehearsal.Â  If my kids get sick, they will have to miss another rehearsal, and I’m so worried for them that they won’t get to do the show!

So today, I have to find a way to navigate around the thumping in my head and the visits to the bathroom (sorry, but here we are) to care for my 4 kids so Hubby can work.Â  And IÂ  have to do things in a way that won’t spread this super-contagious illness (it says something when I get an illness – I don’t usually get sick *ever*!) to the remaining healthy ones in my family.

Anyone want to babysit?Â  ðŸ˜‰

### Comments

**taylhis**I'm feeling a bit better today, although my muscles don't seem to want to work - baby steps, I guess, but I had so much planned this week it's difficult to take it slow. I was not able to make it to rehearsal last night, but Chris did and said things went well. He wasn't gone long, and the older 3 slept while he was gone, so things were easy for me since Beebs and I just spent some quiet time together. Chris is feeling better, but his recovery seems to be slower than mine, although he is able to be up and around, something that's been difficult for me. Thanks for all your well wishes!!  
**derek**Illness- not fun. Get better soon, and I hope you were able to work out this evening!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Goodness gracious!!!!!!!!!!! Maybe they got too run down being with me all week. So far, I haven't gotten sick. Hope everyone gets well very soon....especially Mom. If I were closer, I would help you out.  
**jamiahsh**Sorry... have to work tonight. But here you are again. Get better SOOOOOOON ;) Hope the girls are able to go to practice... face masks?

# Just Too Scary...

My son is newly 2 years old, and he has a favorite movie:Â  Monster House.Â  He asks for it by name, and he just loves it – even if some parts are so scary that he has to watch it from behind his hands:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/Beeber-watching-Monster-House-7-24-10-001.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Well. at least he is in the right family ;) But he is so adorable.  
**Taylhis**I'm having a great summer, Mysmichelle, hope you are too! How is the flood cleanup coming along in Nashville? If it's been anywhere near as hot as it's been here in NW Ohio, then some of that heat probably soaked up the flood waters by now... here's hoping!  
**Mysmichelle**Awww......that's how I watch scary movies too!! Hope you're having a great summer

# VIP Squared

Every year, my husband and I are very lucky to get a week-long break from being busy parents of 4 kids when Grandma takes the kids to her house for a week.Â  For the past two years during this vacation, we traveled downstate to King’s Island, an amusement park near Cincinnati.Â  King’s Island offers a VIP Tour, which means that for 9 hours, you get your own personal park employee to lead you around the park and to the **front of all the park rides of your choosing**, even holding your stuff if you really want him to!Â  In case you’re interested, a VIP Tour at King’s Island also includes an all-you-can-eat lunch buffet, unlimited fountain drinks all day, a ride photo, an ice cream cone, a behind-the-scenes tour of The Beast, and $25 in park souvenir money – which can be spent on carnival style games, buying more food (if you need it after the buffet!), or in the park’s gift shops.Â  While it may seem expensive up front, if you do the math, the VIP Tour ends up being a great deal all things considered, and we highly recommend it; especially if you’re a coaster enthusiast!

Being able to walk to the front of any ride line of one’s choosing is really cool – it’s hard to imagine, untilÂ  you ride coaster after coaster without pause!

We began our day on The Beast (only because the Diamondback was not functioning, but luckily our fears of it being broken for the entire day were dispelled and they were able to fix it before long).Â  The Beast is an almost 5-minute long journey into the desolate forests of southern Ohio on a wooden roller coaster!Â  As we learned from our behind the scenes tour (included with the VIP Tour as I said), prior to its unveiling in 1979, The Beast was built on-site and follows closely the terrain upon which it is built.Â  It was not pre-ordered and shipped to the park in segments like many modern roller coasters.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/the-beast2.jpg)

The Beast follows its native land's terrain and disappears into a tunnel at the bottom of its first drop

After riding The Beast twice in a row (almost 10 minutes worth of roller coasters right there!!), we moved on to the Vortex, an old-school steel roller coaster with more than a few high speed inversions.Â  I had printed out my blog post I had written about the VIP Tour a year before, and it served as a helpful guide for this year.Â  And I have to say, everything was much more enjoyable this year – last year I had written in my blog that I didn’t like the Vortex much and that the Backlot Stunt Coaster was lame, but this year both rides were much more fun than I had remembered – perhaps because I knew what to expect from the park, and so the element of surprise was minimized.Â  I’m a person who likes to know what to expect rather than to be completely taken by surprise – I have 4 little kids, so I have enough surprises throughout my average day, thank you ðŸ˜‰

But whatever the case, whichever the reason, this year’s VIP Tour was even more fun than last year’s!Â  All of the rides we rode were better than I had remembered they were, and the Whitewater Canyon water ride was even more fun when riding with friends!Â  Of course, I think it helped that this year’s temperature was almost 90Âº instead of the unseasonal 70Âº we had during last year’s tour – getting soaked last year left us near frozen!Â  And I learned a little bit from last year’s tour – no blisters from walking around in wet shoes for me!Â  I brought a little bag and put a change of shoes in it.Â  As much as it may have annoyed my co-VIPs (but then again, I was the only gal in a group of men), I changed into my flip-flops every time we got on a water ride.Â  Not only did I save my feet from blistering, but I got to order our guide to carry my shoes around the park!Â  Ok, so I actually felt pretty badly making the poor guy carry my shoes around, but it was kind of like being a queen for a day, and –Â  carrying our stuff **was** his job after all…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/diamondback.jpg)

The Diamondback Roller Coaster

Being led around the park by a guide all day, slipping in front of the ‘regular guests’ to get to the front of the lines (and picking whatever spot you choose on all the rides!Â  Note to self for next year:Â  front car on The Beast rocks, back row on the Diamondback is sweet, and the back is ideal and technically the front for Firehawk…) gave us plenty of time for ‘extras’ in the park: things we don’t normally do in theme parks, usually for lack of time like souvenir shopping, playing games and seeing shows.Â  The show we chose to see this year – and it’s strange, I know, that I keep promising myself a theater break but still I continue to find myself in a theater audience – was called ‘Too Much TV’, and it was actually pretty fun!Â  It began with a ‘host’ who went around the audience asking for them to ‘name that tune’ as different tv show theme songs were played.Â  I thought I would be good at this kind of thing, but apparently my brain had been scrambled upon one (ok, a dozen) too many roller coasters earlier in the day because I couldn’t get any of the answers correct.Â  But it’s ok, I didn’t raise my hand too high- unlike a fellow VIP who was called upon, but he answered correctly and won himself a Too Much TV button – way toÂ  go!Â  Despite a fleeting regret in the beginning of the show (am I really watching yet another stage show?!?), I did enjoy myself.Â  I recognized 100% of the show titles and about 80% of the lyrics since I used to be a huge tv fan and had watched many of the shows when I was a kid (many in reruns; I’m not THAT old!)Â  The show included 6 dancer-singers, and it began with TV shows from the 50’s – 60’s (a few of these I watched like Patty Duke and Mary Tyler Moore – um, in reruns of course ðŸ˜‰ while the rest I just knew the themes since they were very famous like the Andy Griffith Show) and continued to shows from the 70s (3’s Company, Brady Bunch, Partridge Family, etc), 80’s-90’s (Full House, Perfect Strangers,Â  Growing Pains, Friends, etc).Â  LOTS of fun, especially for a former TV junkie like myself.Â  The singers / dancers were pretty good, and I have to say that one of the highlights of the showÂ  was that during the Brady Bunch theme, they showed clips from the episode where the Brady’s actually visit King’s Island!!Â  I had totally forgotten that episode (I used to be a huge Brady Bunch fan; I watched it every day in syndication after school, and I had the book / episode guide written by Mr. Greg Brady (Barry Williams) himself – I used to check off the episodes I had seen – ahem, NERD!!), but anyway, I will have to dig it up on youtube.com or somewhere and watch it again now!!

Miraculously, the rain held off until minutes after our guide was dismissed for the day –Â  we had been watching the storms move in all day the day before our tour, hoping it wouldn’t affect our trip.Â  We had promised our guide an email depicting our thoughts on what riding The Beast was like in the dark, but as I said, it began to rain, and we were forced to take a break.Â  That’s when we realized just how tired we really were – too tired to wait for the rain to stop and the rides to re-open, so we’ll have to experience The Beast at night next year.Â  And I could not be looking forward to it more!!

On the way home, we found a White Castle (don’t have them way up here in the bufu northwestern corner of Ohio), or at least that’s what the sign said.Â  But the White Castle location was connected to a gas station, and the sliders did not taste quite the same…Â  I thought they were just old until I brought some home and re-heated them, and they STILL were a bit off…Â  hmmm….Â  Normally these things reheat really well, and I’m sorry to tell the White Castle newbie in our group that he still hasn’t really tried an authentic slider.Â  They hit the spot at the time and had we taken the time to stop anywhere else, we would have gotten home even later than the 1 am-ish that we did and would have been even more exhausted.Â  My bodily soreness from being beat up by various coasters all day was less than last year, but it also lasted a day or two longer than I remember.Â  Oh well, more to tweak for next year!Â  Maybe I will bring TWO pairs of shoes for Mr. Guide to carry around for me, haha!

And one final note…Â  We have a running joke with a member of our group – we went to Disney World with him almost two years ago, and it seemed that every ride which he rode stalled; including rides that didn’t usually stall.Â  At King’s Island, only one ride stalled while we were on it, but we got stuck in what I am sure is the most precarious position in which a person can get stuck at that park – flat on our backs, under the great blue sky on the Firehawk.Â  Here is a picture of how we were stuck; note that these people are in the station, which would have been better since there were people around to help.Â  We were stuck flat on our backs *outside* of the station for about 10-15 minutes, and I couldn’t help but notice how sympathetic the ride operator seemed during her announcements directing us to stay calm.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/firehawk.jpg)

Also noticeable were the extremely red faces and disoriented nature of our fellow riders who were finally returned to an upright position and allowed to leave the ride with us.Â  For the record, our park guide happened to be on the Firehawk with us (on the VIP Tour, you can also make your guide go on rides!) and said that he had never seen it stuck like that before.Â  So yeah, while we were only stuck on a ride once during our day, what a place to be stuck!!!

And surely I don’t want to leave you with a bad impression of the Firehawk, nor of King’s Island, so here are some fun youtube videos from other riders:

Firehawk (you lie on your back and then are flipped after the lift onto your stomach.Â  Like Superman, you fly thru a series of loops, inversions, and open track):

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.

Next, not one of my favorite rides at King’s Island, though still fun, the joy in Invertigo is watching the person’s face who is sitting across from you.Â  Ride with a friend sitting across from you, and experience the g-forces backwards first.Â  Then watch your friend’s face as they experience the same thing backwards you just did – It’s priceless!!

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

And now for my favorites, The Beast (start watching at a minute and ten seconds into the video for the real action):

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

And the Diamondback:

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.

All this watching the POV cams on the coasters makes me want to do it all over again…Â Â  But unfortunately I have to wait…  
So until next year…

### Comments

**derek**Sounds like it was a really fun time. I didn't even know you were gone until all of you got back and started posting about it. Well, next year if I decide to take a break from kids ministry for some reason (I have been doing it for over ten years after all) I would like to take a couple of days off to join you.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Looks like a great park....wish I had visited it in my younger days. The Beast looks like one I would have really enjoyed....the Diamondback, not so much. Thanks for the posting so I could enjoy "the rides".  
**jamiahsh**AWESOME TRIP! Glad that said person's aptitude for stalling rides is diminishing ;)

# Magic After 112 Years

If you are a tangents.org fan, then you’ve already read two riveting accounts of a little tangents field trip of sorts to Cincinnati Ohio.Â  I don’t mean to be redundant, but I’m going to post my take on the excursion for my friends and remote members of my family to read my take on the trip.

We began our journey bright and early Monday morning, July 19, and I like how the other tangenteers failed to mention that the keys were accidentally locked in the trunk.Â  Someone, I forget who (and I’m not going to mention who it was that locked the keys in the trunk except that it wasn’t me), but someone had the brilliant revelation that the back seat could pull down, thus saving us a 30-mile round-trip drive to get the spare set of keys.Â  Us 4 adults (3 of my kids were with Grandma, and my little boy stayed with a family friend since he couldn’t have gone on roller coasters at King’s Island the following day) crammed into a little Sunfire, and somehow I got the privileged front seat for the whole trip – hey no complaints here, I was so much less sore than I was after last year’s trip – I don’t think I could say that if I had been crammed in the back of the Sunfire for two days.Â  But taking the little car was necessary because we estimate that we saved around $70 in gas by not taking our gas-guzzling mini-van, so thanks to the owner of the Sunfire for letting us put the miles on his car.

We arrived at our first tourist destination, the wonderful Cincinnati Zoo with more than enough time (or so we thought) to explore the entire humongous zoo complex.Â  I just love the Cincinnati Zoo – we visited years ago, and I don’t really remember much about that visit, other than accidentally driving our car into the zoo…Â  But they seemed to have fixed that entry problem by now.Â  Hubby and I visited this zoo last year, but we didn’t leave early enough, and after some delays and the 4-hour drive, we really didn’t see much of the zoo.Â  But this year, we had left bright and early and were prepared to stay all day, despite the 90Âº+ weather.Â  I was appointed tour guide (why?Â  I don’t knowÂ  – I’m a pretty big zoo enthusiast, I guess, and I’m a pretty good navigator until you throw hills or mountains into the equation.Â  And the Cincinnati Zoo has more than a few large hills and low valleys to navigate around, but we did well – Hubby and being especially thankful that we didn’t happen to have kids to carry or a double-stroller to push up all those hills inÂ  that heat!!!)

Cincinnati has a WIDE array of species to see!Â  Some I had scarcely heard of, some I had NEVER heard of; I just wish I had taken better notes and written down which species I saw that I wanted to do more research on when I got home.Â  Oh well, I will be back – Ohio is the only state to exhibit my favorite animal, the manatee, outside of its native Florida, and we are blessed to have not one, but TWO zoos (Cincinnati and Columbus) that exhibit this beautiful creature – so yeah, I will be back downstate to get my manatee fix.Â  Cincinnati has two manatees that arrived fromÂ  Florida just a few months ago, and they are relatively young creatures – just 3 and 4-years old.Â  Manatees can live to be 60-70 years old, so the manatees at the Cincinnati Zoo were relatively small compared to the others I’ve seen in captivity.Â  No less breathtaking, the little guys did move a little bit faster and seemed more playful than their adult counterparts.Â  I knew about the ‘Sleep With the Manatees’ program that Cincinnati offers before this visit, but I was reminded again – that is of course something I would love to do.Â  But “Sleep with the Manatees’?Â  I think I’d probably have to call it something different since I wouldn’t be doing much sleeping if I got to spend the night in the manatee exhibit!Â  Someday…

Another remarkable, highly endangered creature housed by the Cincinnati Zoo is the [Sumatran Rhino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumatran_Rhinoceros" \t "_blank).Â  There are five rhino sub-species left on this planet, and the Sumatran is the most rare –Â  estimated at less than 275 individuals left in the wild.Â  A Sumatran Rhino successfully gave birth at the Calcutta Zoo in 1889, but as decades passed without any further successful reproduction in captivity, people grew concerned and developed a program designed to save the Sumatran Rhino.Â  Widely considered a failure, the program ran from 1984-1996 and consisted of capturing 40 wild Sumatran Rhinos and trying to reproduce them in captivity.Â  By the late ’90s, no rhinos had been born of the program, and half of the captured rhinos had died.Â  In 1997, the United States was down to only 3 captive Sumatran Rhinos: two females (in the Los Angeles Zoo and Bronx Zoo) and one male (Cincinnati Zoo).Â  It was decided that the animals be united for one last breeding attempt in Cincinnati.Â  In September 2001, the first captive-born Sumatran Rhino calf in 112 years was born (this was the 6th pregnancy for the mother; the previous 5 pregnancies were not successful)!Â  Another calf followed in 2004, but sadly that same year a disease outbreak killed all of the Sumatran Rhinos in captivity in Malysia, reducing the number of captive Sumatran Rhinos in the world to **only eight**.Â  Another calf was born in 2007, and that same year the calf who was born in 2001 was returned to Sumatra to try to breed him there.Â  If you are not an animal lover like I am, then you might find my little rant about the Sumatran Rhino boring, and I apologize.Â  But there aren’t words for how fascinating it was to see an live animal walking around and making noise who is so rare in our world.Â  Although this particular rhino species is the smallest of the 5 currently in existence, it is fascinating in other ways; such as its light coat of reddish-brown hair, its almost constant vocalizations (which we were able to witness), and its ability to twist saplings into patterns to communicate with other rhinos in the wild.Â  A truly fascinating creature; if you are going to be in the Cincinnati area, I highly recommend stopping by the zoo and glimpsing this historic animal specimen.Â  Here is a video of Emi’s 3rd and final calf who was born in 2007:

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.

We stopped for lunch and took in one of those 4D shows; which was alright – being in the air-conditioned theater for 30 minutes was worth the admission fee alone.Â  The 4D consisted of a 3D movie of animals with some additional effects –Â  water spraying, high-powered fans blowing (Ahhh…), things to poke your back, etc.Â  The air blasters on my seat were not working, and neither were my feet ticklers, but no matter, for the air blasting sound in my ears is not one of my favorite things anyway.

By the time we got around to the other side of the zoo, I was so hot and tired that I was becoming willing to skip certain parts of the zoo.Â  We did stop in the petting zoo, another one of my usual favorites (I know a secret spot on goats where they tend to feel sore, and my patented ‘goat rubs’ are usually very much appreciated…Â  not as much in the heat though).

Two exhibit buildings of note: I really enjoyed the nocturnal house and the cat house (which housed more than just cats, and many species of animals with which I was not familiar – maybe they should change the name – ‘Cat House And Friends’?Â  ‘Cats and More’?Â  ‘Cats, Etc.’?Â  That sounds like the work of the zoo’s marketing department; clearly my talents do not lie in that area).Â  The nocturnal house had plenty of species outside of the usual fruit bats you see in the nocturnal houses of many zoos.Â  Along with its share of nocturnal marsupials (a few species of gliders and something called a potto), Cincinnati also has vampire bats (complete with ones feeding out of little dishes of blood – delightfully and creepily fascinating!) as well as flying foxes – bats the size of my large parrot at home with faces resembling foxes or small bears.

Overall, a wonderful day with some great friends, even if it was super hot!Â  Up next, my run-down of the following day spent at King’s Island!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**My apologies to Mare, Froggy, and Cabbages and Kings. I have no idea how I thought there was only one female tangenteer. In my defense, Taylhis was the only female tangenteer on the Cincy trip.  
**Taylhis**One female tangenteer - I'm not following? Besides, we have 2 at least! Mary911 still blogs enough to be considered a tangenteer, as does Froggy, but I'm not sure about Cabbages and Kings - I guess she took the summer off!! But I'm still not sure what the comment is referring to... perhaps I missed something?  
**jamiahsh**Thanks d! But I guess we only have one female tangenteer :D Loved the vidoe, taylhis... AWWWW indeed!  
**derek**I did read about the keys in the trunk before this, yes- and he mentioned names... :D The video of the young rhino was interesting to watch- thanks!  
**jamiahsh**I think it would be fun to spend an overnight with the animals.  
**jamiahsh**Fascinating... I thought sure I mentioned the keys in the trunk. The zoo was a great time. Animals I have never seen before and the 4D movie was great! I'm sure there are several readers who do not follow all of our blogs and it is refreshing to get each participants' takes on such a memorable time.

# Cordell Kansas

### Comments

# Are We Playing Politics... Or Preschool?

I check out the headlines on Chicago’s suburban newspaper’s website, The Daily Herald, partly because that’s where I’m from (so I know of the locations of the news stories) and partly because my own small town daily paper is kind of boring because we’re… well, crime-less.Â  No news is good news, so they say, and I agree with that assessment for my little corner of the world.Â  But far removed am I, and so reading about the disasters in the Chicago area can be quite entertaining; especially the recent stories concerning this woman, Lisa Stone, a trustee from a place called Buffalo Grove, which is an upscale suburb of Chicago.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/lisa-stone.jpg)

There have been numerous news stories about Ms. Stone, and I didn’t really pay attention until I saw this headline:

[Buffalo Grove village president tells trustee to ‘shut up’](http://dailyherald.com/story/?id=394009" \t "_blank)

If you want to envision grown-up politicians behaving like children, read the article, for it’s like a play-by-play of a school yard bickering session.Â  If you would like to see the trustees in action, [here is a link to video of the actual meeting](http://www.take-onevideo.com/VBG07122010a.htm" \t "_blank).Â  It goes a bit long (a whopping 3+ hours – these poor people were at their meeting until 10:30pm!), but most of the action involving Ms. Stone is in the first 10 minutes (after the Pledge of Allegiance) and in the last 30 minutes of part 3 of the meeting, which is where poor flustered President Hartstein has finally had enough.

Causing most of the problem is Ms. Lisa Stone because she doesn’t seem to respect the most basic rules of politeness nor eloquence.Â  She interrupts the other board members; speaking out of turn, continuously overriding her superiors and her time limits (time limits which were created, voted upon, and passed by her fellow board members because of her actions at previous meetings), and she just doesn’t seem concerned about any agenda other than her own.Â  After watching these little pieces of political treasure (ah, Illinois politics, gotta love ’em.Â  Isn’t this a state poised to have TWO former governors in the pokey at the same time?), I couldn’t resist doing some internet research on Lisa Stone.Â  The most interesting thing I found was her election website, [electlisastone.com](http://electlisastone.com/" \t "_blank) where the very same newspaper who provided a play-by-play of her getting told to ‘shut up’Â  by the board presidentÂ  endorses her political career with very encouraging words which are displayed prominently and proudly on the top middle of the page!Â  Also of interest on this site?Â  Check out the little video on the left side – the then-mayor of the same city, Buffalo Grove, also endorses Lisa in the election.Â  And guess who the mayor was during the election?Â  Elliott Hartstein, the same president of the village board who got so flustered with Ms. Stone that he told her to ‘shut up’.Â  How about those politics, folks!Â  More entertaining than a 3-ring circus and for free, from the comfort of your own living room!

### Comments

**justj**I'm still wondering if there is a difference between politics and preschool. I've seen stuff like this in the news up to the highest level of government over the years. For years I've been saying that I've only voted against someone, never for someone. This is one of the big reasons why. I better stop before I really get on a political rant. ;)  
**Political Campaign Expert » Blog Archive » Are We Playing Politicsâ€¦ Or Preschool? | My Food Chain Gang**[...] Go here to read the rest: Are We Playing Politicsâ€¦ Or Preschool? | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
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**Are We Playing Politicsâ€¦ Or Preschool? | My Food Chain Gang « Politics And Funds**[...] See the article here: Are We Playing Politicsâ€¦ Or Preschool? | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**taylhis**Actually, it's been a week or so since I've followed the suburban Chicago news so I didn't see any of that. Looking for new pics now - thanks for the heads up!  
**derek**Ever entertaining Illinois- if only it was all just entertainment. Sad news that police officer killed just weeks from his retirement. At least the construction strike is over so that we can get the mess called the expressways finished hopefully before winter. Welcome back! I hope you noticed the extra pics on my last post that I put up from your comment. ;)

# What Did Porky Pig Ever Do To You?

The following news story caught my eye because well, let’s be honest – any sort of physical comedy involving someone in a big mascot costume is funny.  
Ok, so it’s not funny when someone gets hurt; I stand corrected.Â  Best wishes to Ms. Porky Pig for a speedy recovery.Â  From suburban Chicago’s newspaper, [The Daily Herald](http://dailyherald.com/story/?id=393865" \t "_blank):

Two employees of Six Flags Great America turned against a coworker dressed as Porky the Pig on Monday after posing for a photo with her.

Dmytro Petrychenko, 19, and Taras Sikalchuk, 20, were visiting the park on their day off and were seen slapping a woman dressed as Porky Pig in the front and back of her head multiple times, according to Gurnee police. Both men are from Waukegan, reports indicated.

The men were apprehended, removed from the park and issued local battery citations by Gurnee police.

The victim was taken to a first aide station after complaining of a headache and neck pains. She was treated and released, according to a Six Flags spokesperson.

Kind of reminds me of the Sausagegate incident of 2008…

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**Yes, they have been doing the Looney Tunes theme from almost the beginning. The attackers have of course been fired. I hope Ms. Porky is doing well.  
**Taylhis**Oh, I was gonna say... I thought Six Flags Great America had Looney Toons licensing.  
**jamiahsh**HMM.... I see now. I was referring to the video. Apparently, it was from the incident of 2008. My mistake ;)  
**Taylhis**@jamiahsh - To what picture are you referring, I did not see one?  
**jamiahsh**That is VERY true, justj... especially in the recent heat!  
**justj**I'm not sure why anyone would attack a person in a costume. Apparently they never wore one. That is punishment enough.  
**jamiahsh**But I also DO appreciate good slapstick!  
**jamiahsh**Not really funny. But I did not see the resemblance to the Looney Toon character. Maybe that's why the Porky THE Pig?

# Summer Blahs

My kids are driving me nuts!!Â  It’s the middle of summer, and although I’ve scarcely heard the words, “I’m bored”, my kids are driving me and each other up the walls and back down again.Â  My 3 girls (ages 10, 6, and 3) are bickering constantly!Â  By the time I get their brother (age 2) down for a nap in the afternoon, I’m so exhausted that I really cherish my “me” time, which is always laced with sounds of the girls’ fighting and bickering.Â  My husband suggested we do more activities together (we read books and color in the mornings, and I take them to the library every day to play), but it’s a vicious cycle.Â  The more they fight, the less I want to do with them, and the less I do with them, the more they fight, as if their fighting could increase.Â  I am so thankful that Friday is the day when I get to meet their Grandma in South Bend and arrange a trade – 3 girls to Grandma’s for the week!!Â  I could not be looking forward to it more!Â  Sure, I’ll miss them, but given the way they’ve been acting lately, it will be a challenge for me to not dread the monotony of the summer continuing when they get back.Â  I can think of plenty of things to do, but like I said, I’m so exhausted by the constant refereeing (aren’t refs supposed to be paid?) that it’s hard to find the energy to facilitate an activity and clean it up.Â  Wait, Grandma reads my blog, I better not dwell on the fighting too much.Â  Wouldn’t want to change her mind about next week!!

Only 39 days until school starts!Â  One week at Grandma’s and 10 weekend days, so really only 22 days left – not that I’m counting or anything…Â  Now where is that countdown timer widget?Â  

### Comments

**justj**I seem to recall the count downs to school starting. Now I wish I had more time to spend with them. Of course they don't seem to fight as much.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Yes, Grandma is reading your blog. Don't worry, I won't change my mind. I am looking forward to having the girls for a week. We will keep plenty busy. I survived you and your sister bickering so I think I can survive your 3 girls....besides after a week, I send them home.

# You Can't Name Your Baby That!

I found this article on cnn.com a few weeks ago detailing the laws that foreign countries have about baby names.Â  That’s right – here in the fifty nifty United States we have the freedom to name our kids pretty much whatever we want, but in other countries, they actually have strict laws specially crafted regarding this kind of thing.Â  I found the following article interesting and amusing, and at the same time, I gratefully celebrate the freedoms in my country.Â  And an interesting note – this blog post is being written by the mother of a little girl named Disney…Â  I couldn’t help but notice in how many of the following countries my sweet little Disney’s name would have been rejected.

For the article in its entirety, [click here](http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/07/03/mf.baby.naming.laws/index.html?hpt=C2ï»¿" \t "_blank).

1. Sweden – Enacted in 1982, the Naming law in Sweden was originally created to prevent non-noble families from giving their children noble names, but a few changes to the law have been made since then.Â  The part of the law referencing first names reads: “First names shall not be approved if they can cause offense or can be supposed to cause discomfort for the one using it, or names which for some obvious reason are not suitable as a first name.”Â  If you later change your name, you must keep at least one of the names that you were originally given, and you can only change your name once.Â  Rejected names: “Brfxxccxxmnpcccclllmmnprxvclmnckssqlbb111163 (pronounced Albin, naturally) was submitted by a child’s parents in protest of the Naming law. It was rejected. The parents later submitted “A” (also pronounced Albin) as the child’s name. It, too, was rejected.Â  Also rejected: Metallica, Superman, Veranda, Ikea and Elvis.Â  Accepted names: Google as a middle name, Lego.

2. Germany – In Germany, you must be able to tell the gender of the child by the first name, and the name chosen must not be negatively affect the well being of the child. Also, you can not use last names or the names of objects or products as first names.Â  Whether or not your chosen name will be accepted is up to the office of vital statistics, the Standesamt, in the area in which the child was born. If the office rejects your proposed baby name, you may appeal the decision. But if you lose, you’ll have to think of a different name. Each time you submit a name you pay a fee, so it can get costly.Â  When evaluating names, the Standesamt refers to a book which translates to “the international manual of the first names,” and they also consult foreign embassies for assistance with non-German names. Because of the hassle parents have to go through to name their children, many opt for traditional names such as Maximilian, Alexander, Marie and Sophie.Â  Rejected names: Matti was rejected for a boy because it didn’t indicate gender.Â  Approved names: Legolas and Nemo were approved for baby boys.

3. New Zealand – New Zealand’s Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act of 1995 doesn’t allow people to name their children anything that “might cause offence to a reasonable person; or […] is unreasonably long; or without adequate justification, […] is, includes, or resembles, an official title or rank.” Officials at the registrar of births have successfully talked parents out of some more embarrassing names.Â  Rejected names: Stallion, Yeah Detroit, Fish and Chips, Twisty Poi, Keenan Got Lucy, Sex Fruit, Satan and Adolf Hitler.Â  Approved names: Benson and Hedges (for a set of twins), Midnight Chardonnay, Number 16 Bus Shelter and Violence.

4. Japan – In Japan, one given name and one surname are chosen for babies, except for the imperial family, who only receive given names. Except for a few examples, it is obvious which are the given names and which are the surnames, regardless of in what order the names have been given. There are a couple thousand “name kanji” and “commonly used characters” for use in naming babies, and only these official kanji may be used in babies’ given names. The purpose of this is to make sure that all names can be easily read and written by the Japanese. The Japanese also restrict names that might be deemed inappropriate.Â  Rejected names: Akuma, meaning “devil.”

5. Denmark – Denmark’s very strict Law on Personal Names is in place to protect children from having odd names that suit their parents’ fancy. To do this, parents can choose from a list of 7,000 pre-approved names, some for girls, some for boys.Â  If you want to name your child something that isn’t on the list, you have to get special permission from your local church, and the name is then reviewed by governmental officials. Creative spellings of more common names are often rejected.Â  The law states that girls and boys must have names that indicate their gender, you can’t use a last name as a first name and unusual names may be rejected. Of the approximately 1,100 names that are reviewed each year, 15-20 percent of the names are rejected. There are also laws in place to protect rare Danish last names.Â  Rejected names: Anus, Pluto and Monkey.Â  Approved names: Benji, Jiminico, Molli and Fee.

6. China – Most new babies in China are now basically required to be named based on the ability of computer scanners to read those names on national identification cards. The government recommends giving children names that are easily readable, and encourages Simplified characters over Traditional Chinese ones.Â  Parents can technically choose the given name, but numbers and non-Chinese symbols and characters are not allowed.Â  Also, now, Chinese characters that can not be represented on the computer are not allowed. There are over 70,000 Chinese characters, but only about 13,000 can be represented on the computer. Because this requirement is a new one, some citizens are having their name misrepresented, and some have to change their names to be accurately shown on the identification cards.Â  Rejected names: “@”: Wang “At” was rejected as a baby name. The parents felt that the @ symbol had the right meaning for them. @ in Chinese is pronounced “ai-ta” which is very similar to a phrase that means “love him.”

### Comments

**derek**What is to stop the parents from circumventing the law by giving an official name on paper and then referring to the child by a nickname? Of course the official name would be used in official capacities, but for all intents and purposes the child's name would be the nickname. Given a couple of the approved names, it would seem New Zealand pays mostly lip service to their law. The China one is a bit frightening though as they require people to change their names to fit their computer requirements. "Hi Joe, how you doing today?" "My name is Ed, not Joe." "Not anymore, Joe." :o

# Part 2 Of The Whew That Was The First Part Of July

So we pull into our driveway after our 4 hour drive back from Nashville Indiana (not going to waste time with a recap, these posts are long enough!Â  See my previous post if you want to know what I’m talking about), and my husband’s aunt’s truck is parked in front of our house.Â  We had agreed (or so I thought) to meet themÂ  at their hotel (which was a safe distance of 10-15 miles away) for some dinner and swimming –Â  after just getting back from being out of town for a few days, which was preceded by constant activities for my family for the 4th of July, I wanted some time to make the house presentable.Â  Much to my dismay, that did not happen.Â  We pulled up to our house and see that their truck is there – I could not believe it.Â  Luckily, they were no where in sight, turns out they had gone shopping downtown.Â  So hubby and I bribed the kids to all go play together upstairs, we unpack the car as fast as we can, and we quickly run around the house doing some very fast spot-cleaning.Â  It worked out, but I get really stressed about stuff like that – it would have been better if they had just adhered to the original plan.

So they come over (they called first, so they get bonus points for that), and my mother-in-law mentions giving my aunt-in-law a tour of my house multple times.Â  Under normal circumstances, I would be more than happy to do so – personally, I love to see the different layouts of people’s houses, and I’m always excited to take a tour if one is offered.Â  But when I haven’t had the time to clean my house in a few weeks, I’m a bit apprehensive about giving my aunt-in-law (who has never seen the house) a tour…Â  but I think it’s about time I get over some of my hang-ups, so I oblige and give the tour through the dirty house –Â  and we all survived and came out alive.

After that, we went out to dinner and swimming at their hotel, and that was a lot of fun until we made the mistake of letting our little 2-year-old boy out of his floatie.Â  He began to run around and do other brave things, like get onto the pool ladder and act like he was going to jump in, all of which terrified me and compounded my exhaustion from the week before – so I had had enough; it was time to go.Â  The next day, weÂ  left it up to our guests where to eat lunch, and they chose our local circa 1950’s diner, which has a cute atmosphere but I warned them that the food is not so great.Â  I hadn’t eaten there in probably about a year though, and my philly cheese steak sandwich wasn’t too bad, although it left me hungry.Â  After the diner, we decided to play tourist in our hometown some more and went on the “Lolly Trolley” at the Dum Dum factory – you know Dum Dums, and don’t try to tell me you didn’t save up your wrappers when you were little to send them in for various bits of Dum Dum treasure.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/dumdums.jpg)

The Lolly Trolley was fun, much more fun than I had expected given the factory’s disclaimers of how we weren’t going to be able to see the kitchen where the candy is actually made.Â  We also spotted our good friends’ son on the job as he is an employee of the factory, so that was fun.Â  After our tour, we went swimming again in the hotel pool, and someone had a marvelous last minute idea for dinner – let’s go to Walmart, pick up some ingredients, and have my husband’s mother cook us dinner!Â  She is a brilliant cook, I might add.Â  So she made us come kind of delicious baked chicken breasts on a bed of croutons with swiss cheese on top, and the house smelled almost as good as dinner tasted…Â  until my son was left unattended for literally only 2 minutes, when he used that opportunity to produce one of the dirtiest diapers he’s ever had.Â  I will spare details, but let’s just say that the mess did not stay in his diaper (not an accident,Â  either), and the upstairs carpet was one of the victims of this disaster.Â  Luckily, Hubby is great at fast clean-ups, so he helped me quickly clean up the mess and our son before any additional guests arrived for our game night.

Game night with my mother-in-law was extra fun, even if she did sabotage herself in a game of Mafia by talking out loud and accidentally revealing her position – it just added to the fun for the rest of us.Â  We also played other game night favorites, and people stayed too late as usual – not that I ever mind because it was fun, as tired as I was on Saturday.

Saturday we took the family to the produce tent and the local pizza buffet for lunch, and then we just sat around the living room and chatted for the afternoon while my son napped, learning more about my husband’s cousins’ hobbies (his 16-year-old cousin is really into air-softing, something I hadn’t heard of, but I was glad to hear him provide a little more info – getting pictures in my email of this boy I’ve basically watched grow up wearing camouflage and brandishing a gun was a bit alarming, so I appreciated hearing the details about his sport).Â  They left for home a little after 4, leaving us just enough time to get toÂ  a dear friend’s retirement party.Â  We were a tad late, but we overcompensated by staying way past the time the party was supposed to end and had a lot of fun meeting her family and celebrating her accomplishment.

Sunday was my little guy’s actual 2nd birthday, so we took him to the Mexican restaurant where the staff sang to the birthday boy, who was frightened by all the attention being paid to him and jumped out of his highchair, burying his face into Dad’s shoulder.Â  We returned home for a day of some much needed r and r, and here it is Tuesday, and I’m STILL recovering!Â  But in this family, busyness is the norm and while summer provides us a break from school, youth group, and other obligations, we always find plenty more to do – besides, would we be able to survive boredom?Â  I think not!!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I spent Sunday r and r-ing, too! I guess that is expected after being up until 5:30AM.  
**jamiahsh**Oh... I forgot to comment on the fireworks in the last post. No matter how old I get, I will never be bored with them. I don't remember ever NOT wanting to enjoy them on the 4th.

# Independence Day And That Other Nashville

Well, it’s been a long week and a half – which is probably how long it will take you to read this super-long blog post I’m about to write.Â  Hey, it’s been awhile since I’ve been able toÂ  blog, and I have lots to say!Â  Tons of fun since the 4th of July weekend, but go-go-go constantly, and I am so tired, it’s unbelievable!Â  A quick (well, kinda, sorta) rundown…

**July 3** – my birthday, so we dragged the kids down to a larger town down south to see their fireworks, one of my favorite birthday activities.Â  The only problem is that the fireworks didn’t start until 10pm, and we wanted to get there by 2pm because we had tickets for a raffle at a party thrown by a store.Â  Even with our 5 tickets, we did not win any one of the 50 prizes (no surprise there; our luck is terrible when it comes to things like that).Â  But the party was lots of fun with airbrush tattoos for the kids, sand creations they could make, free coloring kits, and also free hot dogs, pizza,Â  and baby water bottles.Â  We had no trouble killing time for the next 8 hours, although it did exhaust all 6 of us.Â  We had a nice birthday dinner at Bob Evans (have you tried their pot roast stroganoff?Â  It’s yummy!!), even though they forgot to sing to me or my little boy, whose birthday is 8 days after mine (so we were celebrating both).Â  No matter, I usually hate stuff like that anyway (like it for my kids – for me, not so much), but I was willing to give it a try just for the free dessert.Â  Oh well.Â  This larger town’s fireworks were much better than our hometown’s, though the kids would not let me forget that they are starting to find fireworks boring.Â  Might have to find something new for next year’s bday celebration, or maybe a babysitter so Hubby and I can enjoy fireworks alone for a change…

**July 4** – After church, we packed all day long for our upcoming camping trip.Â  This involved doing lots of last minute laundry and preparing the house as best I could so that it wouldn’t be too much of a mess when we got back.Â  Although we were exhausted, this turned out to be a good decision because when we got back from the 3 day camping trip, my mother-in-law and her sister and kids were here waiting for us – that was SO not the plan.Â  They were supposed to be at their hotel, and we were going to change into our bathing suits and go meet them at the hotel for swimming, giving me a chance to pick up my very messy house.Â  But more on that next post…

**July 5-8** – July 5 was the day the kids had been waiting for – we left for Nashville.Â  Not the well known country music capital of the country in TN, but the lesser known, population 800 Nashville in Brown County, southern Indiana.Â  What a beautiful place!Â  I can understand why it’s a very popular destination in the fall, the scenery must be nothing short of gorgeous when the leaves change colors.Â  As for visiting in July, that was nice too.Â  Never mind that the weather was above 90Â° all 3 days of our vacation – we barely noticed, thanks to the accommodations my husband was able to find for us:Â  an over 3,000 sq ft fully furnished house that fit all 13 of us comfortably on its secluded 10 acres.Â  I made a video tour of the house, but I haven’t figured out how to put in links to youtube.com playlists yet, so you lucked out – a video tour of a house you’ve never been to would probably bore the pants off of you, and now you don’t have to sit through it.Â  You’ll have to settle for the ultra-exciting text version I’m going to describe below (some of which you can skip if it gets dry – remember, I use my blogs as sort of a family diary as well.Â  Years into the future when I’m long gone, I’m hoping my loved ones will enjoy reading my ramblings.Â  If not, hey, my feelings certainly won’t be hurt!).

The long, tree-encircled, steep hill of a driveway ended at a garage with a basketball hoop, grill and table and chairs for grilling out, which we did a lot!Â  Hubby and I played a few games ofÂ  H-O-R-S-E with my dad, which quickly became a championship when all 3 of us were tied at one win apiece.Â  Unfortunately, Hubby and I were not able to win a title for our family name, but we still had lots of fun.Â  Just off of the driveway, there was a swing that overlooked the pond area, which was a short way from the house, down a steep hill and past the firepit area.Â  We had lots of fun cooking our lunches over the campfire and making smores at night.Â  My 10-year-old daughter also revealed her hidden talent as a master fisherman, er fisher-person!Â  She found a bit of line on the ground with a hook, and proceeded to use it – **without any bait** – to catch no less than 5 fish, and they were larger fish than we had caught with my nephew’s fishing pole and using bait!!

Upon entering the house, the living room (2 couches and large tv with over 100 movies from which to choose, as well as a bookcase full of board games, books, and magazines) was to the right, and the kitchen and breakfast nook was to the left.Â  Off the back of the living room was a washer / dryer (who wants to do laundry on vacation?Â  But in caseÂ  of emergency, it was very nice to have, especially if you were going to stay longer than the 3 days we were staying) and a half bath.Â  On the 2nd floor, directly at the top of the stairs was a bedroom with a bathroom (where my sister, her husband, and their 2-year-old slept), another living room (this one with a couch, futon, and billiard table), and a wrap around 4-season room with CD player and CDs (no country music?!?Â  Don’t worry, this is the only suggestion I could think to make on my comment card – everything else was perfect) and aÂ  Foosball table.Â  OffÂ  of the 4-season room was another bedroom with bathroom (this is where Hubby and I and our 2-year-old slept), and then outside of the 4-season room was a yard with a deck with swing, chairs, picnic table, hammock, hot tub, swingset, sandbox, and outdoor fireplace.Â  And oh yeah, my sister’s room and our room shared an outdoor patio as well.

We also had a cut-throat pool game championship with my dad, but we didn’t do very well at that one either…Â  and since we’re on the subject of lost games, I might as well get it out there that Hubby and I came in last on the Cornhole tournament as well.Â  How funny is that when the Illinois family had never heard the term ‘cornhole’ anyway?Â  ðŸ˜‰Â  Must be an Ohio thing, but that didn’t seem to help our Cornhole skills…Â  So we lost H-O-R-S-E, we lost cut-throat,Â  and we lost Cornhole, but in what must have seemed like an even exchange, we made our reluctant family play some party games against their will –Â  Mafia and Partini.Â  I can’t say they were big fans of either game, but at least they gave them a try and gave us some hilarious memories in the process.Â  Here’s what happens when people reluctantly play a normally very fun game called Partini:

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.

Back to the house…Â  from the 2nd floor living room was a staircase that led up to the 3rd floor master suite, which boasted a master bathroom with whirlpool tub.Â  My parents slept up here, and lucky for them (?) there was a huge walk-in closet right next to their bed, which the 4 older kids (my 3 girls and their cousin) immediately eyed as a “clubhouse” where they could sleep right next to Grandma, who of course agreed.Â  Also on the 3rd floor was a little nook with another queen bed, huge closet, and a little couch and chair – this is the bed where Uncle Bud slept.Â  And off of the master suite was a huge outdoor wrap-around deck, where Hubby, my dad and I spent the first night watching the hilarious comedy The Goods in the fresh woodsy air (on our laptop – didn’t want you to think there was a tv outside or anything.Â  There were an abundance of cool bugs – huge moths and a different sort of firefly than I’m used to, but no outdoor tv).

Overall, a wonderful trip; I don’t think we could have asked for it to be any better…Â  well, perhaps the weather could have beenÂ  a bit cooler, but what else can be expected in early July in southern Indiana than three 90Â°+ days in a row?Â  That made our trying out the hot tub interesting – here we are packed in like sardines; we did try putting some ice cubes in it, but that didn’t work so well.Â  It kind of felt like being meat in a stew for a giant’s brew:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/hottub1.jpg)

And with that kind of weather, it made us even more thankful that we had changed our original vacation plan which was Jellystone campground in Fremont Indiana.Â  It still sounds like a fun place, but the cabins there were very tiny and didn’t have bathrooms, plus it was going to be mobbed on the dates we had to go – July 5-8.Â  I will take our secluded, 3000+ sq ft, air conditioned house with plenty of bathrooms any day!Â  It was a bit further than Jellystone – 4 hrs vs. 45 minutes, but it worked well because our Chicago family had basically the same travel (distance-wise, anway –Â  they made a lot more stops than we did and so the trip took them longer to complete).

Whether you’re looking for a fun place to have a family get-together, a vacation with friends or with co-workers, I highly recommend checking out the houses and cabins for rent in Brown County Indiana.Â  If you would like to know which cabin is the one we stayed at, just leave me a comment, and I can send you more info!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I did not find the house tour at all boring. It was beautiful! Glad you had fun.

# Bingeing Bieber?

Those who know my family are aware that we have a son named Beeber, pronounced the same as the last name of that popular young male singer, Justin Bieber.Â  But my son got his cute little nickname from his big sister, who was not even 2 years old when he was born – she could not say his real name, Christopher, and so “Beeber” stuck.Â  That was way before Justin Bieber became so popular, I might add…

So now that my disclaimer is out of the way, I can share the following story, which has nothing to do with my son Beeber and everything to do with Justin Bieber.Â  A few weeks ago, someone spotted Justin Bieber drinking beer at a bar, so they called the cops to report underage drinking because apparently Mr. Bieber is just a teenager.Â  But when the cops showed up and ID’d Mr. Bieber, they found that the “underage drinker” was a 27-year-old **woman** named Katie.Â  Given the pic below, honest mistake, don’t you think?Â  That would be Katie on the left and Justin on the right.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/beiber.jpg)

*(Thanks to tmz.com for the story and picture)*

### Comments

**derek**Since my facial recognition center is a bit on the slow side I would have never noticed, and if I did I would be far too unsure to report anything. Side by side they don't look alike at all, but in the heat of the moment anything is possible. Speaking of Bieber, I just read about a targeted youtube attack on him: <http://www.neowin.net/news/youtube-hacked-justin-bieber-videos-targeted>  
**jamiahsh**Your Beebs is much cuter and talented! As for the picture, I would have sworn the person on the left was the Real McCoy as well. The person on the right looks Dazed and Confused.

# Look At This Idiot

He is our puppy and he’s cute.Â  But still, you’ve got to appreciate the idiocy of this puppy predictament – a delicious scent awaits in the baby’s playpen.Â  What is one to do?Â  Why, get stuck in a moron’s photo opp, of course…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/07/stuck-Gizmo-6-28-10.jpg)

### Comments

**justj**Better patch that hole, Christopher did see it. It may be a way to escape... He will probably remember that spot for a long time.  
**jamiahsh**Creative and ingenious. "Now how did I get myself into this predicament?"  
**taylhis**Hilarious, D!! You can see his feet in the background... Actually, I think we are lucky - at least he didn't get the same idea about how to get OUT of his playpen as his puppy got about how to get IN!  
**derek**Oops! A penny for Christopher's thoughts as this was unfolding...

# That Candle Smells Like WHAT?!?

Something to put on my birthday list?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/slyder-candle.jpg)The White Castle slider-scented candle.Â  That’s right…Â  if you are familiar with [White Castle restaurants](http://www.whitecastle.com/" \t "_blank) and their famous products, be warned –Â  they have made a White Castle-scented candle.Â  Yes, the steamed onion scent of the famous little burgers can now be brought into your home!

According to an article that ran on [nydailynews.com](http://www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/food/2010/05/07/2010-05-07_if_you_luv_the_smell_of_burger_white_castle_candles_selling_fast.html" \t "_blank):

“The candle has a top note of diced sweet onions and crisp pickle, the middle notes are beef patty, cheese and ketchup, and bottom note is a warm burger bun. It all comes together to create this amazing aroma of a White Castle Slider.”

Ok, so I don’t really want the White Castle scented candle for anything other than a conversation piece.Â  I am curious about how it smells, but for my birthday I would much rather have a terrifically fun weekend, which is always probable thanks to my wonderful family and the awesome local 4th of July events that are usually planned.Â  On my birthday, the 3rd of July (please don’t remind me that I share my birthday with one of my least favorite actors), we will probably catch some fireworks somewhere, as that is one of my favorite thing to do every year.Â  Since the 4th of July is on a Sunday this year, we will be going to church, so we have to find a way to get out to the airport as well for the annual fly-in breakfast which is always a lot of fun.Â  After church, probably during the little dude’s nap, we have a lot of packing to do for a super-fun week in the woods of southern Indiana with the extended family – more about that when we return in a week or more.

HAVE A VERY HAPPY AND SAFE 4TH OF JULY WEEKEND!!!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/flag.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**It could be worse- I could probably find some examples but I'm feeling lazy right now. That scent sounds kind of gross to me though, and not just because I don't like WC sliders.  
**justj**Not sure about burger smelling candles. It would either make you very hungry and in need of a snack, or ill after a bit. Nope, no burger candles. Happy Birthday!!  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like a scent that Jan forgot in her Serenity line of candles. Wonder if Michael would appreciate it. Have a wonderful, safe trip and a Happy Birthday! Happy 4th to you!

# Runaway Parrot

As you might have read in my blog previously, we have a pet Scarlet Macaw parrot.Â  His name is Squawky, although he is more ‘screamy’ than he is ‘squawky’.Â  Occasionally when the weather is warm enough, we take Squawky outside – he either goes for walks with our family or he gets tied to a tree (so he doesn’t fly away) to enjoy nature.Â  A few weeks ago, we were sitting in our dining room having lunch when we saw the man from our local pet store approaching Squawky in the tree out front with a towel on his hand.Â  “He’s going to take your bird!”Â  I said to my husband, “You have to go outside!”Â  I guess this is where I should get it in that I didn’t think it was a good idea for Squawky to be outside alone in the first place, but we had to give the kids lunch and Squawky was enjoying himself so we didn’t make him come in with us.Â  So anyway, we ran outside, and told the pet store guy that he was our bird – apparently our neighbors were unaware that we had a parrot (guess they hadn’t seen him outside before; sometimesÂ  we put him in the backyard).Â  So the neighbors called the police, who called the pet store, who sent the bird-catcher.Â  He thought it was someone’s lost bird, and he was going to “rescue” Squawky – and lose some fingers in the process.Â  It’s not an exaggeration when they say that adult Macaw parrots can snap a broomstick handle with their super-strong beaks.Â  Check out a few of my husband’s parrot battle scars or use your imagination to see what one of those beaks can do to a fleshy finger.Â  Luckily we got out there just in time to save the pet store guy’s fingers, and he apologized profusely, as did our neighbors who had called the police.Â  The pet store guy found it unbelievable that we could have a macaw parrot (a notoriously loud bird) and not have the whole neighborhood know about it.Â  I told him that the neighbors on the side of the house where Squawky’s room is probably know about him, but the neighbors who called the police live across the street –Â  plus Squawky doesn’t scream when he’s outside.

But all’s well that ends well – as much as that bird irritates me sometimes, he has been a part of our family for 8 years now, and I don’t want to lose him.Â  Well, not to have him stolen or lost anyway – getting paid the going price of an obnoxious Scarlet Macaw might be kind of nice…Â  A joke, sort of.Â  

I looked around for a picture of Squawky in the tree, but I guess I don’t have one.Â  So here he is having a tremendous amount of fun taking a bath.Â  He is a bit larger now because this was taken 7 years ago.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/Squawkys-bath4.jpg)

\*\*UPDATE\*\* – Squawky was back in the tree tonight, so this time I made sure to get a picture of him enjoying his tree:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/Squawky-in-the-tree-6-30-10-1.jpg)

If only his personality was as beautiful as his plumage

### Comments

**Taylhis**@Mysmichelle - JJ is good, thanks for asking! I was beginning to wonder about you, thought you had forgotten about my blog!! Glad to see you haven't! How is the flood cleanup coming? Just got to talk to some friends who came up to visit from TN, and they have stayed dry. JJ is actually doing great lately since I moved him downstairs. He is ecstatic!!! And it makes me happy to see how happy he is... maybe he'll let me touch him one of these days...  
**Mysmichelle**So glad your bird is fine, he's so beautiful. How is JJ?  
**Love Your Parrot? Learn the Benefits Of Organic Parrot Food-cancer**[...] Runaway Parrot | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**taylhis**@jamiahsh - he was less obnoxious 7 years ago in some ways, yet so much more obnoxious now 7 years later... just depends upon what aspect of his personality to which you are referring ;)  
**taylhis**I thought you all might like to know that I've posted an update picture...  
**jamiahsh**What a story... luckily you got outside before the pet store guy had battle scars of his own or Squawky was taken. Was he as obnoxious 7 years ago?  
**taylhis**A skinny pig is a hairless, super-expensive guinea pig, as I'm sure you found out. I was in there today, and they told me they were telling "my friend with the Corgi" about it. That's what reminded me to put it on the blog; meant to do it weeks ago when it happened, oops...  
**justj**I heard that story when I went into the pet store. I was just wondering what a skinny pig was.  
**Ultimate Parrot Guide. | Wine Reviews**[...] Runaway Parrot | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# Tornado - Err, Weather Siren

If you’ve read my previous blog post, then you know that I wrote a letter of complaint to my local newspaper about our town’s policy change regarding the ~~tornado~~ weather siren.Â  Our siren is now activated for any severe thunderstorm warning, a policy which I consider hazardous since we seem to now be left without any warning of actual tornadic activity.Â  Ironically (or not, since the sirens have gone off no fewer than *eight* times this June 2010), today we got another dose of the siren.Â  As has been usual lately, we got an average thunderstorm, nothing more than some lightning, thunder, and rain.Â  I decided to videotape my street as the sirens were going off, with the intention of adding it to my blog to illustrate my point about writing a letter to the newspaper.Â  At the very least, the following video will help my daughter and I –Â  we are getting really good at doing impressions of the ~~tornado~~ weather siren – enough to drive our puppy crazy anyway.Â  

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

**Thunderstorms don’t detour weekend visitors to Waterloo Farm Museum :Do It Yourself**[...] Tornado – Err, Weather Siren | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**jamiahsh**I like Mare's response to my suspicions. Worth looking into... why else would it be doing NOTHING weather-wise and ten miles away it is storming good. But we are in the same boat, our siren is two blocks away... site of the ruins of the village hall. Which is going to be only half demolished for the time being until the total damage to the connecting fire hall can be assessed.  
**Taylhis**@jamiahsh - your suspicions...? @mary911 - I heard the same thing about the siren being for people outside, and in the case of hundreds of people being outside for the Jubilee or for those who live in the country, it makes sense I guess. But there needs to be another siren for tornadoes or for dangerous thunderstorms as you mentioned. NOT for every severe thunderstorm warning we get which can easily be over 10 a season, as we've seen this June! And since we live a block and a half from the fire station which has a siren mounted on top of it, that could explain why it sounds like such an emergency here. But I do know that we no longer go into our dirty basement, so let's pray that we never need to since we won't be down there taking cover. If we were ever to try to sell our house - note to self - do not show it to prospective buyers during a thunderstorm!!  
**mary911**I do believe your sirens are probably all linked together. In Defiance County, we cannot set off the sirens for just one part of the county. When we push the button, it sets off the entire county's sirens. I totally agree that these sirens should only be sounded in the event of a tornado warning, OR for incredibly severe weather that could do large amounts of damage. I do not believe it should be used for every thunderstorm that rolls through. I have heard one explanation for the siren that does make some sense to me..... I was told that the warning siren (whether it be for thunderstorm or tornado) is mainly for people who are outside because in some areas, a siren cannot be heard if you are inside of a house. This siren is used to make people aware to go inside, and check out the weather forecast and to "prepare" for whatever the weather condition is. I believe that more explanation is needed to be shared with the public. It's not right that it seemingly changed overnight for you. I hope that we do not change our protocols.....  
**jamiahsh**I'm beginning to think that the county's warning siren is linked together. At least when ours went off, it was doing something besides freaking the kids out here. Of course, when I mentioned my suspicion, everyone thought I was goofy.

# I'm Published - Again!

The title of this blog post is kind of a joke, just as it was the first time our local newspaper printed something from me.Â  A few months ago, they printed a picture I took of some baby doves in our tree in the front of the house, and today I am happy to see they printed my letter in the public forum!Â  Here is a copy:

**Siren Rules Need Clarification***I appreciated your article about the weather sirens  
called “Siren Rules Given” that was printed on Tuesday  
June 22, but it seems that further clarification is necessary  
to ensure the safety of the community. Because the  
rules were changed regarding when to activate the sirens  
â€” they are now being activated for severe storms, not  
just tornado warnings â€” what type of warning system  
does our town have in the event of an actual tornado?  
When did the guidelines change and why were they  
changed?  
The seemingly constant activation of the sirens lately  
(at least 6 times in the past month; with 3 sirens in ONE  
day on June 23!) is very scary for my 4 children. Other  
local parents are having the same concerns. Today there  
was a mild rumble of thunder at my daughterâ€™s T-Ball  
game, and at least one little boy began to cry. We can reassure  
our children, but itâ€™s concerning that in an actual  
tornado emergency that many people might not take it  
seriously since the now so-called â€˜weather sirensâ€™ are being  
activated weekly if not more often â€” it’s a â€˜boy who  
cried wolfâ€™ scenario that could lead to a tragic disaster.  
I would like to see our city go back to the old guidelines  
on the weather sirens â€” call them tornado sirens  
once again and only use them when the threat of tornadic  
activity is severe enough that us citizens should be  
taking shelter in our basements.*

I wrote this letter the other night and sent it in before I learned of [what happened to a town in our county](http://jamiahsh.tangents.org/2010/06/25/edgerton-blasted/" \t "_blank).Â  Edgerton was hit by a microburst and sustained devastating damage toÂ  many trees and a few buildings.Â  Thankfully, there is only one report of an injury that was not life-threatening.Â  I hope that people aren’t confused by my letter; clearly the people in Edgerton should have been in their basements on Wednesday night.Â  Their tornado sirens were warranted (as were ours probably since Edgerton is only about 10 miles away) on Wednesday night, and thankfully the injuries were kept to a minimum thanks to the smart people who took cover.Â  But we did not go into the basement on Wednesday night.Â  As I said in the letter, the sirens had gone off 3 times on Wednesday, and the kids panicked each time.Â  And since the sirens had been going off all month and it had been published in the newspaper that the siren was now for severe thunderstorm warnings, we decided that going downÂ  to the basement added to the drama and aided in keeping the kids alarmed and up late.Â  After Wednesday’s storm moved through, our town was spared any major damage, but this storm did cause tornadoes to the east in Indiana as well as that dangerous microburst in Edgerton.Â  Looking back, we probably should have gone to the basement, but we have been desensitized to the seriousness of the siren, and it didn’t seem like a big deal.Â  Part of the purpose of writing this letter was to vent my frustrations, and I also wrote it partly because I want some answers to the questions I raised.Â  I was hoping that maybe someone from our local branch of the National Weather Service will reply or perhaps we’ll hear from the fire chief, who was quoted giving the new siren rules in the original newspaper article to which I referred.Â  If there is any follow-up, I will keep you posted, and in the meantime, we will have to continue to calm the kids any time that now weekly ‘severe weather siren’ gets activated.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**No argument here, either. With the weather as it has been lately, your sirens will be going off every other day multiple times.... wait, they have!  
**justj**Living where I do, I don't hear any storm sirens unless I happen to be outside and the wind is blowing in the proper direction. For years, I've determined when to take shelter by watching the trees. I can't do that at night. My new phone gives alerts during bad weather. I can read them and make the determination as to what I want to do. You had a well thought out letter. I was wondering the same thing when I was driving through Town on the 23rd. I didn't even hear much on the radio. I saw more people coming out on their porches looking at the weather instead of taking cover. The boy who cried wolf is exactly what will happen. Funny I can't hear sirens from other local communities, but I can hear the fireworks from 12 miles away....  
**derek**If they want to continue the severe thunderstorm siren, it sounds like they should at least distinguish it somehow from a tornado (and microburst?) siren so people can react appropriately. Otherwise, going to the basement every time as you have discovered becomes tedious and soon forgotten. This could then lead to increased fatalities and injuries, potentially leading to lawsuits on top of everything else. This new system could cost your town big- perhaps an angle you could bring up.

# My Psychic Moment

This is a strange thing that happened to me; just thought I’d write a little note about it.

I was in my laundry room, folding laundry and humming the song “You Light Up My Life”, which is not a usual song on my playlist –Â  I probably haven’t heard it in a few years.Â  So I’m folding laundry, and the final Jeopardy question comes on the tv:

CATEGORY:Â  Billboard Hot 100  
CLUE:Â  Besides Frank and Nancy Sinatra, they’re the only other father and daughter who each had #1 solo hits.

Got your answer?Â  Mine was Nat King Cole and his daughter Natalie.Â  Although wrong, my guess must have been a reasonable one as two of the contestants also incorrectly guessed the Cole’s as their response.Â  The correct answer, however, was Pat Boone and his daughter Debby –Â  whose only #1 hit was ironically enough, “You Light Up My Life” – the same song I had inexplicably had in my head just minutes earlier!!

PS – I’ve never really heard of Debby Boone, and I certainly didn’t know who sang “You Light Up My Life”.Â  For all I knew, it was Lee Ann Rimes, whose version of the song is quite enjoyable.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**WOW! I see an infomercial in your future. with a 1-900 number. First 2 minutes free $1.99 each additional minute. Remember the Psychic Friends hotline with Dionne Warwick... speaking of performers ;)

# Fun At The Jubilee

For the life of me, I could not think of a creative title for this blog post, so I just went with a logical one.Â  Our town has an annual Jubilee – a little carnival on the town square that comes once a year.Â  For all but 1 of the 7 years that we’ve lived here (we were out of town during that missed year), we’ve enjoyed the Jubilee, especially now that we live within walking distance and don’t have to worry about parking – we can come and go as we please, and it’s especially nice to spend a night at the Jubilee and run home for potty breaks rather than using the disgusting Port-O-Potties.Â  It’s fun to walk around the square and soak up the bustling atmosphere while chatting with familiar faces among the crowd.Â  Although carnival rides are quite costly these days, we are lucky that my husband’s birthday always falls during the week of the Jubilee and that we have some generous relatives who send him much-appreciated birthday money (which my husband is always more than happy to spend on the kids at the Jubilee).Â  The kids had a night of fun on the carnival rides, and there was an extra treat at the Jubilee this year –Â  an animal show!!!

I, like many of my friends it turns out, was thinking that the animal show would not be anything spectacular – a few snakes, a parrot, and maybe a jumping dog or two.Â  But this was more like a traveling zoo – *in my backyard*!!!Â  First, a disclaimer – I love animals.Â  But I’m not one of those PETA activists – I find most people like that over-the-top; you know, those people who spend their time protesting the “horrible” conditions of zoos, blah, blah…Â  that’s not me.Â  I won’t go into too much detail, but basically I believe in taking good care of animals.Â  I believe that most zoos accomplish that, and overall, I believe that zoos are a great way to educate the public about animals and get people to care enough to want to take actions that will stop the destruction of wild animal habitats and the killing of species throughout the world.Â  That’s it in a nutshell, and I’ll stop there since that isn’t really what this post is about.Â  My point in bringing this up is to say that when I first heard there was going to be an animal show at the Jubilee, I wasn’t going to go, much like when I refuse to attend circuses (I’m not an extremist, but circuses ARE bad for animals!!Â  But that’s a whole ‘nother post…).Â  So we were at the Jubilee, and there was a huge crowd over by the animal stage, and my curiosity got the better of me – so we checked it out.

Like I kept saying all weekend, it was like a zoo in my backyard!Â  They had a tortoise, a turtle, a huge python, an albino cobra, a monitor lizard (komodo dragon’s cousin), an eagle owl (largest species of owl in the world with striking orange eyes), a blue and gold macaw parrot, a binturong (rare mammal who is always sleeping every time I see it at the zoo – this is the first time I’ve actually seen one awake and in action.Â  They have an odd buttery popcorn smell.Â  I put a picture of one below if you’re curious.), a kangaroo, a monkey, a full-sized leopard, AND… a 4-week-old white tiger!Â  The animals seemed well-cared for and their keepers were caring and knowledgeable, so I was quick to become a big fan – in fact, I attended 3 of the 8 shows they put on while they were in town!Â  I would have gone to more, but it was tough enough to get my little guy to sit through the two we brought him to (especially when there were very rude kids standing in front of him – I was so mad!).

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/Jubilee-animal-show-6-19-10-0071.jpg)

Saturday was one of my favorite days ever with me getting to take my kids to TWO animal shows and another one of my favorite things – a PARADE!!Â  I just love small town parades, and this one was especially great – the weather was perfect (in the 80’s, but with big puffy clouds and a nice breeze, humidity not too high for once), and two of my kids were marching in it!Â  PLUS, there was a vehicle handing out free stuffed dogs at the end, so we got one for each kid!Â  Best.Â  Jubilee.Â  Ever.Â  Â  Even if I didn’t make my annual trek to the Dippin’ Dots stand this year – that should tellÂ  you how much I enjoyed the animal show!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/Jubilee-animal-show-6-19-10-012.jpg)

### Comments

**justj**Missed most of the Jubilee. I did see part of the animal show when I stopped at Rita's for dinner one evening, but that was about it.  
**jamiahsh**Not at all... Syd told me... "Guess who we saw at the parade!?" Them Liz (she prefers that now, I guess... ah the tween set) told me Sunday afternoon. Sorry I missed out.  
**taylhis**Not part of the evacuation, stayed at home and went down to the basement instead since the siren went off AGAIN. They're starting to call it a weather siren rather than a tornado siren, so I think we're done going in the basement. I wish our town had a tornado siren too, so we are clear on when to go down, but I'll have to use my own "expertise" for that - that tornado spotter class I took should help. Friday, I waited until the severe threat had passed and walked down in the pouring rain to see if there was any damage or anything pieces of stage or anything missing, and to my surprise, there was actually something NEW at the Jubilee - a super slide! That was strange... and too bad they didn't have it on Wed night when we invested in the bracelets for the kids. Oh well. Yes, I missed the Dippin' Dots tremendously, but what are you gonna do? The budget was tight, so I took one for the team. I should put away a dollar a week and totally make up for it next year... though I'm afraid the lady won't be returning - she knew me by name and looked forward to seeing me every year. I'm afraid this will scare her away forever... And yes, I did see some familar faces after the parade - didn't have much time to visit though since I was too busy trying to politely get my hands on enough stuffed dogs for four kids to avoid fighting! Hope I didn't come across as rude...  
**jamiahsh**WOW! No Dippin' Dots?! Amazing! Glad the animal show was well done and that you got to enjoy multiple viewings. Were you part of the evacuation Friday night? O/C you would not have had far to go t reach safety. I heard you had some visitors at the parade who stopped by where you were watching to say Hi!

# It's Gone...

If you’ve traveled down I-75 in Southern Ohio since 2004, you’ve no doubt seen this; it was hard to miss:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/king-of-Kings.jpg)

The King of Kings statue no longer graces I-75

We’ve passed by this King of Kings statue outside Solid Rock Church on our way to Florida many times, and it was always awe-inspiring.Â  Quite unfortunately (and ironically), an act of God destroyed the infamous 62-foot statue – it was struck by lightning and subsequently burned to the ground.Â  No word yet if the church plans to rebuild the huge sculpture, and until they do, if they do, I-75 won’t be the same.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/King-of-Kings1.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I mis-spoke and said it was a statue... oops!  
**mary911**The touchdown Jesus at Notre Dame is not a statue. It's a beautiful piece of wall art (I believe it's a mosaic) on the side of one the buildings. When driving down the street past the football stadium, you can see Jesus with his arms raised.....right between the North end goal posts. Jamiahsh saw it last October on our way home from Chicago..... ;)  
**taylhis**I too read that the nickname is also a nickname of something at Notre Dame. I don't think your wish will be granted, Derek, because the steel framing still exists making it difficult to alter the pose. Personally, the nickname doesn't bother me - the more attention it gets and the more people that talk about means that the church gets that much more attention and they can get their message out.  
**derek**I just read about this, oddly enough, on mameworld.info, a retrogaming forum I visit. In the link they had someone was quoted as saying it would be rebuilt. I vote for an alteration though to prevent it from being nicknamed "touchdown Jesus" though.  
**jamiahsh**When I read about Touchdown Jesus, I thought it was the statue at The University of Notre Dame. Wasn't aware of that this was called the same but I do remember seeing it.

# Teacher, Teacher

Well, I survived.Â  Today was my try at teaching my 3–year-old daughter’s Sunday school class.Â  Every summer, church members have the opportunity to serve in our church’s Kids’ Kingdom in order to give the regular teachers a much deserved summer break.Â  Instead of requesting a specific age group where I might have been comfortable (last summer my husband and I taught 4th grade boys, and I’m used to teaching 5th and 7th grade girls from my youth group teaching experience), I decided to let the Kids’ Kingdom coordinator put me where I would be needed the most – so the 3-year-old room it was.Â  And lucky for me (cough cough), there aren’t very many 2-year-olds at our church at this time, so they were just combined with the 3-year-olds, putting me in charge of fourteen 2 and 3-year-olds for over an hour.Â  But it was SO much fun!!!

Not something I’d like to do every week (just because of my responsibilities at home with 4 of my own kids 24/7), but definitely worth a shot, especially since I was helping out.Â  I might evenÂ  sign up for another Sunday with the 2/3-year-olds; they were so cute!!Â  In anticipating my teaching experience today, one challenge I did not foresee were the kids who cried when their parents left.Â  We had about 4 of those – their world was blown apart when this strange lady (me) was in their classroom in place of their regular teacher.Â  3 of them got over the shock right away; one little girl did an actual 180Âº turn in personality.Â  She began the class by crying and clinging to the wall, only to come out of her shell later and insisting she sit by me at story time as well as wanting my constant attention.Â  The 4th little boy held out a little longer; he was a cute little guy who clung to the wall for most of the class.Â  He stopped crying for his parents within the first few minutes, but I couldn’t get him to participate in any of the activities.Â  I kept asking though, I didn’t let him fade into the background, and I think that helped.Â  Also helping was my teenage helper, without whom I surely would have lost track of all those kids.

Upon arriving, I was given a packet of papers detailing my lesson plan and ideas for activities related to the lesson which I will share:

**Basic Truth: God Made Me  
Key Question: Who can help you?  
Bottom Line: God made people who help me.  
Memory Verse: â€œBe kind and loving to each other.â€ Ephesians 4:32, NCV  
Bible Story Focus: God wants families to help each other.  
Boaz cares for Ruth and Naomi â€¢ Ruth 2:1-23**

As kids were arriving (and some were bawling into the doorframe), I had them sit at the table and draw their favorite foods in the pre-printed basket they were given on cardstock.Â  I got a big kick out of one little girl who drew chocolate fudgicles, chocolate soy milk (?), and chocolate pancakes.Â  I attempted to draw my own basket (filled with spaghetti; I didn’t think I could draw Greek food nor did I feel like explaining saganaki or kafta to 2 and 3-year-olds), but there was too much to do for me to finish my artwork.Â  Soon, we ran out of table space to color, so I moved on to this activity:

***Get Up and Go****What You Need: Blue paintersâ€™ tape, masking tape and different forms of transportation toys such as cars, horses, trucks, trains, buses, boats and airplanes.  
What You Do: Make â€œroadsâ€ on the floor with the masking tape. Make â€œwaterwaysâ€ on the floor with the blue tape. Pretend you are traveling on the roads with the trucks, horses and cars and in the water with the boats. Fly the airplanes around the room. Make up places to go and let your imagination take you on a fun trip.  
What You Say:  
During the activity: â€œWho wants to go on a trip with me? These cars and trucks can take us places. These boats can take us places. Oh! And look! We have horses and an airplane too! We can use these to go all kinds of places. This white tape can be our road and this blue tape can be water. Come on! Letâ€™s get up and go!â€  
At the end of the activity: â€œCars and trucks and boats can take us to all kinds of places. Thereâ€™s one more way to get somewhere that we havenâ€™t talked aboutâ€¦our feet! We can WALK to places too! In our Bible story today, two ladies named Ruth and Naomi have to use their feet to get to a new pla*ce.â€

So as you can see, the instructions were laid out pretty well for me.Â  After the kids laid out their “roads” (and had a BLAST doing so, I must say!Â  Gives me a great idea for an inexpensive, non-messy fun activity to do at home this summer with my own kids!), it was time to go down the hall for story time.Â  Here we met up with the 4-year-old group and the 5-year-old group (of which my other daughter belongs; she was happy to see me!), and the kids listened to a Bible story.Â  During the story, my teenage helper stayed behind to set out the snack, so it was soley up to me to keep our group of 14 quiet and listening to the story – yeah right.Â  I did the best I could, and I even got toÂ  dance withÂ  the kids.

We returned toÂ  our classroom, had snack, and then we tried the Foil Food activity:

***Foil Food****What You Need: Aluminum foil.  
What You Do: Give each child a piece of aluminum foil. Show them how to shape the foil into different food shapes like a hot dog, banana, apple, small grapes, chicken fingers, French fries and carrot sticks or anything a child could easily shape with foil.  
What You Say:Â  â€œWatch what I can do with this foil. (Shape the foil into a food item.) Look! Itâ€™s a (name of food). I have some foil for you too. You can shape it into all kinds of foods like a banana or several small grapes or even an apple. Ruth and Naomi were very happy to find food to eat when they got back to Bethlehem. God gave them Boaz to help take care of them. God gives you people to help take care of you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people who help me.â€*

The kids had a ball with the foil activity too, even though some of them misunderstood – my little friend the chocolate lover, requested that I make her a butterfly out of the foil…Â  oh, and there was one little guy who completely misunderstood and began to EAT the foil 

When the kids grew tired of that activity, there was still about 15 minutes left, so we did some free play with the toys and puzzles in the room as I did not feel prepared for the other activities on the list.Â  One little girl kept putting a cow toy on my shoe, and she and about 5 others were loving it when I would react every time – OH, there’s a COW on my shoe!Â  Am I going to have to take this cow home with me?!?Â  That lasted about 10 minutes; imagine if I had tried that one with my 7th graders – they’d be gossipping about me being bi-polar as they do about one of their teachers, gossip which I try to stop, of course.

My teen helper had to take about half the kids to the bathroom at some point, so I decided it was a good time to try this activity – I didn’t want to try it with all the kids there since we were only given about 6 pieces of fake food.Â  Having 4 kids of my own, I’m well-versed in kid-fight-prevention, so I knew doing the following activity with only 6 pieces of food and 14 kids was a recipe for disaster.Â  But with about 8 in the room, I thought it was worth a try…Â  until the bathroom group came back in the middle of the activity…

***Fast Food****What You Need: Toy food items, a large basket like a laundry basket and a stopwatch.  
What You Do: Spread the toy food items all over the room. Place the laundry basket in the middle of the room. Challenge the children to see how fast they can get all of the food into the basket. Time them and be ready to tell them how fast they do it each time. Continue doing the activity as long as the children are interested.  
What You Say:  
At the start of the activity: â€œA girl named Ruth has to look for food to go in her basket in our Bible story today. Our basket needs some food in it too. Do you see some food that we can put in it? (Pause for response.) OK. When I say â€œgo,â€ I want you to put the food in our basket as fast as you can. On your markâ€¦get setâ€¦go!â€  
At the end of the activity: â€œYou got faster and faster each time you put the food in the basket. I wonder how long it took Ruth to put food in her basket? I canâ€™t wait to hear her story.â€*

Ok,Â I wasn’t given a stopwatch, so I just had half the kids hide food items and the other half find them… Â but then the bathroom group came back and we had too many kids and too little room and too few food items to hide. Â My little friend threw a not-so-little tantrum because she wanted to be the one to hold the basket – and she was going to have her turn as I said, but first she had to wait, which wasn’t cool with her (ADHD diagnosis, anyone? Â It’s sad, but they seem to be slapping that one on kids left and right these days). Â But oh, great, now I had a kid screaming just as parents are starting to arrive. Â Luckily she got over it quickly, and the parents came a few minutes earlier than I had expected – good thing too, since I was out of activities for which I had supplies.

Overall, a GREAT experience – I’m so proud of my own little 3-year-old who was not only one of the best behaved in the group (of course), but who was surprisingly not very clingy to mom and let me be a teacher to her peers. Â I think the kids had trouble remembering my name, so by the end of the hour, I was known as ‘Teacher, Teacher’ complete with pant-leg-tugging – hence the name of this blog post.

Next up – in August I’m scheduled to help with my 5-year-old’s class, and I’m excited to see the differences in behavior between the two groups. Â But after today, I’m quite tempted to volunteer for another Sunday in the 3-year-old room… Â they are fun kids who are quite sweet. Â My only regret is that there were so many of them, which impeded my ability to get to Â have more fun with them on a one-on-one basis.Â  Plus there were a few that were handfuls (well, just my little friend and then another little boy who started all kinds of trouble all morning!), but it was still hard to give attention to the kids who were being good, and that should never be the case.Â  Too bad I know in my heart that I’d be spreading myself way too thin if I volunteered toÂ  be a Sunday school teacher.Â  I need to stick with the youth group kids I committed to, and both groups plus my own kids at home would be way too much…Â  something to think about when my kids get older and my youth group kids graduate though!!

For those of you looking for ideas for Christian fun at home, for your small Bible study groups, or a Christian daycare, here are the rest of the activities I was given and didn’t have the time / materials to do:

***Looking for Food****What You Need: A clear plastic soda bottle or a large clean peanut butter jar, uncooked white rice, several pieces of RuntsÂ® candy and a hot glue gun.  
Tip: RuntsÂ® candy comes in a mix of green, red, yellow, purple and orange. You can pretend these are little green apples, red cherries or red apples, yellow bananas, purple grapes and orange oranges  
What You Do:  
At the start of the activity: Fill the plastic container no more than 2/3 full with the rice. Put in several pieces of the RuntsÂ® candy pieces. Put the lid on tight and hot glue it.  
Tip: Make one bottle for every three children to share.  
During the activity: Show the bottle to the children. Point out that there are different kinds of â€œfoodâ€ inside the bottle. Their job is to roll the bottle around in their hands until they see a piece of â€œfood.â€  
What You Say:Â  â€œCome and sit with me. I have something to show you. Watch the white rice while I turn this bottle. Tell me if you see anything. (Wait for a child to respond.) Yes! There are little pieces of food hiding in the white rice. There are little green apples, red apples or red cherries, yellow bananas, orange oranges and purple grapes. Here. You can hold the bottle. Keep turning it and see what you can find. Two women named Ruth and Naomi have to go and look for food in todayâ€™s Bible story.â€*

***Make a Match****What You Need: â€œFood Itemsâ€ (from the Activity Pages on the Web site), scissors and white cardstock.  
What You Do:  
At the start of the activity: Make two copies of â€œFood Itemsâ€ on white cardstock and cut the cards apart along the perforated lines. This will give you one set of cards to play a game of memory match. To play the memory game, place all of the cards facedown. A child will turn over two cards at a time and try to make a match. If a match is not made the next person has a turn. If a match is made the player can go again.  
Tip: Make more than one set of cards so more than one group of children can play at a time. You can pair children up or put as many as four children with each set of cards.  
During the activity: Show the picture cards to the children. Ask them to help you identify each food picture. Next, place all of the cards face down and play a game of memory match.  
What You Say:Â  â€œBoaz helped Ruth and Naomi in our Bible story because they were in his family. God wants families to help each other. God gave you a family to help you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people to help me. Thatâ€™s right! In our story Ruth and Naomi had to look for food, right? Well, I have a game for us to play and weâ€™re going to have to look for food too!â€*

***My Favorite Food****What You Need: No supplies needed.  
What You Do: Sit in a circle with the children and play a food memory game. Begin the game by saying. â€œMy favorite food is an apple.â€ The child next to you will say, â€œMy favorite food is an apple and (their food choice).â€ The next child will repeat, â€œMy favorite food is an apple, (name of food) and (their food choice).â€ Assist the children in remembering when the list gets long.  
What You Say:  
At the end of the activity: â€œRaise your hand if you like food. (Raise your hand really high.) Me too! We all like food and we all NEED food. Ruth and Naomi needed food in our Bible story today. They also needed help to find food. God gave them Boaz to help them find food. God gives you people to help you too. Who can help you? [Bottom Line] God made people to help me.â€*

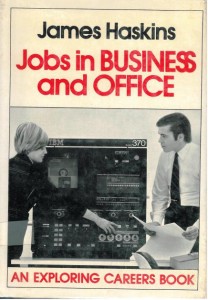
(Ok, so this activity didn’t require any materials, but I found it way too daunting to attempt for a group of 14 2-3-year-olds…)

### Comments

**Fabric Shower Curtain**Italian and Greek Foods are indeed very spicy. sometimes they are so spicy hot ';`  
**Gold Detector :**my father is greek that is why i also love greek foods. Greek food in my opinion is one of the world's best tasting food,.:  
**derek**Quite the post there, Taylhis! I had to read this post in chunks. I'm happy to see that they gave you more activities than you could use to make sure the time was filled. Many times subbing, the teachers deliberately wrote more than needed and said so. Of course, in my case a free time was not an option but for 2-3-year-olds it's kind of a must I think.  
**jamiahsh**Aww... sounds like you had fun. At least the few who had melt downs to begin the class calmed down.

# That IBM Is Almost As Big As Me

I forgot now how I found this site, but I got some good laughs out of a blog called [awfullibrarybooks.wordpress.com](awfullibrarybooks.wordpress.com" \t "_blank)  
It’s mostly a tribute to books the blog’s authors and contributors found in libraries that are extremely outdated.Â  I got a big kick out of this gem:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/ancientibm.jpg)

When's the last time someone checked this one out from the library? I mean, checked it out to actually use it, not just to laugh at it.

Ok, computer ~~dorks~~ um, experts – who can tell me what some of those little doo-hickeysÂ  are on that [IBM 370](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM_System/370" \t "_blank)?Â  I’ve already done some simple research and found that this computer is circa 1970.Â  Has anyone played around on something like this?

### Comments

**justj**Hmm. In looking at the picture, I see the display lights in the upper right hand of the machine. Reading these was fun, and they would display the status of the machine. A teletype was sometimes added to allow the messages to be read in "English" Dials and buttons at the bottom would allow you to program in APL or Assembler. Also controlled certain functions of the computer (read cards, tapes, ect. ) I'm not sure what is installed in the upper left. Can't make it out from the picture. Other pictures on the web looked like it was something that wasn't on all the machines..  
**taylhis**Exactly... even given it's 1970 birthdate, I was thinking that it wouldn't be that much of a stretch for my peers to have had experience with it. Not saying anyone is old or anything... sometimes these things hang around. Nowadays, in 2010, the thing is truly a dinosaur :)  
**derek**A little bit before my time, I think. :o But no, that doesn't necessarily make you old, JustJ. As we know businesses tend to hang on to old systems for as long as they are useful even when they are severely outdated.  
**justj**Hey, I think I had an interview to work on one of those once... Does that make me OLD?  
**jamiahsh**It's the IRAC! Or... Information Retrieval Associative Computer.

# He's Not Half The Man He Used To Be...

Our little puppy Gizmo is now about 6 months old, and we’ve been marveling at what a handsome young man he’s become.Â  But yesterday, he had his appointment for his, um, fixing.

He handled it like a trouper, and we haven’t noticed any behavior changes, positive nor negative.Â  We’re happy the little guy is ok, and he doesn’t even seem to need his prescribed pain meds.Â  I’ve always had girl dogs before him, and it seems to be a bigger ordeal for females since the incision is larger.Â  Yesterday when we picked Gizmo up from the vet, he seemed happy to see us but still a little dazed:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/Gizmos-big-day-of-change-6-10-10-002.jpg)

And while we were waiting for the um, procedure to be complete, we had a few hours to kill, so we began at Meijer where the kids rode the 1Â¢ electronic horse.Â  We also learned that our almost 2-year-old son knows how to say ‘pop tart’ since he loves the treats:

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

And then we went over to a nice scenic place on the Maumee River called Independence dam, but we had some unwanted excitement and had to call [our friend Mary](http://mary911.tangents.org/" \t "_blank) at work.Â  Nothing bad, atÂ  least we don’t think, but no one was hurt, if that’s what you’re thinking (Mary is a 911 dispatcher).Â  The water level was very high due to all the rain in the area recently, and the current was swift around the falls from the dam.Â  And we kept seeing something suspicious bobbing to the surface – some tires, some large beige objects, and a few other strange looking items that just weren’t moving right.Â  My first thought was that it was an ATV, and that someone had been 4-wheeling and went into the river.Â  After a few more bobs, we saw that the wheels must have belonged to a full-size vehicle since we could still see the tires’ rims.Â  The kids’ imaginations began working overtime, and soon they began to see heads and hands reaching out of the water.Â  My husband and I saw nothing of the sort, but it was an odd sight, and we figured better safe than sorry so we called Mary’s work number – 911 – and apologized for the non-emergency nature of the call.Â  The officer that was sent to talk with us was very nice and completely understanding about why we had called, and as it turns out, he is head of the Sheriff’s Department dive team.Â  At first, he seemed to think that nothing was amiss, but as he watched the bobbing debris, he seemed to become increasingly interested.Â  He told us he’d keep an eye on it, and we drove further into the park to turn around, and when we came back, there were more officers in the park.Â  I’m curious to know what was found, if anything…Â  perhaps our tip helped them locate a minivan that’s beenÂ  missing since it went down in the ice 2 years ago or something else useful.Â  If anyone hears anything, let me know!

### Comments

**taylhis**@derek - I see what you mean. I just had the window of that news story open on my comp while reading my comments. Super-scary; next time I'm camping near a river or have a kid camping and it's raining, I'll think twice and review safety procedures. Let's pray for the Arkansas families affected...  
**derek**Living creatures tend to do that- grow ;) This post reminded me of the news I heard today about flash floods through an Arkansas campground area, killing several people. :(  
**jamiahsh**Oh, Beeber... growing so fast! Wasn't it yesterday when I had him in a pouch walking the sidewalks of Manhattan? And GIZMO... just the picture tells me how he has grown.

# Zack And Kelly Having A Baby?

Do you remember the *extremely cheesy* Saturday morning kids’ sitcom on NBC called Saved by the Bell?Â  The show saw the beginning of the careers of famous now-adult actors and reality show hosts Mario Lopez, Mark-Paul Gosselaar, and Tiffani-Amber Thiessen.

I used to watch Saved by the Bell every week, and I caught every episode at least once again in syndication.Â  There was at least one spinoff: Saved By The Bell – The College Years, and a few made-for-tv-movies that followed the exploits of the Bayside High School crew.Â  In one of the movies, that famous on-again, off-again couple from the show, Zach and Kelly (played by Gosselaar and Thiessen) were united in holy matrimony…Â  I didn’t know that, since I was only interested in the original show, not so much the spin-offs or updates.

Sometimes I peruse the celebrity gossip (and sometimes current events info) site tmz.com, especially lately when they’ve been reporting a lead in the Stacy Peterson case (a missing woman from the Chicago area whose case I’ve been following because I used to live in the area).Â  For their part, tmz.com seems to have quite accurate info and usually has it much earlier than other news outlets.Â  So the other day, I noticed a headline on Tmz saying that [“Kelly” – aka Tiffani-Amber Thiessen – is pregnant and looking ready to pop](http://www.tmz.com/2010/06/09/tiffani-thiessen-baby-belly-pregnant-saved-by-the-bell/" \t "_blank), as they say.Â  At the bottom of that article, there was a link to another Saved by the Bell story:Â  [Zach Morris and Kelly Kapowski –Â  Back Together!](http://www.tmz.com/2009/09/17/zack-morris-and-kelly-kapowski-back-together/" \t "_blank) If you click the link, you’ll find that the Saved by the Bell actors were out and about together in NYC in September.

Interesting…Â  wasn’t September about 9 months ago?Â  An interesting footnote to this story is that I read that Mark-Paul Gosselaar was divorced from his wife only weeks ago.Â  So are Zach and Kelly from Saved by the Bell having a baby together?Â  Did you read it here first?Â  Most importantly, will the actors continue their name-hyphenating tradition when they name the baby?Â  How about Saved by the Bell – The Baby Years?Â  Stay tuned…

### Comments

**derek**I think I watched maybe two episodes of the original show...  
**jamiahsh**There was an awful, very short lived New Class (Zack, Kelly, etc. lookalikes and name changes) with Mr. Belding and later Screech coming on as a teacher. Lasted about as long as the College Half-Year lasted. Time will tell if we see a little Thiessen-Gosselaar (did I get it right?).

# How To Plug The Oil Leak In The Gulf

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/06/oil-leak-plug.jpg)

### Comments

**Hank Ness**The Gulf oil leak is a complete disaster...I feel bad for all the people who are affected by this and Obama should step in and make sure that all are compensated by BP for this attrocity  
**taylhis**Oops, I should have made sure to say that this wasn't my photoshopping job... just an email forward I received from my aunt who lives on the Gulf coast - they're pretty frustrated over there.  
**derek**Nice photoshop job! I could be mean and wish certain politicians were inside at the time, but I won't. 8)  
**justj**That might just work.... :)  
**jamiahsh**HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA! THAT IS RICH! :D

# From T-Ball To The MLB

Ok, so it’s doubtful that our 6-year-old daughter Sammie is headed for the MLB after having had her first day of T-Ball today.Â  If sports skills and hand-eye coordination are hereditary, my kids are definitely not inheriting those traits from their mother’s side.Â  I wouldn’t mind having a kid in the MLB, but it’s not going to be something I’m pushing for or aiming toward, especially given my lack of athleticism.Â  But Sammie has been very excited about starting T-Ball for weeks, and we like to let our kids try as many activities as we can afford to take them to (time AND money-wise) so they can see what they like and where their strengths lie.Â  Sammie brought home the T-Ball flier a few months ago and said she wanted to join.Â  Of course, this is coming from the same kid who said the same thing about wrestling in the winter, but we knew she had no idea what that was about, and she was talked into doing Brownies instead.Â  So I was worried that she would get to T-Ball today and decide it wasn’t for her and want to quit on the first day.Â  But luckily, she seemed to have liked her first day of T-Ball.Â  We try to keep by the guideline in this family that once you sign up for something, you stick with it for the duration of your commitment.Â  You don’t have to sign up again, but you should fulfill your original obligation.

When we arrived at the ball field today, the head coach (and coincidentally also aÂ  fellow small group leader for our church youth group) gave a spiel about how the 20th pick in the MLB draft last night was from our town and began in our same T-Ball program, hence my blog post title.Â  Our local guy was picked by the Boston Red Sox, a funny twist of irony for his father, the lifelong Yankees fan.Â  While immediate relation is enough to convert some lifelong Yankees fans to Red Sox fans overnight, whether the small town / county connection is enough for others remains to be seen. Â  ðŸ˜‰

From what I saw, Sammie did a good job today in T-Ball.Â  She didn’t catch every one (any?) of the ground balls that were hit her way, but it was her first time ever trying anything of the sort, and she gave it her best shot.Â  She tried everything that was suggested by the coach, and didn’t sit out any of the activities.Â  She had fun, and as long as she sticks with it, I think T-Ball will serve the purpose for which we intended: a fun activity that gets Sammie out of the house for a few hours a week this month so the kids don’t kill each other – and she learns the fundamentals of baseball at the same time!

And our pastor thought of our family when our church had extra tickets for an upcoming Toledo Mud Hens game (minor league baseball), so I think this will enhance Sammie’s appreciation of that as well – looking forward to it!!

Here’s a video – I apologize if it’s hard to see, but the team went way out into the field, and I could barely see them let alone tape them when I had an almost 2-year-old and a 3-year-old to chase at the same time.Â  At one point, the camera dips down to catch my almost 2-year-old as he ran crazy – thought I’d tape him since I couldn’t seem to film Sammie playing any baseball.Â  She’s the one in the yellow shirt, and if you watch untilÂ  the end, she does throw a ball.

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's good to see Sammie doing something she enjoys. I remember enjoying tee ball myself way back when. I could really wallop the ball- too bad I couldn't do the same thing when pitched to five years later in intermediate league. Seems I should have probably played in the little league like my brother in the years between... ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**How exciting! I would love to see Sammie play. I don't suppose it would work out for me to see a game. Send me her schedule.  
**jamiahsh**I concur, justj. I have two (niece/nephew) in tball and it is fun to watch! No outs, go through the lineup each inning. All the kids in the field at the same time chasing the ball. And best of all... no screaming bleacher coaches/umps.  
**justj**Hey, let me know before the next game. I always loved t-ball. It is fun to watch the little ones try to learn the game. Much older than that, and the parents seem to get in the way, trying to get the kids to win, but that subject could be its own blog topic.  
**jamiahsh**We had a female wrestler when I was in high school.  
**jamiahsh**Hmm... nope, a local draftee is NOT enough for this die-hard Yankee fan to convert. Has to be A LOT more than that. But good luck, anyway. If it was my son, I would cheer for the player. ;) I really admire your attitude toward your childrens' involvement in activities. They should see them through to the end of their initial commitment. I don't recall the wrestling interest, though.

# Waiting...

It’s 1am and I can’t sleep.Â  Why?Â  We are right in line for our second round of severe weather tonight.Â  Round one was kind of fun.Â  The two older kids were still awake, and they came downstairs panicked at the TornadoÂ  Warning that was flashing on their tv.Â  It turned out to be for a different county, but then one was issued for our county a few minutes later.Â  But it soon became clear that our townÂ  would be spared – a few very soft claps of thunder, and we were done.Â  The tornado sirens blared, so we dutifully went to the basement, but before we could even get everyone down there, the sirens were off.Â  So right before bed, I checked the radar again, and round two is headed straight for us.Â  I’ve had the news on while laying in bed, and after all of the very serious reports of damage and that which is yet to come, I gave up on sleep.Â  My husband and I came downstairs toÂ  watch the radar on the news and…Â  wait.

I’ve got a comforter and some bottled water and snacks waiting by the basement door; it looks really bad.Â  I hope I’m over-reacting, but better safe than sorry, I guess – and it’s 1:30 in the morning so it’s easy to panic; I’m tired.Â  Plus, preparing for disaster keeps my mind of the feeling of impending doom from outside.Â  The county just north of us has a Tornado Warning.Â  It feels like a pressure cooker outside – the humidity is stifling, and the wind is picking up.Â  So far they’re saying on the news that tornadic activity is heading straight for our town, but weather is very unpredictable.Â  But even if we don’t get a tornado, they said to expect winds 80-90 mph.Â  Did I mention we invested in an inflatable pool for the kids yesterday?Â  ðŸ˜‰

I’m praying for the safety of our family and friends who are spread all over this county and the next one over.Â  I’m praying for our old house and for all of the tall trees around it.Â  There are reports of heavy damage (possible tornado) in the county to the east, and we have many friends who live there – praying for everyone.

Well, this thing appears to be in our county now, and no tornado warning for us.Â  The wind is howling, so I better go before I lose power – I have flashlights and battery radios, think we’re well prepared…Â  just difficult to decide at what point it’s safer to panic the kids by waking them and taking them into the basement…Â  always a tough decision.Â  I’ve lived in the midwest all my life, but this is so much harder when you’re the parent and the one who has to make the calls.

Stay safe everyone…Â  I will leave an update on this post tomorrow, but so far, it looks good for us – the storm turned due east at the last minute…

\*UPDATE\* –Â  Yes, the storm turned away from us at the last minute – a miracle.Â  So other than being extremely tired, we are unscathed.Â  Some friends I saw at church today are ok too, so I’ll have to do some digging about the rest of the area, but I think everyone is ok!Â  Time to catch up on that sleep…

### Comments

**justj**So far everyone I know is OK. I've heard of some house damage, but not much. No big trees down around here.  
**jamiahsh**AWWW... thanks, Mare. I think we were relatively luck here in E-town. No sirens, lightening, wind, but nothing major. Scary radar but all is well. And I agree, storms really do bring out the worst in people. Forget about full moons  
**mary911**I was keeping close tabs on Edgerton, Bryan, and...well, all of Williams County last night! I'm glad to hear all of my friends are well. I haven't heard anything from Justj yet, so hopefully he is well. A funnel cloud was spotted in the Evansport area, but it didn't touch ground. Unfortunately that same storm cell is the one that caused the tornados in Fulton County and devastated the town of Millbury in Lucas/Wood County. It was a scary night at first. I tend to worry....not about me, because I love storms, but I worry for my friends and loved ones. We were extremely busy. Amazing how many people, after all the public notices and education we provide, still have no idea what that siren is for. And if they know what the siren means, all common sense leaves their system and have no idea what to do. So they call.....and they call.....and they call....I think people don't think about it because it has been so long since it has happened here, they don't believe it will ever happen. Not being prepared is the worst thing. I'm glad that you were and I'm glad you are all safe! :)  
**derek**Actually, I meant shortly after noon.  
**derek**We got a brief downpour this morning that lasted minutes, but went back to a sunny day shortly after. I did just hear some thunder though (yes, it's still sunny!)  
**jamiahsh**6:30AM... I'm still here. Our town (no pun intended) seems to be in one piece. Sorry about the lack of sleep. Hopefully, things calm down today. Be safe and keep your brood safe. Love you guys.

# Death By Hollywood

There has been a rash of celebrity deaths lately – Art Linkletter, Gary Coleman, Dennis Hopper, and Rue McClanahan (second to last survivor of the Golden Girls) to name a few.Â  As with many celebrities, circumstances surrounding some of these deaths have been quite out of the ordinary.

Dennis Hopper was in the midst of a frantic and nasty divorce when he lost his battle to cancer.Â  His wife is currently battling for her share of the estate – seems the pre-nup stipulated that the couple be married AND living together at the time of his death.Â  She contends that living in the guest house on the same property IS living together…

I listened toÂ  the 911 call from Gary Coleman’s wife, and it’s creepy to say the least.Â  I’ve never heard a person so cold – “”send someone quick because I donâ€™t know if heâ€™s going to, like, be alive.â€Â  And that she can’t help him because she “doesn’t want to be traumatized right now…” and “I’ve got blood on myself, I’m gagging, I can’t deal.”Â  Me, me, me. Â  So WOW.Â  Does Shannon (aka Mrs. Coleman – well, not really…Â  as it turns out,Â  there was a secret divorce backÂ  in ’08) have something to hide?Â  My guess is that she is digging herself a deeper hole with every press conference, er, day that goes by…Â  It’s especially interesting how she is quick to do press conferences, shooting a video for tmz.com just one day after her ~~husband’s~~ er, roommate’s death.Â  You can listen to Shannon’s refusal to help Gary [here in the sad 911 call](http://www.tmz.com/2010/06/02/gary-coleman-911-call-brain-hemorrhage/" \t "_blank), and[here is a link to the video](http://www.tmz.com/videos?autoplay=true&mediaKey=b8975458-18fb-4b5c-9f82-72b96ba7fd3f" \t "_blank) shot a day later when she contradicts herself – in the 911 call, she says she can’t help Gary because she has seizures so she can’t drive, whereas in the video, she says that Gary has done nice things for her, like buy her a car.Â  So…Â  why would he buy her a car if she can’t drive?Â  Oh, and not a tear has fallen from Shannon’s eyes publicly since Gary’s death.Â  Something’s fishy here, and Ms. Price’s penchant for being in the spotlight is going to be the catalyst to her unraveling, it seems.

Last night was the first night I was able to spend at home in a long time.Â  I was excited to see that the Cubs had a night game, and I was looking forward to getting to sit and watch my first entire baseball game since opening day…Â  but I had read the schedule wrong – actually I’ve been a day off all week.Â  My husband being off work on Memorial Day got me a day behind, and then somehow I overcompensated and got a day ahead in the later part of the week.Â  Just the latest on a lengthening list of stupid things I’ve done lately – where is my brain?Â  So anyway, baseball-gameless, I decided to watch some “junk tv” – whatever I could find in useless reality shows or documentaries.Â  I was looking for “Fantastic Houseboats”, but I couldn’t find the Travel Channel (have I mentioned that I never watch tv?Â  I don’t even know what our channels are!Â  Well, I know Noggin, PBS, and Nickleodeon by heart, but nothing other than kids’ channels…), so I ended up watching something called “Jail” that was really a Cops knock-off and then an interesting show on E! –Â  20 Most Horrifying Hollywood Murders.Â  Ah, celebrity gossip meets true crime = perfect junk tv!Â  It was quite interesting; though I had already known about most of the cases which included:Â  Nicole Brown Simpson, Bonnie Lee Bakley, Rebecca Shaeffer (an 80s tv star that was murdered by a stalker, how sad), Dominique Dunne, Bob Crane, Sharon Tate, Black Dahlia, Tupac Shakur, Biggie Smalls, and Jose and Kitty Menendez.Â  I did miss a little bit of the show, but I kept waiting for the Phil Hartman case to come on – I thought that would be considered ‘horrifying’ as he was unexpectedly murdered by his cocaine-addicted wife Brynn who then committed suicide.Â  Perhaps it was one of the 20 on the show and I just missed it?Â  And the show also spotlighted something I’d like to try if I ever find myself in Hollywood again: the [Dearly Departed Tours](http://www.dearlydepartedtours.com/DDT/tours.htm" \t "_blank).Â  The name speaks for itself.Â  I have a macabre sense of curiosity that way, which is also why I’d like time someday to delve into Steven Bocho’s (famous producer who gave us NYPD Blue, Hill Street Blues, and Doogie Howser, MD) first attempt at a novelÂ  – where I got the title of this post.Â  Found Death By Hollywood at the Dollar Store and it looked worth a buck to sit on my shelf for years until I had the time to read it.

So anyway, lots of death in Hollywood lately, and it’s sad.Â  Even for those of us with somewhat morbid curiosities; there were still people behind the celebrity facades, and their loved ones left behind are hurting.Â  No matter to what degree of fame they rose, they were all human beings, so how could their deaths be anything but sad?

### Comments

**taylhis**When referring to Dennis Hopper, they keep referring to Easy Rider, but I knew him from Speed - he made an excellent villain in Speed. I might have to give Easy Rider a try, depending on what I read about it on imdb.com. I watched Golden Girls every Saturday night when it was on in the 80s, then again on Lifetime a few years ago, so I knew right away who Rue McClanahan was. And I remember Art Linkletter from his appearances on Bill Cosby's version of Kids Say The Darndest Things. Art originated the show, but that was before my time. I did not know about his daughter who committed suicide in the 60s - he blamed it on LSD although none was found in her system, but that's interesting... wonder how long something like that stays in one's system? It probably could have messed with her brain enough to cause that. Sad. And I watched Diff'rent Strokes too... but I watched it more when it was in syndication. I remember being all excited that we were supposed to meet Gary Coleman on a train since my dad worked for Chicago Northwestern (a railroad company) and we lived in Zion where Gary was from. But we were disappointed that Gary had to cancel because of a kidney transplant. Must have been 1983 when he got his first transplant. My parents have the pictures of the train, but no Gary, of course. It's just sad that he died broke and lonely since he had been estranged from his parents as well.  
**derek**Why oh why do they release these 911 calls to the public?? Anyway, I expect we will hear more about his ex-wife (not widow I guess). I can't really speak about any of the other deaths like Hopper- I really hadn't heard his name until the news about his death nor the former Golden Girl. Art Linkletter I have heard of of course, but even so I don't think I ever saw him in anything as he was a bit before my time.  
**jamiahsh**I also heard the 9-1-1 call from Mr. Coleman's "friend". So fearful of blood she had to make the call from another room? Apparently, there had been abuse on both sides. So tragic and I'm sure this isn't the last we will hear of the infamous call, sadly. And don't forget Cop Rock... was that not a Bochco production... such as it was?  
**smiley face clip art**Dennis Hopper will forever be remembered for his great movies. It's truly sad and a great loss. Not just for the movie industry but in general as he was a man of integrity. His most rememorable movie for me is Blue velvet. Regards, Jennifer [smilys](http://smilysdownload.com)

# The Irony...

First, in honor of Memorial Day, I’d like to begin with a special thanks to all of our vets – thank you for all your sacrifice, no matter how high the price you paid while serving our country.

My family had an action-packed super-fun weekend planned starting the Friday night before Memorial Day.Â  It lived up to its expectations, but not quite in the way I expected.Â  It began with a Friday night plan to go to the last home game (Fort Wayne Indiana is the closest) of the CIFL – arena football.Â  But we got a call on Friday afternoon from the Memorial Coliseum saying that the game had been canceled due to the fact that the opponent’s team – the Marion Mayhem – had folded on Wednesday.Â  That’s right, the team went out of business.Â  And they didn’t tell us ticket holders until two days later, which was the day of the event.Â  And we had had so much fun at the first arena football game we attended that we had invited and planned for a large group of 11 to go with us this time… including some last minute emergency babysitter finagling when our regular one had to cancel days before.Â  So anyway, I was not going to cancel on our new babysitter, so after much searching (there was NOTHING else going on in Fort Wayne Friday night!), we ending up finding a (cheap!) movie theater that still had a great movie playign though it’s an old one for the theaters: Book of Eli.Â  A fun time, though not quite as fun as arena football, and I can’t help but feelÂ  that the entire league is going to fold also, so that’s the end of that kind of fun, I guess…Â  But it was just ironic that we had told everyone how fun it was, then I planned this big outing only to find out mere hours before that it was canceled!Â  Ironic.

Saturday and Sunday saw mucha fiesta as our friend [Derek](http://sublife.tangents.org/2010/06/01/was-going-to-blog-tonight/" \t "_blank) was able to visit from Illinois, and IÂ  will save on the detail since I am EXHAUSTED.Â  All 3 of the little kids have been in challenging stages lately, and my mornings have been beginning at 6am; waking up to screaming and fighting between the middle two, which is constant and does not stop until well after 10pm.Â  I was seriously considering going to bed at 9pm Tuesday night, but we got home around 8:30 and found that our daughter’s rat had passed away.Â  We knew it was coming; he had been sick for a while.Â  But we had to find a “coffin” (dog biscuit box) and have a burial, no matter how late it was or how many mosquitoes there were.Â  And of course it was the best rat we had, and the one that belonged to our most responsible, well-behaved daughter.Â  Ironic.

But the weekend involved a super-fun game night, a really great graduation party, some go-carting, movies, and just good old-fashioned catching up with friends.Â  Hopefully I can catch up on my sleep soon, and hopefully the kids won’t drive me too crazy being home all day, every day – today is their last day of school.Â  Thanks to those of you who helped to make the weekend awesome!!

***RIP  
BOBBY JACK  
12/6/2008 – 6/1/2010***

### Comments

**derek**RIP Booby Jack. May you cause something nice to grow above you. Do something nice for Taylor now, ya hear? :)  
**justj**Loved the movies Friday night. Sorry I missed seeing you guys the rest of the weekend. Very sorry to hear about the Bobby Jack. I remember it being really hard for the girls to lose their special pets.  
**jamiahsh**Aww... poor Taylor. Sorry to hear about Bobby Jack... even if it was inevitable. But it was a good weekend with friends. OH, yeah... good luck with that sleep thing.

# Class Of 2015

We are winding down our first year of teaching youth group, and it’s been an interesting experience, to say the least.Â  Last week, my “small group” consisted of 17 girls, and it was totally crazy.Â  We couldn’t get much accomplished, but luckily they weeded themselves out – those who didn’t want to participate (their choice) went to play in the gym, leaving quiet for those who did want to participate.Â  It’s not like that every week though; last week for some reason the other two 7th-grade-girls teachers were missing, so I had to have ALL the 7th grade girls PLUS my 5th graders.Â  Yeah, you read that right – IÂ  have 7th graders AND fifth graders, and it’s been a challenge to bridge the gap between the two ages groups.Â  It happened innocently enoughÂ  – a new 7th grader brought her 5th grade sister.Â  At our church, our student ministries typically don’t usually start until 6th grade, but we didn’t want to turn her away either.Â  She liked youth group and started bringing friends, all of which are great things, but next thing I knew, I was getting a call from the office manager who handles attendence and things like that, wondering why I had all these 5th graders in my group.Â  I explained to her what had happened, and she acted like she felt sorry for me rather than being upset –Â  I was a bit anxious to know why I was getting called by my “boss”.Â  But no problem – the more the merrier!Â  I just wonder what will happen next year –Â  I cannot move up to 8th grade and 6th grade at the same time!Â  I would think the now-5th graders would get a new group with other 6th graders, and I would stay with the 2015 group as the 7th graders are called for their graduation year.Â  We’ll see.

But anyway, it’s been a fun year, and I’ve learned A LOT.Â  Tonight is the final youth group of the year, and we’re having a pizza party, plus another party in regular small group time.Â  That will be interesting – I have a feeling that my girls will forget the snacks they pledged to bring as they’ve done in the past, so they’ll probably just run around crazy doing gymnastics, cheerleading moves and whatnot as usual.Â  Except tonight I don’t have to interrupt them since we are supposed to be having a end of the year party!Â  And, I’m bravely bringing my two youngest kidsÂ  – my youth group girls have always wanted to meet my little ones, so I figured tonight is a good opportunity.Â  I just hope I’m not going to overwhelm myself, but there’s only one way to find out…

But anyway, a fun year that makes me look forward to the next one, despite the time commitment involved.Â  Here is a typical schedule, in case you’re wondering – especially since a friend suggested oh-so-nicely:Â  “You should make more posts about your youth group.”Â  

6:30 – students have arrived and assemble in the Linc – a sort of clubhouse-type room.Â  We watch a short video or two that’s related to the message, usually 2-3 minute clips from movies.Â  We’ll play 2 audience participation games, and these are always really fun to watch.Â  One had 2 teams of 2 kids each wearing pantyhose on their heads.Â  They put bananas in the feet of the pantyhose, and their goal was to swing their pantyhose around until their pantyhose was wrapped around their partners – hilarious to watch.Â  Another game involved speed-eating of baby food and another one had pies-in-the-face.Â  Of course my girls were chosen for that one, and after theyÂ  were late to small group after having to wash the pie off their face and out of their hair, that one wound them up all night!

Around 7pm, the worship band (not the same one we have on Sunday mornings) begins their set, and the leaders leave for a leaders’ group prayer in another room.Â  After this, the kids and leaders move to the Wherehouse, a room with a small stage where they’ll sometimes watch another very short video and hear the youth pastor’s talk for the week for about 40 minutes.Â  We get to small group around 7:40 and have until 8:18 if we need it to talk amongst our small group.Â  We leaders get a paper with discussion questions on it, but we are allowed much freedom with this – we adjust the questions as they apply to the conversation we have.

I love all my girls, but of course some are better behaved than others.Â  And some are much more interested in developing spiritually and bettering their relationship with God than others.Â  The 7th graders are much more mature about this than the 5th graders – they just don’t get it yet.Â  Probably why our student ministries start at 6th grade, but they’re worth a try!Â  I wish that all my girls are on the same page, but they’re not.Â  There is one girl in particular who causes a lot of drama amongst the other girls (they’re all friends in the same social group), so if there is drama going on that day or that week, it’s difficult toÂ  get anything done.Â  I now understand the process a little better from when I was a new leader – the other leaders “cherry-picked” their students and left me with the clique.Â  Not that they’re bad girls at all or anything like that, but I can see where it would be so much more fun if I had a group of girls who were all there for the sole purpose of improving their relationships with Christ.

Well, that’s it in a nutshell.Â  I’m really hoping to have more leaders next year so that our groups aren’t so large, but it’s been difficult to find leaders that have the 3+ hours per week this volunteer job requires.Â  It’s a shame, but then again, for a job like this, you only want people who really want to be there – the kids can sniff out reluctant and moody adults like bloodhounds!

### Comments

**Mysmichelle**wow, glad you posted that you survived I read the original post and saw the date and no posts since...........I was like uh oh Hope all is well with you and your family, things are gearing up for summer I guess I've been SUPER busy. Have a great summer taylhis  
**derek**No summer off for me! The 3rd-graders will move up next weekend (6/5, 6/6) but I will continue with the groups I have I'm sure- the new 5th grade. The old 5th grade ended last weekend, and I had to miss so I could see my nephew's home. At least your girls are still willing to devour pizza. The world paints such an ugly picture of beauty, insisting that girls must starve themselves, it is good to hear of healthy eating among your 7th grade brood.  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like exhaustive fun!  
**taylhis**UPDATE - Had the pizza party and it went well, although we over-ordered and were left with 3 full pizzas. I had only 3 girls show up, and my husband only had 4 of his boys. But then for the after-party, I had about 17 girls again, and the rest of the pizza and the few snacks I had brought were devoured by 17 hungry girls in a matter of minutes. I've never seen anything like it :) They loved seeing my kids, and despite the huge group, we were able to have some meaningful discussions about what we learned this year - even if some of the 5th graders tried to start a food fight. FUN, but incredibly exhausting! At least I have the whole summer to recoup! Well, except for the 2 Sundays I'm volunteering in Kid's Kingdom. One I have 5/6 year olds, and one I have 3-year-olds! I'm looking forward to the change of pace in working with little kids, but I have to admit - I am scared!!  
**jamiahsh**Yep, that's the thing... the leader has to "want to be there" before they can expect the followers to do the same.

# Nightmare On... Elm Street?

We checked out the Nightmare on Elm Street remake a few weeks ago.Â  It was better than the Friday the 13th remake and the Halloween remake but not comparable to the Texas Chainsaw remake, which was very well done and better than the original, in my opinion.Â  Nightmare on Elm Street, not so much.Â  For starters, I don’t understand why the new Freddy Krueger was so short.Â  His burned face was much less scary than the original Freddy, and I have to say that having high school kids tower over him did take away some of the intended fright.Â  Also, Freddy’s back-story changed for the new version, which now includes allusions to child abuse of Freddy’s victims at a preschool rather than all of the terrorized kids being from Elm Street.Â  In fact, I don’t really know what Elm Street has to do with the new version of Nightmare on Elm Street.Â  Part of the reason we wanted to check this one out is because much of it was filmed in the suburbs of Chicago where we grew up, but we didn’t recognize anything, and my husband did not recognize which scenes were filmed in his former high school.Â  But not recognizing the filming locations was not what disappointed us most – the 2010 version of Nightmare on Elm Street is just not as scary as the original.Â  Sure, the special effects are better and the throwback and remakes of certain key scenes were done well and appreciated, but the movie just didn’t have the same effect.

We also recently took in the original My Bloody Valentine, the 1981 version, and it was a good horror movie.Â  I read afterward that much of it is actually filmed in real mines, which must have been really dangerous, and I wish I had known that before I watched the movie.Â  Many things were changed for the 2009 version, which I really enjoyed – probably my favorite modern day horror movie.Â  But to enjoy the original version was nice too.Â  We picked up the 2009 version on a sale at Walmart, and it came with both the 2D and 3D version and some glasses.Â  I’ve never had any luck with the old red/green 3D glasses technology, and this time was no exception – my vision is just too uneven, I guess.Â  It worked for my husband, but I ruined his fun because seeing everything in red and green was incredibly distracting for me.

We’ve also been watching the [After Dark Horror Fest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/After_Dark_Horrorfest" \t "_blank) movies lately, and there have been too many to review, so I’ll just make quick lists of recommended vs. terrible ones for any horror fanatics reading my blog and looking for some opinions.

**Good:**[The Final](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1390535/" \t "_blank)  
[Kill Theory](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0893532/" \t "_blank)  
[Perfect Getaway](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0971209/" \t "_blank) (more thriller than horror, but good)  
[My Bloody Valentine 3D](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1179891/" \t "_blank) (2009) – especially if you can get the 3D to work for you at home.Â  The 3D for this one in the theater was amazing, and I really enjoyed my first horror movie 3D experience on the big screen when it came out.

**Worth one viewing:**[Dread](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1331307/" \t "_blank)  
[My Bloody Valentine (1981)](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082782/" \t "_blank)  
[The Graves](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1203517/" \t "_blank)

**Awful waste of time:**[The Broken](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0906734/" \t "_blank)  
[Grace](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1220213/" \t "_blank)

And, I think I’ll throw this one out there separately since it’s not horror at all, but we also watched [The Prestige](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0482571/" \t "_blank) again yesterday and it’s very good – especially the second time around.Â  It’s a story about two rival magicians that takes place in the 1890’s.Â  If you’re going to give it a try, pay attention!Â  Oh, and I would not look too closely at the imdb entry for it – there is too much that can be given away.Â  That’s all I’m going to say other than I highly recommend it, but again -it is in no way a horror film; we just watched it again recently which is why I put it in this horror-movie-laden post.

### Comments

**derek**I also read that the new Freddy was terrible. I don't think I'll ever bother with this one, nostalgia or no.  
**jamiahsh**I liked the Prestige, too. I'll have to look into MBV 3D to see if it works for me. I've often wondered about the After Dark films. They sound interesting enough. I'm still not completely sold on the NOES remake. After the first couple in the original series they became less and less scary until they became a parody of themselves. I did like the "Nancy" trilogy.

# Good Riddance To Lost And Celebrating...

…the end of my desire to re-watch the run of the show on dvd.Â  Here I thought the finale would be so ground-breaking, so explanatory, and so intriguing that it would make me want to re-watch the entire show again, just to see how it looked after it was pulled all together.Â  But I was wrong.Â  I don’t want to watch it again, and they didn’t pull it together.Â  In fact, my feelings couldn’t be further from what I had hoped – I want to forget that I was ever hooked on a show called Lost, and I want to forget that a show called Lost ever existed.

The tv show Lost premiered in 2004.Â  The premise always seemed intriguing – a group of people survive a plane crash only to be faced with unforeseen mysterious challenges that await them on a mystical island.Â  I meant to watch it during its inaugural season, but I had a new baby in 2004, and tv was not one of my top priorities.Â  After Lost’s first season ended, however, the water cooler buzz just became too intriguing for me to resist, so my husband and I began to catch ourselves up on the first season, thinking we could always drop the show if we didn’t like it.Â  But like millions of others, we were hooked – Lost was great.Â  WAS.Â  Somewhere along the line, the show **lost** (haha) quality and many viewers at the same time – I’m thinking this was around the time of the infamous Hollywood Writers’ Guild strike of 2007-8.Â  Many tv shows went on an indefinite hiatus at that time, some did not return, and some, like Lost, were never the same.Â  Lost became famous for throwing out a ton of loose ends, new characters and questions each new episode – without ever offering answers or resolutions.Â  Many viewers **lost** (ahem) the ability or desire to follow the show, and Lost **lost** (cough cough) much of its fan following.Â  And that’s when Darlton (the collective name of the show’s production / writing team Carlton Cuse and Damon Lindelof) announced an end date to Lost – all of our many questions and loose ends would be concluded at the end of the 2010 season.Â  And my husband and I, like many other almost-lost Lost fans decided toÂ  stick around.Â  After all, we reasoned, we had invested all this time already, why not a few more seasons, especially if we were going to get our answers?Â  We were anxiously awaiting the finale tonight, but unlike the anticipation of true Lost fans, we were just excited that we could have our Tuesday nights back.Â  Much of the buzz compared Lost to reading a good book – when you get near the end, you think, what am I going to do when this book is over?Â  It’s so good!Â  I can certainly identify with the good book analogy, but I would not apply it to Lost – we were just happy it was ending.Â  So I guess disappointing isn’t really the word I would use to describe the finale.Â  I was half-expecting no real answers, considering the original bait and switch, but I couldn’t really believe that they could get away with such a thing.Â  And I am disappointed that I wasted a whopping **four and a half hours** (count ’em) on this tonight!

The first 2 hours were a re-cap special, which was less helpful than I thought.Â  The first half of it was the actors reflecting on the show and giving inside info about filming techniques, etc.Â  I’m thinking, why would they show this before the final episode airs?Â  It didn’t make sense to me.Â  Now I’m thinking it was just another way to grease the wheels of Lost fans to overwhelm their tiny minds and brainwash them into being happy with the craptastic finale.Â  There were also these “Lost Transmissions” – letters from audience members incorporated into scenes of Lost.Â  They used footage from old episodes of Lost to make it look like Lost characters are actually reading fans’ letters – for example, a scene with computers had a fan’s letter written on a computer screen and the characters reacting to the “letter”.Â  It was really stupid, and no, I’m not just upset that my letter wasn’t chosen.Â  I didn’t care enough to write a letter, just as I don’t care enough to stay up really late, pointing out every one of the clues I found that the cast and crew of Lost KNEW their finale would be incredibly awful and disappointing.

So anyway, then the finale episode itself was TWO and a half hours, and NONE of the questions were answered.Â  NONE.Â  All of the “true lovers” were paired up, and that provided enough fluff to keep Lost fans preoccupied and happy with the end, or so the producers hoped.Â  Not the case in this household.Â  In fact, if you ask me, in many of the interviews with the actors, you can catch hidden statements that they were not happy with the ending and didn’t think the fans would be satisfied.Â  In fact, Darleton themselves made a series of disclaimers during the re-cap special.Â  I’m not going to waste more time on Lost by pointing everything out though.Â  I stayed up until 11:30 to watch this garbage and another 30 minutes writing this, and that’s long enough.Â  Goodbye Lost – and GOOD RIDDANCE!

Oh yeah, a quick list of the few of **many** Lost loose ends they failed to tie up, just off the top of my head there are plenty more:

The temple and the guy who was in charge of it.

Sayid and Claire changing, having something dark inside them.

Drug smuggling with the Mary statues on the small plane that crashed – a man named Echo and his brother appearing to Lost survivors – for example, Hurley in the mental hospital.

The Numbers

Walt

Walt’s Comic Books

Whidmore’s connection to the island

Polar Bears

Miles’ father – Dharma guy on Dharma Initiative training videos

The whole show in general – the ending didn’t make sense to me at all

And I have one last thing toÂ  say – the 10 seconds of the water-skiing squirrel on the news after Lost was more entertaining than the Lost finale.Â  At least my night was redeemed – thank you, water-skiing squirrel!

\*An addendum – it was too late last night for me to write about the extremely entertaining Jimmy Kimmel Lost special, so I’ll just share the alternate Lost endings he had on his show – they are very funny and although meant as jokes, any one of them would have been better than the REAL series finale.Â  Sigh.

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

**Ewan Matthews**stargate SG1 was my favorite sci-fi tv series on our cable TV,"\*  
**Abigail Clark**Stargate SG1 is much better than Stargate the movie. the series has lots of action and adventure.;``  
**Poppy Scott**Stargate is probably the best science fiction series after Firefly. Nice visual effects too.\*;;  
**Alia Berglund**I'm sure so feeling sad that lost has was completed, I really liked this tv show such a lot.  
**Irina Swarn**I actually enjoyed lost and often will miss it  
**Watch online**Cool website you have, I just love this show. Thank you for sharing!  
**taylhis**Yes... not worth watching, I would say. Our pastor has been catching up on dvd, and I don't know how to tell him he might be disappointed. It did take a somewhat religious turn, but I haven't read about Christians or non-Christians liking it. I think perhaps only the romantics liked the finale, and even they seem to be starting to get angry and feel gypped now that the buzz has worn off from seeing all the romantic couples getting together. @derek - glad to hear you didn't get caught up in the DeWyze hoopla that seems to be sweeping the area. Can't say the same for Hubby's mom - she went to the Arlington party for some reason! And I'm hearing that Tony Packo's (famous Toledo food) is getting some press over there -the competing cities bet their local food for the Idol competition - not sure though what Mt. Prospect brought to the table...  
**derek**I am one of the rare ones who has not bothered to see a single episode of Lost and your writeup makes me think I shouldn't bother checking out seasons from the library. For the record, I don't watch Idol either, even though our local boy just won it. I agree that DS9 was my least favorite, though Enterprise was fairly close. And as a Stargate SG1 fan, I am not enjoying their newest rendition SG Universe.  
**justj**I liked lost before the writers strike. I never got back into it after that. For that reason I am grateful that the writers went on strike. I wasn't even aware that the last show was going to be on until I read what people were writing on the web.  
**mary911**I have never seen an episode of Lost. I think I saw 15 minutes of one once, and it didn't come close to be interesting to me. It's good to know I didn't miss anything!!!! :)  
**jamiahsh**that was hilarious! "One of the most famous endings in television history and he THINKS he's seen it?!" Priceless!  
**jamiahsh**@Ben, I agree with you on DS9. The least favorite spin off of mine. Glad I abandoned the Lost ship back in Season 1.  
**Angela**Hallelujah â€“ I have been saved! Thank YOU for your redemption! Like you I had my first child in 2004 â€“ As a first time â€˜olderâ€™ mom I was busy with my new joyous bundle and methodically researching my new job position as she slept. To second your response -- TV was not one of my top priorities. By the time I resurfaced to rejoin the regular world I found my non new parent friends had found this new religion called â€“ Lost In hindsight aptly named. As too much time past to get with the program (pun intended) my friends deemed me a heathen not to jump on the Lost bandwagon â€“ To make maters worse many would shake their heads in disbelief that I had never seen even one episode â€“ Guess who is shaking their head now-- :)  
**taylhis**Ok, I updated the post with a youtube clip with the hilarious Jimmy Kimmel alternate endings. SOMETHING should be fun about this post :) Thanks to everyone for their comments! Don't be afraid to speak up, especially if you liked the final episode! I would like to hear every opinion about it...  
**taylhis**Actually, I did catch Jimmy Kimmel, but it was on too late for me to write about it. It was hilarious, especially the alternate endings - one was a Bob Newhart style endiing! The Jimmy Kimmel show was SO MUCH more entertaining than the Lost show!  
**jamiahsh**HAHA! THAT'S TOO FUNNY! The last time I remember an entire evening being devoted to a series ending was M\*A\*S\*H. At least, that was a two and a half hour episode. So, you didn't stick around for the Jimmy Kimmel special? So glad I LOst interest back in season 1. So glad that J.J. Abrams selling out on Alias did not succeed totally. I blamed Lost on Alias' rapid demise.  
**A disappointed (former) fan**I was extremely disappointed with this episode as well. I didn't mind most of the episode, but when it turned out that the ENTIRE show was just a bunch of religious brainwashing, I immediately felt the same way you do. Goodbye LOST and GOOD RIDDANCE. I want my six years back!  
**Ben Black**Ha! Reminds me of the 7 years I wasted watching Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. The most miserably depressing Trek ever. Fortunately for me, I gave up on Lost early on. Just couldn't take the constant flashbacks.

# Look What They've Started...

If you’re a fan of Wicked, stop reading because the following post might offend you, by no means am I pulling any punches.Â  I had kind of a stressful day that I can’t post about, and then I read this article, so that was the icing on the cake.Â  Think I’ll take out my frustrations on pop culture – things that don’t really matter in real life.

I just read an offensive (to me) article detailing the no fewer than SIX Wizard of Oz spinoffs currently being developed in Hollywood.Â  Luckily for the world and movie fans abound, most of them won’t see the light of day, but unfortunately at least one or even a few will make it through production and be released into mainstream society, poisoning the legacy of Baum’s characters and the 1939 MGM cinematic masterpiece we true fans hold dear.Â  Before you think I’m overreacting, read the synopses I included below.Â  If you’re still not offended, do a google image search to dredge up the action figures from the Twisted Oz series, but make sure your kids aren’t in the room first.Â  What is this world coming to?

I bring Wicked into this because I blame the franchise – once someone decided to write a book imagining their own version of Baum’s characters, the door was blown wide open.Â  Sure, there have been uncountable Wizard of Oz spinoffs.Â  The Muppets had one, the Veggie Tales had one, and countless sitcoms from the last 7 decades had their shots at putting their main characters in versions of Munchkinland.Â  But not until Wicked took off in popularity have people really started abusing the integrity of Baum’s original characters and, more importantly to me, massacring the sweet and innocent 1939 MGM movie – my favorite movie for many reasons, the main one being how advanced in many ways it truly was for its day.Â  Sure, 1985’s debacle Return to Oz was no picnic, but did it really do any significant damage?Â  Not really, it was never really liked nor taken seriously.Â  I like to make this comparison:Â  take another movie classic, say, Gone With The Wind.Â  Now take an “author” (really just some who is literate enough to be able to put words together toÂ  make a story) and imagine them creating aÂ  “backstory” for the Civil War characters Rhett Butler and Scarlett O’Hara.Â  Let’s make Rhett, oh, let’s say he was an astronaut before he met Scarlett and let’s make her an ER doctor – that’s why she has trouble attaching to people; it’s because she loses them in the ER.Â  Doesn’t make much sense, does it?Â  Probably because Gone With the Wind is what it is –Â  an epic story set during the 1800’s when those professions did not exist as we know them today.Â  Do you see my point?Â  Wicked has the witches going to school and other ridiculous scenarios – I’m not going to falsely claim to be an expert as I’ve never read the book nor seen the show.Â  Perhaps if I saw the show, I would like it –Â  everyone seems to rave about it, and the costumes are supposed to be amazing.Â  Maybe so, but they should have left my favorite movie alone!Â  They could have started from scratch, wrote their own stories with their own characters, and I would have been perfectly happy to check out Wicked the show.Â  But they had to steal Baum’s ideas and MGM’s visions just to put a brand-name on a product to sell, and this my friends, is called “selling out”.

And as a result, we might be faced with the following junk polluting our theaters in the future (taken from [this article](http://insidemovies.moviefone.com/2010/05/19/whats-up-with-all-the-wizard-of-oz-spinoff-movies/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+InsideMovies+%28Moviefone%3A+Inside-Movies%29" \t "_blank) from moviefone):

â€¢’Surrender Dorothy’  
Who’s behind it? Drew Barrymore’s production company, Flower Films  
What’s it about? According to Pajiba, the latest version of the script, by Zach Helm (‘Stranger Than Fiction’) is an ‘Enchanted’-like story that sees the Wicked Witch of the West still alive and threatening to take over our world as well as Oz. It’s up to Dorothy’s great-great-granddaughter to figure out how to use the ruby slippers to defeat her.  
Status: Barrymore’s been developing this project since way back in 1999, when she was still a fresh-faced ingenue who’d just played Cinderella in ‘Ever After.’ Today, Pajiba says, the 35-year-old is unlikely to star in it, but she would direct it as her follow-up to her directing debut in last year’s ‘Whip It.’ Pajiba imagines she might cast ‘Whip It’ star Ellen Page, who would indeed make a fine Dorothy. Still, with 11 years having gone by, it doesn’t seem like Barrymore’s exactly in a hurry to get this off the ground.

â€¢’Oz the Great and Powerful’  
Who’s behind it? Disney and ‘Alice in Wonderland’ producer Joe Roth  
What’s it about? The script by Mitchell Kapner (‘The Whole Nine Yards’) tells the backstory of how the wizard went from earthbound carnival mountebank to becoming the fearsome and mysterious sorcerer of the Emerald City.  
Status: Given the success of the Roth-produced ‘Alice,’ Disney is likely to fast-track this movie, which was formerly titled ‘Brick’ (as in “yellow”?), according to the Los Angeles Times. Now that the next James Bond movie has been postponed and his schedule freed up, Sam Mendes has been approached to direct and Robert Downey Jr. to star, reports FirstShowing. Neither has yet said yes.

â€¢’Oz’  
Who’s behind it? Temple Hill, the production company behind the ‘Twilight’ movies  
What’s it about? According to the Los Angeles Times, the script by Darren Lemke (‘Shrek Forever After’) is a faithful retelling of L. Frank Baum’s first novel in the saga, ‘The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.’ Imagine the Judy Garland movie, but with more action and no music.  
Status: Coming from the New Line division of Warner Bros., this has the potential to launch a vast franchise based on the 22 ‘Oz’ books. Which is why it’s the most likely of the three competing ‘Oz’ projects at Warners (see below) to see the light of day.

â€¢’The Twisted Land of Oz’  
Who’s behind it? Comic book gorehound and toymaker Todd McFarlane (‘Spawn’)  
What’s it about? Based on McFarlane’s own decidedly R-rated ‘Twisted Land of Oz’ line of figurines, his Oz includes a Scarecrow who’s torn apart by ravenous birds, a Tin Man who’s a junkpile of Edward Scissorhands-like limbs, a flesh-eating Lion who’s not at all cowardly, a Wizard who’s a gas-mask-wearing mad scientist, a carnivorous creature dubbed Toto after it eats Dorothy’s dog, and a nubile Dorothy who’s bound and molested by depraved Munchkins.  
Status: There was confusion in the trade press (including some strewn by McFarlane himself) between this project and Josh Olson’s, (see below) since both were pitched to production company Thunder Road, with an eye toward distribution by Warner Bros. Last we heard from McFarlane (via MTV), back in September, he was grumbling over Thunder Road’s apparent decision to go with Olsen’s more family-friendly script instead of his own. McFarlane also claimed at one point that Michael Bay was interested in directing, but we imagine he’s a little too busy making movies based on another line of toys.

â€¢’Oz: Return to the Emerald City’  
Who’s behind it? Screenwriter Josh Olson (‘A History of Violence’)  
What’s it about?In a plot that sounds a lot like ‘Surrender Dorothy,’ a descendant of Dorothy Gale (this time, her granddaughter) living in contemporary America (she’s a young associate at a top Chicago law firm) is called upon to defeat a new witch making trouble in Oz. Aiding the young woman are the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion that she’s been hearing her grandmother talk about for years.  
Status: Olsen has denied ever being affiliated with the McFarlane ‘Oz,’ telling MTV in January that the script he delivered to Thunder Road and Warner Bros. was based on his own original pitch. Dakota Fanning was rumored at one time to be up for the younger Dorothy, but that rumor proved false (makes sense, since Olsen’s granddaughter character is an adult). Of course, both Olsen’s and McFarlane’s projects have to compete with Temple Hill’s for Warners’ favor.

â€¢’Wicked’  
Who’s behind it? Universal  
What’s it about? It’s a film version of the Broadway smash about what Glinda the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch of the West were like when they were schoolmates, well before Dorothy showed up. (Think ‘Mean Girls’ with green face paint.) Winnie Holzman, who wrote the book for the musical, has also written the screenplay.  
Status: Universal is a co-producer of the stage show and has owned the film rights since the play opened seven years ago. Despite an IMDB listing that cites a 2012 release date, there’s been no sign of progress beyond script stage. No one has been cast, though let’s hope this gets rolling before original stars (and recurring ‘Glee’ guest players) Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel are too old to reprise their stage roles.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Exactly, justj ;) but way to detailed to get into as a comment.  
**justj**Jamiahsh, conflict in comic book history? Just throw it in an alternate universe. Everything is ok then. It even gives you a plot for later works. Can we say "Crisis on Infinite Earths"?  
**jamiahsh**Smallville and its tangents from the source material would take a post and then some. After 9 and the upcoming 10th season, I guess people are willing to forgo the breaks with tradition. You raise an interesting question. How much backstory is necessary? The creators of Superman focused very little on his younger years.  
**taylhis**Where to start... Lots of good comments here - some interesting points have been raised. I honestly don't know if people were upset in 1939 with MGM's movie. I know that the movie was not initially successful enough to warrant such a huge budget for that time period, although I've also seen pictures of people lined up for blocks to get into the movie. I also know that the Judy Garland version was the most true to Baum's novel when it came out; there had been others before that were even further from the original novel, so perhaps people were just happy that this one was closer - or maybe they didn't care about Baum's books, I don't know. I know that when I read Baum's first Oz novel, I was not impressed; I am more of a fan of the movie. But I also think that if Baum didn't cover the backstory of his characters in his novels, there was a reason for that. There were 22 of the books after all, so there would have been plenty of time for this. And it's another thing to write a backstory about the witches being in school and making them humanesque - that to me doesn't fit with the tone of the characters. It's difficult to say what Baum would have thought - as it was, the good witch was actually a character that had been merged from 2 characters from the book. I guess the bottom line is that we have lots of freedom in this country - freedoms to take others' ideas and make them your own. And it's been happening in pop culture frequently for a long time as has been pointed out. Not everyone is going to like all of the takes, and that's ok. It's just unfortunate for me that my personal favorite is the one with all the terrible versions getting the most publicity and are constantly being shoved down our throats. I did not realize that Smallville was not true to the Superman character... and I thought Superman fans enjoyed Smallville for the most part? Maybe not... At this point, I think I should just be happy that there isn't a Tim Burton version of the Wizard of Oz in the works starring Johnny Depp as the Mad Wizard - for that, I am truly thankful.  
**jamiahsh**HOOK! Now that is an interesting comment. How could I totally forget Smallville? That is even closer to Wicked. Taking all kinds of liberties with the young man who would be Super. Some totally crazy liberties!  
**derek**The "Twisted" version can go back to the domain of the one who "spawn"ed that idea, and I don't mean McFarlane. I agree that the Oz one does sound intriguing, but I have no interest in the others, though I would probably watch the Josh Olson one. Hey, I watched Hook which is to Peter Pan as that one is to Oz...  
**jamiahsh**I think it would be interesting to see a movie that was more faithful Baum's book, as well. Were there Baum fanatics in '39 who snubbed the movie? I think you have raised a great debate.  
**jamiahsh**Offended... no. Expert, fanatical... Definitely not. The '39 movie is and will always be a favorite of mine. Hard to explain, really. Reminiscent of Star Trek and it's myriad incarnations. In my opinion, anyway. Many fans of the original wanted nothing to do with the Next Generation when it premiered in '87. When the new movie opened last year there were many who cried foul because of the changes it made to the original series... new actors inhabiting the iconic characters for one. That could be another post itself. I do see where you are coming from but I guess I am just more open. There was an animated version of a classic musical that I found totally blasphemous.  
**justj**Well, as for myself, I would like to see the new "OZ" movie, and possibly the "Wicked" movie. The rest can stay away from the screens as far as I'm concerned. The 1939 movie is a classic, of course, but did not hold true to the books. Most movies do not. I would like to see one that did with these books. As far as "Wicked" goes, I think that is an interesting take on a time in OZ that Baum never did write or much less hint about. You have to think of that as not really OZ, I guess.

# Creativity With Spam

If you’re looking for recipes for that gross canned meat, you’ve come to the wrong place…Â  This post is about the internet spam variety sinceÂ  the blogs here have been getting a ton of spam comments recently.Â  I just mark them as spam and delete them, but some are so amusing that they deserve recognition.

Come on people.Â  Some of these are so obviously written by someone who doesn’t even speak English – am I really supposed to believe that they read my English blog and understood enough to appreciate it?Â Â  Some are just general comments, and I’m not (that) stupid, so they’re obviously such generic comments that they barely apply to the blog post for which they are written.Â  Some just don’t make sense at all as you’ll see below; I’ve dug up the best 5…Â  and I wonder how much spam I will get on this spam post?

– The following is a response I got to a post I wrote about local murders:  
*Me and my brother eat with a fork too, but that doesntâ€™ change or mean anything, does it?*What?

–Â  I received the following comment on a blog post I wrote about a man and his eagle:  
*Definitely trust that which you stated. Your explanation was certainly the easiest to recognise. I tell you, I usually get irked when folks discuss problems that they plainly have no idea about. You managed to hit the nail at the head and explained out everything without complication. Maybe, people usually takes a signal. Will likely return to obtain more. Thanks*.  
Mmhmm…

– Here is a comment on a blog I wrote about everyday life:  
*Martin you beed to sort out the awful display after this weekend. Too many tired wasters.*Makes no sense whatsoever.

– Another one from the same everyday life post:  
*Intimately, the post is really the best on this precious topic. I concur with your conclusions and will eagerly look forward to your coming updates. Just saying thanks will not just be sufficient, for the exceptional lucidity in your writing. I will instantly grab your rss feed to stay abreast of any updates. Gratifying work and much success in your business endeavors!*Wonderful use of the English language there.Â  Get a thesaurus for your birthday, didja?

– And finally, this one had Europe (or Australia as it turned out to be) written all over it – my first clue was the use of the word ‘keen’.Â  One thing I’d like to know is, why are these spambots so enthusiastic about telling their brother?  
*Yes, I was very keen on that. So was my brother. He said he will check it out tomorrow. We will be back before you know it.*Great.Â  Is that a threat or a promise?

### Comments

**taylhis**I just had to approve the spam comment on the blog post about creative spam.  
**Effective study habits for students**Thank you so much! I really liked your video as well because it looks so professional. I also like how we have a similar style in editing. Haha!  
**jamiahsh**Yeah, I'm ALMOST jealous. I keep getting the tattoo parlor guy, too. The same canned spam in most cases;. YUM! Canned spam.  
**justj**You have better spam than I do. I usually get criticized for something, usually my graphic selection. Or the "I enjoyed your post, keep writing" from the tattoo parlor, dating site or something other 'business' site.  
**derek**My spam hasn't been quite so creative for some reason, or in engrish. Most have sounded legitimate, but then their names or websites give them away. Generally I have deleted the more obvious, but left alone some of the more normal-sounding ones choosing instead to just remove their website links :evil:

# Talking To The Animals

Do a search on youtube.com for talking animals, and you’ll see birds, dogs, and cats that say human words.Â  Not all of them know what they’re saying, but some of them do.Â  I came across an article on cnn.com about 4 animals that could REALLY talk –Â  these include a seal, a cat, a parrot, and a chimpanzee.

In 1971, George and Alice Swallow found a baby seal just off the coast of Maine. The little guy appeared to be orphaned, so they took him home and kept him in their bathtub.

For the first few days, they tried to feed him ground mackerel, but he refused to eat. Once he trusted his new parents, though, he began eating so voraciously they compared him to a Hoover vacuum cleaner and the name stuck.

When he got too big for the tub, Hoover was moved to a small pond behind the Swallows’ house. After only a few months, Hoover was eating more fish than his human caretakers were able to provide, so they contacted the New England Aquarium in Boston, hoping the facility had room for him.

When introducing the seal to the aquarium, George mentioned that Hoover could talk. Of course no one believed him at the time. A few years later, though, researchers at the aquarium noticed that Hoover’s guttural sounds really did seem to be forming words and phrases. He was often telling people to “Get outta here!” or asking, “How are ya?” He could say his name and a few other phrases, all with a thick Bostonian accent.

Once the word got out that the Aquarium had a talking seal, he became a media sensation, making appearances in Reader’s Digest, The New Yorker, National Public Radio, and even on Good Morning America.

Sadly, Hoover died of natural causes in July 1985 at the ripe old age of 14. He was so admired that he received his own obituary in the Boston Globe. He left behind several offspring, but none possessed his unique gift for gab.

I did a google search for Hoover the Seal, and I did find one piece of audio, but my husband says the words are not Hoover’s.Â  I’m not sure what to think – my husband has a point:Â  if there was a talking seal, and he died in 1985, why aren’t there more video clips of him out there?Â  I can be kind of gullible, but then again, thousands of people claim to have seen this sealÂ  talk, so I don’t know.Â  Here is the youtube video I found which is audio only.Â  What do you think?Â  If anyone has visited Hoover and seen him talk, I’d love to hear from you!

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.

Then there was Blackie, the talking cat.

When Carl Miles of Augusta, Georgia, trained his cat Blackie to say, “I love you” and “I want my mama,” they took their act on the road. Throughout the early 1980s, Blackie made paid appearances on local TV and radio programs, and even hit the big time with a spot on the network TV show That’s Incredible.

However, as the novelty wore off, Carl and Blackie ended up performing on street corners, asking for donations from passersby. After some complaints from locals, police informed Carl that he would need to get a business license in order to keep up Blackie’s street show. Carl paid the $50 fee for a license, but something about it rubbed him the wrong way.

So Carl sued the city of Augusta, under the pretense that the city’s business license code mentions many types of occupations that require a license, but a talking cat show was not one of them. But that wasn’t the only issue Carl had –he also claimed the city was infringing on Blackie’s First Amendment Right to Free Speech.

Carl lost his case, but he appealed the ruling until it came before a federal court. The argument was finally closed when three presiding judges declared that the business license ordinance allowed for other, unspecified types of businesses to require a license, which would encompass a talking cat performer.

As for the First Amendment violation, the courts said the law did not apply because Blackie was not human, and therefore not protected under the Bill of Rights. Furthermore, there seemed no good cause for Carl Miles to be the one to bring the suit in the first place. If Blackie felt his rights were being violated, as a talking cat, he should have been the one to say something.

Next comes Alex the African Grey parrot.Â  I’ve always wanted an African Grey parrot (ever since as a kid I enjoyed the book Harry’s Mad by Dick King-Smith), and so I took special notice of Alex when he would make media appearances.Â  He died suddenly and unexpectedly in 2007, most likely from some sort of heart problem, but not before his accomplishments amazed millions.

According to Dr. Pepperberg’s research, this avian Einstein could identify 50 different objects, knew seven colors and shapes, and many different kinds of materials like wool, paper, and wood. For example, hold up a blue block of wood and Alex could tell you the shape, the color, and even what it was made of.

However, he also grasped more complex concepts that required a higher level of thought and understanding. Put a handful of red and yellow blocks on a tray and ask him how many were yellow, he could tell you the correct answer. If you then asked him how many of those same blocks were green, he would say “none.”

Furthermore, hold up two blocks of different colors and different sizes and he could tell you which was bigger.

And finally, Lucy, the chimpanzee who was raised like a child by humans:

When she was only two days old, Lucy, a chimpanzee, was purchased by the University of Oklahoma and sent to live with Dr. Maurice Temerlin, a noted psychologist, who, along with his wife, raised the little chimp as if she were their own human child.

Lucy was taught how to eat normal meals at the table using silverware. She could dress herself, often choosing to wear skirts just like her “mother” did. She could even make tea for her “parents” and the team of researchers who trained and cared for her.

Dr. Robert Fouts, one of the groundbreaking psychologists who taught American Sign Language (ASL) to Washoe the chimp in 1967, helped Lucy learn to communicate using around 250 ASL signs. Lucy could not only give the signs for objects like airplane, ball, and food, but she could also express her emotions with her hands, often “saying” when she was hungry, happy, or sad.

Lucy had become so close to human in most every way that she only found human men, not male chimpanzees, sexually attractive. It was pretty clear that, in her mind anyway, she was the same as her parents.

It’s a sad fact that once a captive chimp has reached about four or five years old, their immense strength can become a danger to their human caretakers. Often they need to be placed in a zoo, a lab, or some other facility better equipped to handle primates. In this case, the Temerlins raised Lucy as their daughter until 1977, when she was almost 12 years old, before they finally felt like they had to find her a new home.

After much deliberation, they decided upon a nature preserve in Gambia on the west coast of Africa. They, along with research assistant Janis Carter, flew with Lucy to her new home to help ease the chimp into the wild. However, it was not going to be as simple as they’d hoped.

At the preserve, Lucy was put in a cage at night to protect her from predators. She had only ever slept in a bed inside a nice, quiet, suburban home, so the jungle was a completely new and frightening environment for her.

She was also scared of the other chimps, strange creatures she had only encountered a few times before in her life, preferring to stay close to her parents and Janis whenever she could.

She wasn’t eating because her food had always been delivered to her on a plate; she didn’t even understand the concept of foraging.

When her parents suddenly became distant and weren’t providing her with the life she had always known, Lucy became confused and sad. She would often use the sign for “hurt.” And she lost much of her hair due to the stress of her new situation.

Realizing that Lucy would never move on if they stayed, her parents left her behind after three weeks. Janis agreed to stay for a few weeks longer, but it was soon clear that Lucy couldn’t change who she was. And so, Janis never left.

Janis helped found a chimpanzee sanctuary on an abandoned island in the middle of the Gambia River. She took Lucy and other chimps that had been raised in captivity and lived with them on the island, teaching them skills they would need in the wild, like finding food and climbing trees.

For most, the new lifestyle quickly became second nature. But for nearly eight years, Lucy refused to give up her human ways. She wanted human food, human interaction, and to be loved by, what she considered, one of her own kind. It wasn’t until Janis stopped living on the island that Lucy was finally able to accept her new life and joined a troupe of chimps.

Whenever Janis visited the island, Lucy was still affectionate, still used sign language, but thankfully, she always went back with the chimps into the forest.

Sadly, Lucy’s decomposed body was discovered in 1987. Her exact cause of death is unknown, though some believe she was killed by poachers. Others say it was probably something less spectacular, like an attack by a dominant male or an illness.

There’s one thing that no one who knew her wonders about, though, and that’s the fact that Lucy never really believed she was anything less than human.

Ok, so the part about Lucy being sexually attracted to male humans is a bit disturbing and TMI.Â  Nonetheless, the article provided a fascinating look at animals who act closer to humans than we can imagine.Â  Just a friendly reminder that all animals can be dangerous, however, so as they say, don’t try this at home!

And I’m somewhat surprised that [Koko the gorilla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koko_%28gorilla%29" \t "_blank) who uses sign language was kept off the list – Lucy the chimp could use sign language, so what about Koko?

To read the article in its entirety, [click here](http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/wayoflife/05/14/mf.animals.that.could.talk/index.html?hpt=C2" \t "_blank).

### Comments

**derek**I had heard before about teaching primates sign language (didn't remember the one particular name Koko though). As for the rest, they were interesting reads. I would have to go with C on the video, but to paraphrase you, who knows?  
**justj**I've seen and heard about the parrot and the gorilla. I don't recall the story of the chimp. I thought I knew all the stories of signing animals, but I don't recall that one. NEVER heard about a talking seal.

# Some Might Have Called It A Disaster...

… but not me.Â  I’m talking about my hugely busy, albeit super-fun weekend.Â  It began Friday night when we took the kids to the Fort Wayne Tin Caps (minor league baseball) game.Â  We decided to go mainly because we needed to get to a Ticketmaster outlet to buy tickets for an upcoming arena football game.Â  Since we live in a rural area, the nearest Ticketmaster is an hour away, but the drive to the city to get tickets was still cheaper than all of the service fees Ticketmaster wanted to tack on for phone or internet orders.Â  So we decided while we were in the city, why not take the kids somewhere fun, so we decided upon the baseball game.Â  The only problem is that we found out just as we were leaving (at 4:10) that Ticketmaster closed at 5 – we live more than an hour away, especially at rush hour on a Friday evening.Â  It was a big deal because we had already bought our baseball tickets, and the only reason we decided to go to the baseball game with such a busy weekend ahead was because we were going to use the money that we were going to save buying the football tickets at Ticketmaster – except now we weren’t going to make it by 5 (did I mention that Ticketmaster’s website said they were openÂ  until 6?Â  So this really wasn’t our fault…)Â  Long story short, we arrived there at 5:20, and the people at the Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne were very accommodating.Â  We got our arena football tickets at the original price without the crazy sur-charges – YAY!Â  So on to the baseball game…Â  It was fun, though we had barely sat down on our lawn seats when my almost 2-year-old son took a tumble and was one dad-catching-his-shirttail away from falling from a 3-foot-high ledge onto cement and cracking his head open.Â  We promptly moved seats, and after my son ran around for a bit, we were actuallyÂ  able to watch some of the game, even though our team lost.

Saturday was my daughter’s birthday party, and we ended up with about 10 kids (this is a guesstimate – they were never still enough to count them all!).Â  Thankfully, the weather was nice, so we decided to keep all the kids outside for the entire party.Â  The kids started to get rambunctious, and it was difficult to keep so many kids entertained and out of trouble for so long (note to self – next year, an hour is plenty long for a kids’ birthday party) – we had the parents coming 2Â½ hours after the partyÂ  started on Saturday, which was WAY TOO LONG!Â  Everything was going ok though, until one of the party guests opened the gate while playing hide n’ go seek.Â  Suddenly, we had 2 dogs loose and roaming the neighborhood.Â  2 of the adults fanned out to go catch the dogs, and I was left to control the 10 kids (AND my son and his cousin who are around 2 years old).Â  Some of the kids were scared for the dogs, some were bored by being outside, some were whining for cake, and others just stood there, looking as shell-shocked as I felt.Â  Then the phone rang, and it was a neighbor on the next street over (whom I’ve never met) saying that they have our dogs.Â  Thinking my husband was still around, I followed my mom and oldest daughter with some leashes to capture the dogs.Â  Somewhere in the melee, it became apparent that my husband was just on his way back from looking for the dogs, and he comes back to the entire birthday party which he thought was unattended (though I was leaving as he was coming), but in the meantime, my daughter had decided to lead her guests into the house, like some sort of catastrophic parade.Â  We got to the neighbors house, but they only had one dog by this time, so my mom and my daughter went to find the other one while I returned the puppy to the house.Â  When I got back, we were still missing a few adults who were out looking for the dogs, and my daughter the birthday girl is begging for her cake.Â  Eventually, my mom and my daughter returned with the dog, everyone was fine, but we were still missing some adults who were still out looking for the lost-now-found dogs.Â  We found everyone, and tried to relax, even though there was still an entire hour left of the party –Â  WHEW!Â  For the most part, the kids were good, but there was one little girl who was not a very good listener.Â  She seemed to rub off onÂ  the other kids too.Â  Is it a coincidence that this is the same little girl who had opened the gate in the first place?Â  For the rest of the party, she was obsessed with the puppy.Â  She wanted to hug him, squeeze him, and hold him every second.Â  After his romp around the neighborhood, he was quite tired and made an easy mark to catch, but he was still a good sport –Â  good thing he’s great with kids.Â  I asked her to leave the puppy alone at least 4 times, and I heard my mom doing the same, and later my husband said he also tried, especially when he saw her dragging the puppy by his collar.Â  She reminded me of the character Elmyra from the cartoon Tiny Toon Adventures.Â  For those of you who aren’t familiar, I had fun finding the following clip – picture this little girl at our birthday party leading the pack of 10 kids, and you’ll wonder how we survived.Â  Starting at the 35 second mark, this could have been a scene from our house on Saturday:

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.

After the fiasco of a party (the kids had fun, so I wouldn’t call it a disaster, even if it was stressful at times), my family took the kids to their hotel for a party, and Hubby and I got some alone time.Â  The problem was, after the busy week we’d had, we were too tired to do much of anything.Â  We hastily chose a Redbox movie,Â  and it was terrible.Â  To my husband’s credit,Â  he wanted toÂ  just forget it after seeing the small selection, but I pushed for [Meadowoods](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1616512/" \t "_blank) since it was the only horror movie available and it was just $1 and we had already waited in line at the Redbox – I didn’t want it to be for nothing.Â  But it was a complete waste of time (movie-wise I mean, for any time with Hubby is well-spent); we would have been better off watching someone’s youtube videos for 88 minutes instead, that would have been far more interesting.Â  If only Redbox had an imdb link at the Redbox units – perhaps Meadowoods’ 3.1 rating would have made me just want to forget it too…

Sunday our church service ran late (of all days), and so we were running late for the entire day…Â  But we had a nice brunch with our family before seeing them off back to Illinois.Â  We then picked up my daughter’s friend for a playdate, and I was off to my MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) group get-together a little late because IÂ  had to finish up my thank-you notes and my appetizer.Â  I had decided upon little smokies in the crock pot instead of picking up a 7-layer dip as I had originally planned because I didn’t want to be even later after having to stop at the store to get the dip.Â  Everything was well-planned, and the appetizer actually tasted good…Â  but I forgot to drive gently on the way there – I was already late and in a hurry.Â  I wasn’t even out of town before I had to hit the brakes and make a hard stop, sending the crock pot flying, leaving me with a huge pool of barbeque sauce on the front passenger-side floor.Â  I pulled over and cleaned it up best I could – I am so thankful I had a roll of paper towels and extra plastic bags in the car!Â  But when I got to my friend’s house, my smokie appetizer in my crock pot had NO sauce left…Â  oh well, what could I do?Â  There was plenty of other great food, and I ate too much.Â  I think I was the only one to take the food they brought home with them, but I can’t really blame anyone for not wanting seconds on the sauceless smokies.Â  To add injury to insult, the crock pot tipped again on the way home (what is WITH my driving?), and I had smokies on the floor of my car this time.Â  Did I mention that Hubby and I spent an hour cleaning out the car last week?Â  But I guess it worked out since if we hadn’t cleaned out the car, the BBQ sauce would have spilled all over the junk that was in the car – this way I just ruined the floor of the car and the floor mat – and luckily for me, I have 4 kids and therefore don’t put too much stock into the car’s appearance or condition.Â  Besides, talk about built-in air freshener…Â  if anyone accuses our car of stinking like anything but BBQ sauce for a long time, I will certainly be surprised!

After everything that went wrong this weekend, some might classify it as a disaster, but we call it FUN!!Â  

### Comments

**taylhis**I agree, justj - good memories!  
**justj**taylhis, Many similar experiences. Not always together in one weekend like this, but many times the hectic and rushed times are recalled with fondness.  
**derek**What a wild weekend- not so much excitement when I'm there, m'kay? ;) I'm glad everything worked out fine in the end, though I am not sure I would have seen the bright side of dumping the crock pot- twice...  
**taylhis**Yes, long post, long weekend. So you had a similar experience involving all of these events? Or is this just how everyone's life sounds when they have 4 little ones? Thanks for taking the time to read my book.  
**justj**Wow!! that was a post and a half. I don't know where to begin on the comments. Condensed version Get tickets, see ballgame, Kids' Party, lost dogs, bad movie, long Sunday service, rushing and spilling food in a previously cleaned vehicle. Why am I getting the feeling of Deja Vu? I guess I'm just glad you had a full/enjoyable weekend. BBQ mini van, not exactly what you want to have for a pot luck. Could be better than Mexican cheese dip in July, but I'm not sure.  
**jamiahsh**And I LOVE Tiny Toons! Why can't they have that on Cartoon Network :D  
**jamiahsh**HEY! That sounds like a better movie than Meadowlands which I haven't seen but sounds like a waste of 88 minutes! HAHA! What can you do but laugh?! Sounds like a fun weekend to me, too!

# Stopping For A Breath In May

The month of May for our family has been booked solid for months.Â  Now that we are in the midst of this wonderful month, there is literally ONE day on our calender for the whole month that remains empty.Â  But I have to say, when busyness such as this used to stress me out just a few years ago, I have since learned to embrace it and enjoy these good times.Â  I’ve been able to find a healthy balance between planning ahead and making myself crazy worrying about every little detail; a compromise between taking one day at a time and also being organized enough to think ahead (but not too much to be stressed).

This coming weekend is just an example of the busyness of every weekend in May:Â  Friday night we are going to Fort Wayne to see a minor league baseball game, Saturday we are double-booked with an event for our youth group (which we will unfortunately have to skip) and my daughter’s 6th birthday party.Â  We are expecting family from Illinois and almost 10 kids to attend; my kids are so excited!Â  The kids (mine, not all the party guests!) will spend the night at Grandma’s hotel, and Hubby and I have been tempted to go to the drive-in, which is SO much more relaxing without kids.Â  The problem is, the drive-ins are about an hour away from our house, and since they show double-features that don’t begin until sundown, we can’t expect to get home until after 2am Saturday night – not sure if that’s doable in the middle of this busy weekend on top of me being already extremely tired.Â  I haven’t gotten a good night’s sleep in about a week since our 3-year-old has been coming into our room in the middle of the night and also waking up early in the morning.Â  But the drive-in sounds like too much fun to pass up, so we’ll see.

We have to rest up for Sunday, another big day.Â  We will begin by going to early church, then brunch with family, and then our oldest daughter has a playdate, our almost-6-year-old has a birthday party to attend, and I have a get-together for my mom’s group.Â  I’m looking forward to it, but somewhere in all of this I have to find time to prepare an appetizer, write thank-you notes, and get and wrap a birthday present for my daughter’s friend.Â  Plus I have to figure out how to do the play date and get my daughter to the birthday party when I am going to take the car toÂ  a neighboring town all day, leaving my husband with errands, all the kids and no car.Â  Sounds stressful, but amazingly, I am relaxed and ready for FUN!!Â  I just wish I wasn’t so tired…

### Comments

**derek**I ought to mention I have ONE RSVP for tomorrow. Yay! Hopefully Paul (the other leader) has more, but from past experience...  
**taylhis**@jamiahsh - 22 invited, only 10 rsvps. Sometimes kids come that don't rsvp, but at least we know we'll have at least 10 - Sammie is SO excited!!! @derek - your visit is one of the uber-FUN action-packed May weekends to which I was referring. You are not allowed to reschedule :)  
**derek**Well, if you need to I can always reschedule my visit... :o Just kidding. :) Have a great weekend, even if it \*is\* busy!  
**jamiahsh**I stand corrected... 22 kids ;)  
**jamiahsh**Good for you! Balancing everything? Are you a juggler in your down(??) time. 10 kids sounds a lot more manageable than the 21 you mentioned in a previous post.

# Fool Me Once, Strike One

My kids have been totally crazy lately.Â  End of school year I guess?Â  Great, let’s take a look at the irony in that…Â  end of schoolÂ  year makesÂ  kids act crazy, which makes me dread the end of the school year when I will have 4 crazy, bored, unstimulated kids 24/7.Â  Nice irony, that.Â  But anyway, today it’s been one thing after another.Â  So much so, that I’ve decided to use my spare minute to blog it instead of doing one of the other many and more productive things that I had planned for today.

I guess it began when my son pooped and smeared it all over the bathtub.Â  He somehow managed this while his sister was watching him so I could run to the kitchen for a minute to stir lunch which was on the stove.Â  I had to turn down the stove and delay lunch while I cleaned up the mess.Â  Don’t worry, I washed my hands (many times), but lunch was late, giving my daughter less time than usual to eat it before school.Â  I took extra time today to make their favorite mac n’ cheese, but no one ate anything.Â  So that also cans my make-your-own pizza sandwiches I was planning for dinner.Â  Like I’m going to allow the extra mess and time it will take for the kids to make their pizza sandwiches when they wouldn’t even eat lunch.Â  Besides, I have my end-of-the-year MOPs meeting to get to, and I’m not taking 4 hungry kids into MOPs childcare if they don’t have time or refuse to eat.Â  Let’s take bets on whether or not I will actually make it into the shower before my meeting…Â  I could go now, but then I’d have the company of my 3-year-old, who’s been wanting to take showers with me lately.Â  It’s nice to have a buddy, but my showers used to be my downtime, especially needed on a day like today…Â  By the way, did anyone see the [nice article about MOPs](http://www.americanprofile.com/article/39666.html" \t "_blank) in the latest American Profile magazine?Â  I enjoyed the few paragraphs I’ve had time to read…

Back to today – I finally got my 3-year-old to eat her lunch (had to drop what I was doing to chugga-chugga-choo-choo into her mouth), so she was rewarded with Cheetos.Â  Next thing I know, she and her brother had stomped the entire bag into the floor.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/05/cheeto-mess-5-10-10-002.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/05/cheeto-mess-5-10-10-001.jpg)

While I was cleaning that up, they were playing in the bathroom sink and flooded the floor.Â  In the words of Michael Scott from my favorite tv show The Office – **“**Fool me once, strike one. Fool me twice, strike three.”Â  So rather than leave them unattended, even for just long enough to clean up yet another mess, I put the little guy down for his nap before I cleaned up the latest mess.Â  Thought that little Office quote would make me smile, so at least I was right there 

And if you think that my 3 and 1-year-old kids were actually helping with the cleanup, you must not have kids because they only succeeded in spreading the Cheeto crumbs around further.Â  But at least they thought they were helping, and theyÂ  had fun while doing so.Â  Plus, note my gorgeous Mother’s Day bouquet in the background of the one pic – It’s from the kids (yeah right).Â  I â™¥ Hubby!

I’m just extra stressed since I’m trying to keep the house nice since we’re having a birthday party this weekend.Â  Don’t ask me why I’m trying to keepÂ  a nice house while waiting for 22 five-and-six-year-olds to run wild around my house celebrating my daughter’s birthday…Â  that doesn’t make much sense, does it?Â  Maybe I *have* finally lost it…

### Comments

**mary911**BTW, Disney looks uber cute in her pretty dress!!! :)  
**taylhis**Oh yeah, I forgot to add that the Cheeto abuse was part of what was so upsetting - a waste of perfectly good Cheetos, plus the money they cost... and it was a pickle - do I let the dogs in to clean it up when the puppy still isn't potty trained and might not do a good enough job AND leave more mess? In the end, I just cleaned it myself :)  
**Mysmichelle**I'm with mary911 - that's cheeto abuse!!! mmmmmm cheetohs I think its spring that actually causes the chaos, it just so happens that its the end of the school year - or maybe thats why they end it there? Good luck girl, and my dogs LOVE cheetohs mmmmmm  
**taylhis**@mary911 - Sometimes I think I can't do what I do either, and that's why I blog it before I explode! Thanks for the kudos! And you know what? I could never do what YOU do! So kudos back at 'cha!  
**mary911**What a waste of perfectly yummy cheetohs....mmmm...cheetohs.... I'm sorry about your day. I could NOT do what you do...not even for 5 minutes. Huge kudos to you!!!  
**i need help with my miniature amazon tank theme? | Pro Bass Fishing Blogger**[...] Fool Me Once, Strike One | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**derek**Sounds like our 4th grade small group outings- two would have shown up the first time, one showed up the second time, and now we are approaching the rescheduled first event and so far no RSVPs... As for your main post, well the only real preschooler experience I have is when I subbed in some preschool classrooms. Suffice to say I wouldn't have survived without the teaching assistants. :o  
**taylhis**Well, to be fair, 22 were invited, and only 3 have said they are coming for sure. But if you bring invitations to school, the entire class must be invited, which is understandable. And after last year, when only 1 kid showed up (thank goodness her parents called on the morning of the party - we had been fretting that NO ONE was going to come), we figured better have too many than not enough - but ask me if I still have that opinion on Sunday ;) And dogs cleaning up the mess is a fine idea. I just want to know who cleans up after the dogs when they get sick from all the cake and wrapping paper? ;) Looking forward to the chaos!!  
**jamiahsh**I think you ARE doing a great job. But 22 five and six year olds?! HOLY MOLEY! That is an idea... have the dogs clean up ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Oh My!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I would definitely have lost it. I would clean your house after the party. How about letting the dogs help clean it up?  
**justj**Ah parenting 101, I miss that... (NOT!!!). I see that you are blessed with inquisitive, intelligent and artistic children. This is not a mission for the faint of heart. Good luck. Keep saying to yourself "I love my children, I love my children..." ;) You'll do just fine and maybe you will be able to find yourself when the youngest moves out.

# I Am Published!

It doesn’t take much to amuse me, I guess, because today I’m happy that my local newspaper printed a picture I sent in of the baby doves that resided in our tree.Â  You have to subscribe to the paper to see the picture, so if you’re local, pick up a copy to see my picture; it’s on page 5 ðŸ˜‰

For the rest of you, [follow this link](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/04/17/dove-tale/" \t "_blank) and you can read my post about the baby doves – the photo that was printed in the newspaper is the middle picture.

### Comments

**justj**derek, Do those cars, trucks and vans only have one good side? Almost makes me want to go out and buy one... almost.  
**taylhis**Nice pics Derek! :)  
**derek**Since you demanded so nicely... :D [link](http://www.nissanofstcharles.com/used-inventory)  
**taylhis**@derek - That's funny! But seriously, give me some websites, we'd like to have a look :) @jamiahsh - you'll have to log in and see it online - it's so much better than the black and white version they put in the paper. Or, I guess you could just follow the link I provided, but the picture looks better in the online version of the paper - it's bigger. @justj - famous... haha :) Some funny comments here, made me laugh, thanks guys!  
**jamiahsh**I will have to look! Congrats!  
**derek**Congrats. I'm a published photographer too- you can see my photos on car dealer web sites everywhere. ;) (but not the newspaper- so congrats again!)  
**justj**Cool a published photographer. We have someone famous in our midst. ;)

# Zoo Snoozin' - Part 2 - And Then Some

Bright and early at 7am last Friday at the Toledo Zoo, we were gently awakened by one of our guides (or not-so-gently awakened at 5am by the screaming parrots if you were in the Michigan group sleeping in Nature’s Neighborhood) after hitting the pillows at 1am just hours earlier.Â  No problem, what better motivation could I have to get out of bed than already being IN the zoo?Â  We got dressed and packed up our gear and headed to the Carnivore Cafe for a generous breakfast of bagels, cereal, yogurt, applesauce, juice, and coffee (thank goodness for that, and I chugged two cups for fuel).Â  Oh yeah, if you’re not a regular reader andÂ  happened upon this post unintentionally, then you probably don’t know that I’m talking about the Zoo Snooze my daughters and I went to last week –Â  [see installment one here](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/05/03/zoo-snoozin/" \t "_blank).

After breakfast, we headed over to the gorilla exhibit, but we got stopped halfway there because there was mis-communication – we were supposed to be at the primate exhibit instead.Â  So we did an about-face, and headed over to the primates to watch them play with our tubes we had made the night before.Â  THEN we headed over to the gorilla exhibit, and we had to take the long way since they were re-doing the sidewalk between the primate and gorilla exhibits.Â  For those of you who aren’t familiar with the Toledo Zoo, there is A LOT of walking.Â  Not as much walking between exhibits as other zoos, such as Brookfield Zoo near Chicago, but still a lot of walking.Â  As frequent visitors to the Toledo Zoo, we’ve found ways of cutting down the mileage, especially when pushing the double stroller.Â  But on the second day of the Zoo Snooze, we were all over the place.Â  And I loved it.Â  It was a nice day.Â  My kids were tired, but I was rarin’ to go, so I didn’t even mind any of the detours.Â  SoÂ  we watched the gorillas play and tussle over their enrichment treats, and we listened to the gorilla keeper tell us about their personalities.Â  The gorilla troupe of Toledo holds a special place in my heart – their silverback (male gorilla leader) Kwisha, was born at Brookfield Zoo in 1988 – right about the time when I was a frequent visitor there as a child.Â  I remember ogling the gorillas and especially the babies in the (then) new Tropic World exhibit, and it’s quite probable that I admired Kwisha (who is the youngest and last son of Samson, a famous Brookfield silverback) way back when he was a gorilla tot.

After the gorillas, we had to walk across the zoo to the elephant exhibit (the long way, remember, because of the construction) to watch Louie play withÂ  our enrichment treats.Â  Louie is the zoo’s baby elephant – well, not so much anymore…Â  he was celebrating his 7th birthday last week when we were there.Â  I have a video of Louie popping our treat bags into his mouth – whole thing, bag and all without even opening it – but I put that in my previous post, so refer to the link above if you’d like to see it.Â  And then it was time for the Zoo Snooze to end, and the gates to open and let the real visitors come intoÂ  the zoo.

So we hiked back to the car, and we got many a strange look from regular zoo-goers who were wondering why we were carrying sleeping bags and backpacks and pillows.Â  We stashed our stuff and spent some time in the gift shop, which is not normally something I do on zoo trips, but it was a nice change of pace.Â  Besides, I was missing my little ones so much, and I had that zoo membership card burning a hole in my pocket – I just had to buy them something.Â  At this point, it was starting to get rather warm outside, and my kids were exhausted.Â  The rest of the group was going quite well, but my kids kept asking if we had to go back into the zoo.Â  Keep in mind that we come often, so they were old hats at the zoo who were extremely tired.Â  I patiently explained that we were going to do whatever the people who we were riding with were going to do, and that was that.Â  As it was though, everyone was exhausted and the people we rode with seemed to be asking us for permission to **not** go back into the zoo.Â  FINE with us!Â  I explained – not because I had had enough of the zoo – that would never happen, no matter how little sleep I’d had…Â  but I wanted toÂ  be on their schedule, plus I had the potential for two very tired and crabby kids on my hands AND a trip to Illinois scheduled for the next day.Â  We ended up staying on the side of the zoo where our car was parked (Toledo Zoo straddles the Anthony Wayne Trail – a major thoroughfare, and the zoo has a walkway above it.Â  But it requires a lot of walking to get from side to side, and most of the exhibits are located on the opposite side of the parking lot), so stayed on the one side and still got to see the Polar Bears, Wolves (who were passed out because of the heat), giraffes, and zebras.Â  And then it was time to go.

During the entire Zoo Snooze, I had planned onÂ  napping the whole way home, but I found myself having an intriguing conversation with our drivers instead.Â  We arrived home about 5pm, and I unpacked and then I re-packed for the trip to Illinois the next day and made up some lost time with my little ones.Â  By the end of the night, I was seeing things and not making much sense because I was so tired, but it was well worth it!

We awoke bright and early Saturday morning and left at 8am headed for Chicago, and wouldn’t you know it – a traffic snarl.Â  It was too early for the kids to nap, and they were awesome in the car – at least untilÂ  we hit stop and go traffic just outside the Loop.Â  An hour and 4 miles later (yes, you read that right – it took us an **hour** to go **four** miles!), we discovered the reason for our delay –Â  a bridge had begun to crumble, soÂ  they had to close down 2 lanes to repair it, which left all the traffic to merge into ONE lane.Â  Ah, Chicago traffic, don’t you love it?Â  NOT!!!

The kids were pretty great during all of this, as was I for running on fumes – I think I was still high off my Zoo Snooze.Â  They did start to lose it a little, but luckily I had some powdered donuts packed, so between those and the Veggie Tales dvds I put into the car’s player, we managed to not kill each other.Â  We arrived at my mother-in-law’s house 55 minutes late, even after Jill the GPS had predicted us getting there an hour early all morning.Â  This would have been fine, except that my mother-in-law had previous plans, so we got to see her for a whopping 15-minute-hi-goodbye-here’s-this-here’s-that-I-love-you-hug-kiss-goodbye session while my husband’s sister and brother-in-law managed to avoid us completely…Â  long story, there’s bad blood there, but I thought we were over it by now.Â  Guess not.Â  Whatever.Â  We moved on to a local Chicago beef place (NOTE to non-Chicagoans – just because you call it Chicago Beef, **a French Dip IS NOT CHICAGO BEEF** no matter how hard you try!!)Â  where we shared great food and even better conversation with a friend from way back, Derek – SO glad he called us and that the traffic jam didn’t ruin this part of our trip!

Our next stop was my Grandpa’s nursing home, and that was awesome.Â  It’s pretty much on the way from my husband’s family’s house to my family’s house, and I wouldn’t dream of going to Illinois without seeing him, especially since my grandparents do not travel and have never been to our home in Ohio.Â  Going to ~~Hellinois~~ Illinois is the only way I can see them and so every time I’m in the area, I make sure to stop by and let our kids have aÂ  visit with their great-grandparents.Â  My little boy, who will be 2 in July, had a special buddy in my grandmother; it was really sweet, and I don’t even know why.Â  But we were there for over an hour, and the whole time, he kept saying “Grandma!Â  Grandma!”Â  making sure that she was doing everything right along side him.Â  My grandpa made me a bet – will the Chicago Cubs (my team – he is a St. Louis Cardinals fan) or the Chicago Bears (a football team, also a favorite of his and my husband’s, for that matter) win their respective championship first –Â  World Series or Superbowl?Â  Stay tuned to find out…Â  ðŸ˜‰

Next it was on to my sister’s house, where there was a birthday party for my nephews who both have April birthdays -they turned 2 and 7 this year.Â  It was a great party; a wonderful chance to see family; immediate and also my sister’s in-laws who are very nice and interesting people to chat with.Â  My sister’s nephew is my oldest daughter’s age (10), and he has been interested in the weather since he was about 3 years old.Â  His hero is Tom Skilling, a local Chicago WGN weatherman, one whom I’ve always liked also.Â  Tom always teaches about the weather and its systems and patterns rather than just simply forecasting it.Â  But anyway, my sister’s nephew has his own weekly weather newsletter thatÂ  he writes and send electronically himself, so I put myself on his mailing list.Â  When I got the newsletter this week, I was impressed – just as I was when talking to the little guy and being dwarfed by his weather knowledge.Â  As is usual, my kids had such a wonderful time with their cousins that they hid when it was time to leave, and we had to dig them out, this time out from under my sister’s bed.Â  I’m done with being embarrassed about this; especially since my sister dug up some memories of us hiding from our parents while playing with our cousins!Â  I don’t remember this, but I’ll take her word for it…

Anyway, time got away from us, and we left my sister’s house at 9pm –Â  which was 10pm Ohio time.Â  Arrived home at 2:30 in the morning and had two crazy dogs and some kids toÂ  put to bed, and we begrudgingly gave up our church dreams for Sunday.Â  But lo and behold,Â  we were all up and ready for church on Sunday, so we went, and almost one busy week later, I’m still catching up on sleep as I write this, no surprise there.Â  But thanks for reading my rambling, and may this Mother’s Day find you blessed, happy, and healthy – hope you have a good one!!

### Comments

**taylhis**@mysmichelle - WOW. Yes, I enjoyed that, and I'm glad you sent it because some of the quotes in the video hit the nail on the head - the national news DID NOT do a very good job portraying the devastation. I wonder why? I had some idea because we have friends that moved down to TN to start a church, and they were talking about it in their blog. Nashville seems like a great community, full of caring souls who help one another. I pray that the city and its people recover. Please keep me posted on cleanup! Thanks for sharing the video!  
**Allen Nyhuis**Should've spent more time in the Toledo Zoo -- it's one of America's best. Allen Nyhuis, Coauthor: America's Best Zoos  
**jamiahsh**A singing meteorologist... the best kind! If he gets the forecast wrong at least he will be able to entertain his audience!  
**derek**It was a pleasure seeing all of you last Saturday. Thanks for the zoo writeup- it was a good read. This refers to the first post, but I would have stayed out of the bird house as well knowing your own big bird!  
**Mysmichelle**Happy Mothers Day Taylhis!!! Thought you might like seeing this video about Nashville - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFjaQoOdJvI I will for sure keep you posted about the zoo and roller derby.  
**taylhis**@jamiahsh - a comment rather short, for so much to comment on :) Yes, Caleb has been fascinated by weather for as long as I can remember. He got his first barometer when he was about 3, and he measures the rainfall and sends data to the National Weather Service. He wants to be a "singing meteorologist" :)  
**justj**Sounds like that was a good weekend overall. Not so much with the Chicago traffic. That is never a fun trip.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... so much to comment on. My cousins and I were always inseparable when we were young, too. Sounds like a budding meteorologist, to me and at 10?! Glad the Illinois traffic did not disappoint... well, was typical for the most part.

# Zoo Snoozin!

Last week I got an email from my friend Carol – she had planned a field trip to the zoo for a ‘Zoo Snooze’ and a few of her students backed out at the last minute.Â  Since the trip was pre-paid, the spots were paid for, and Carol wanted to fill them – so she thought of me, her friend, the zoo lover, and I of course JUMPED at the opportunity!

I took my two oldest daughters since the age requirements for the trip excluded my 3-year-old Disney and of course my almost 2-year-old, who I wouldn’t have wanted along anyway.Â  Poor Hubby had to stay home with the little ones, and how I missed him!Â  (and the little ones)Â  But other than that –Â  Best.Â  Zoo.Â  Trip.Â  EVER!!!

Because of legality reasons, my daughters and I were not allowed to ride the school bus with the rest of the group.Â  So my friend Carol graciously arranged for us to ride with one of her student’s parents who were chaperoning – they were the nicest people!Â  They were actually going to take their pickup truck, but upon learning that they’d have 3 hitchhikers, they switched vehicles to their SUV without complaint – how accommodating!Â  We followed the bus to the zoo, and we hiked across the zoo carting our sleeping bags, pillows and backpacks, and I was EXCITED beyond belief!!Â  We set down our stuff in Nature’s Neighborhood (where the birds were screaming) and walked over to the primate building where we got to watch the primates after zoo hours and listen to a zookeeper talk about her interactions with the primate families.Â  We then went into the Museum of Science building (this is at the Toledo Zoo, don’t know if I mentioned which zoo it was…) intoÂ  a classroom in the basement to listen to a worker tell about 3 animals – a box turtle, a salamander, and a rat (my girls were more than happy to volunteer the info that they had FOUR pet rats at home!).Â  After listening to facts about the animals, we got to touch them, and I had already promised myself I would touch it no matter what – not a big deal, I love animals, so I don’t have a problem touching regardless of species…Â  except for my fear of frogs, but had there been a frog, I was going to touch it!Â  We switched classrooms and did the same thing with 3 more animals: a cockroach, an agama (type of lizard – cute!), and a fox snake.Â  Because the group sizes for Zoo Snoozes are supposed to be 25-50 people, they had actually paired our group of 11 with a rather large school group from Northern Michigan.Â  When we were in the classrooms doing the animal activities, they separated our groups, and I was so glad because it would have been difficult for our kids to see and touch the animals if we were still combined with the huge Michigan group.

Next we went to the Carnivore Cafe (used to be an exhibit building that housed animals and they left some of the cages up for kids to eat in – they get a big kick out of this) for our snack of pizza, raisins, juice, and animal cookies.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/05/Zoo-Snooze-4-29-and-4-30-2010-011.jpg)

the kids eating in an animal cage at the Carnivore Cafe

We then went for a night hike, and walking around the zoo in the dark under the full moon was amazing.Â  We could hear the lions roaring, the snow leopards making cat noises, and when we walked past the cheetah exhibit, they were quite active.Â  One sprayed a tree, and then he began stalking us, slowly walking toward us and then running at us and jumping on the fence!Â  I didn’t have my camera out when he jumped at the fence, but here he is stalking us – listen for the little cheetah “meow” at the end:  
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.  
  
The zookeeper said that the cheetahs like to stalk toddlers who can barely walk, and they especially have fun with this during the zoo’s Halloween celebration when parents bring their kids who dress up like cute and cuddly things – like little bunnies or other tasty cheetah snacks.

So we tookÂ  a night hike to the aquarium, and it was neat to see the keepers turn on the lights for us.Â  Even the fish were acting differently at night –Â  some fish appeared that we don’t normally see during the day when we come, and others were swimming in schools when they don’t usually do that during the day.

After the night hike, we made enrichment treats for the animals – there were four to choose from:Â  melon bombs for the elephants (you make holes in watermelons and stick carrot sticks in there), pumpkin cookies and paper towel tubesÂ  for the primates, and snack bags for the elephants.Â  My oldest daughter made primate tubes, and Sammie and I made elephant snack bags – you put an apple, a pear, and a handful each of peanuts and popcorn in the bags and roll them shut and decorate them.Â  We were incredibly surprised the next morning when we watched Louie the elephant (and it was his 7th birthday!) take our treat bags and pop the whole things into his mouth (bags and all!) without even opening them first!Â  Here is a video of Louie eating our bags – too bad I couldn’t get out from behind the girl with the ponytail: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.  
  
After making the enrichments, we went back to a classroom and played an animal training games using a training clicker – I have to get myself one of those and follow the puppy around for a day or two to housebreak him!Â  Wonder when I’ll find the time for that?Â  After the game, it was finally time for bed, and we got to choose if we wanted to separate from the Michigan group.Â  We chose yes, leaving them to sleep with the screaming parrots – I get enough of that at home!Â  And sure enough, they reported to us the next day that the birds were up and screaming at 5am.Â  IÂ  would not have been too happy about that, especially since we didn’t get to bed until 1am!Â  So we took our stuff and slept in one of the classrooms in the basement of the Museum of Science which was pretty neat – it’s a well-kept 1930’s Works Progress Association building, and we got to wander the winding basement hallways back and forth to the bathroom.Â  Never mind that the building is home to hundreds of frogs and toads –Â  they were upstairs, and I didn’t give them any thought.

I think I will end it here and save day 2 of the Zoo Snooze for another post – this turned out to be a rather long post, and even though it’s difficult for me to understand, not everyone loves zoos as much as I do.Â  I don’t want to bore the heck out of anyone!

### Comments

**Zoo Snoozin’ – Part 2 – And Then Some | My Food Chain Gang**[...] My Food Chain Gang MY LIFE AS A WIFE & MOM: Parents, Kids, and Pets… Oh My! « Zoo Snoozin! [...]  
**taylhis**@Mysmichelle - you'll have to let me know what you do at the zoo to help! AND if you end up doing the zoo snooze. I don't have any TN zoos on my "been there" zoo list yet, but I was hoping to add Memphis in the near future - they're the closest zoo with pandas! We pass thru Nashville sometimes on our trip down to Orlando, but it's usually in the middle of the night, so we can't stop at the zoo. Were any of the animals affected by the flood? Hope you guys are digging out ok!  
**Mysmichelle**Thank you so much for your well wishes. I would like to say though our local government did an AWESOME job of keeping people safe and controlling the panic ect. I had destruction on all sides of me and the local news was very well informed and kept me and my kids from driving right in to danger (the roller derby venue is still under about 6 ft of water) I'm so proud to be part of such a great community and I just went and got my tetenus? shot so I can help with debris removal. AND I am volunteering at the zoo and I checked and they have a zoo snooze too!!! Keep posting taylhis - I am enjoying copying your ideas lately :-)  
**jamiahsh**yes, glad to heat you are all safe down TN way. I'm sure the news does not do it justice. Hope the cleanup is quick and free from further incident.  
**taylhis**@Mysmichelle - glad to hear you and everything / everyone near and dear is safe and unharmed. I've been reading about TN and Nashville and saw pictures of the Opry flooded. Cnn also had an interview with Keith Urban about how he lost much of his equipment in the flood. Shame, but as he points out, nothing compared to the cost of the human lives lost. Hopefully cleanup goes smoothly and no one else gets hurt!  
**Mysmichelle**Looking forward to the second day post!! Nashville flooded over the weekend and I didn't get to see the roller derby but my family, cars, house and job all escaped unharmed so I feel very fortunate and will see the roller derby another time. I thought of you today because I was signing up for volunteer cleanup and I picked the zoo!! Surprise surprise your post was about the zoo :-) I hope flood cleanup at the zoo will yield a little behind the scenes activity for me and my daughter too.  
**Phyllis Beyer**What an awesome experience!!!! I can't wait to read about day 2. Glad Sammie and Taylor had a chance to experience it.  
**Latest National Zoo Auctions**[...] Zoo Snoozin! | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**jamiahsh**A zoo after hours and overnight, too! That would be a fun field trip! Did you see your snow leopard "pal" from a previous visit? It would be fascinating to see how the different animals behaved at night. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LOUIE!

# A Trip To Walmart That Made Me... Happy?!?

It’s been awhile since I’ve posted a venting complaint post about Walmart.Â  It seemed like every time I went there, they were changing around their prices in some way that added to their profits from my pocket – it was aggravating.Â  I got used to it, and I haven’t noticed anything new (or let it get to me anyway) for awhile.Â  Today after a very long day, I had to go to Walmart, and I actually left happy about THREE things!

1.Â  They had my shoes back!!Â  The black Brahma Bravos they haven’t carried for aÂ  year!Â  It was enough to put a smile on my face and for me to give my cashier an earful about my quest for shoes.Â  I’ve been toiling over my [shoe issue](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/03/22/my-issue-isshoe/" \t "_blank) for about a year, and now I found the exact ones I wanted, for the price I wanted – YAY!!!Â  So tempted to buy two pair, just to put one away in case they decide to shoe-starve me again, but that would just be a waste of money…  
2.Â  The whole reason I went toÂ  Walmart in the first place was to find a snack for my daughter’s Kindergarten class.Â  Our turn to bring snack is tomorrow, and you are supposed to bring a snack that coincides with the letter they are learning about that week.Â  Our letter?Â  X – quite possibly the most difficult letter in the alphabet!Â  I’ve been pondering this one for a few weeks ever since the snack list came home, and I came up with nothing.Â  That’s why I had to make the last-minute trip to Walmart today, exhausted as I was.Â  So I went up and down a few aisles, searching for X snacks –Â  I had long since decided to settle on a snack with an X in it instead of one that started with X, so that madeÂ  it a bit easier.Â  Trying to also be budget conscious (there are about 20 kids in my daughter’s class), I boiled it down to 3 choices:Â  Trix, Chex Mix, or Stax potato chips.Â  Hmm, tough decision.Â  Of those, the cereal seemed the most healthy, although the Chex Mix had a double-x…Â  I could not decide.Â  But then again, I was up at 6:30 this morning to get to the middle school to attend a puberty talk with my daughter.Â  More on that later, aren’t you excited?Â  So I called my husband about the X snack – I was so tired, I just couldn’t figure it out.Â  He said to go with the Stax based on how much the kids would like it and the fact that it was the best value.Â  Fine.Â  No one ever said these had to be healthy snacks.  
3.Â  I found a booster seat for under $15.Â  Ohio is one of the last states to pass that booster seat law –Â  you know, the one where kids under 8 years old or shorter than 4’9″ have to be in a booster seat?Â  Well, that would include two of our kids, and we had only 1 booster seat.Â  I think it’s a dumb law; sure they say it’s safer, but who funded the studies -Graco et al.?Â  I’m from the 80’s – you know, the era where we kids lay sprawling in the backs of the station wagons, free as birds, feeling safe as can be while our parents braved the Chicago expressways…Â  Me and everyone I played with in the back of our parents’ station wagons made it into adulthood just fine…Â  not that I’m saying it was safe, but I just spent $13 on a booster seat, so I deserve to go off a little.Â  But I expected to pay much more, so I was happy.Â  Besides, like I told Hubby, $13 is a heck of a lot cheaper than the $100+ ticket it would have cost had our kids not been in the booster.Â  And I have a question – what about adults who are under 4’9″?Â  Do they have to ride in a booster seat in Ohio?Â  You know what, I won’t go there – it’s rude 

So, yeah.Â  Three reasons Walmart made me happy today; that’s unusual.Â  Maybe they’re messing with my brain – I had 5 items on my list and came out with a $60 bill; how could that make me happy unless they’re brainwashing me?Â  That must be it…

Or maybe I’m just excited to have gotten out of the puberty talk at the middle school unscathed.Â  My husband (bless his heart) was the only male in the room.Â  We asked our daughter last night if she wanted both of us, just me, or none of us to go, and she chose both.Â  I won’t go into detail, but it was kind of a reality check.Â  Man, kids sure don’t stay little for long, do they?Â  Luckily for us, the talk was given by the school nurse, who is also a friend of the family from our church.Â  She handled it wonderfully, primitive sketch and all.Â  And that’s all I have to say about that.Â  1 (puberty talk at school) down, 3 to go…

### Comments

**taylhis**Or maybe they make the shoes bigger now? I dunno, I just know that I'm a half-size smaller than my last pair of the same shoes, and the new ones are still a bit big. Maybe I wore the last ones during a pregnancy when my feet were swollen? That's all I can figure... still, each pregnancy is supposed to make your feet spread out and become larger and stay that way, so I don't know why my feet are getting smaller... Plus the old pair of shoes still fit me, the soles are just wearing away...  
**jamiahsh**feet that shrink? that's a new one on me :D  
**taylhis**@derek - the talk was centered more on puberty than other things, although respecting one's body was touched upon. Too bad it couldn't be addressed as God's body, but then again, it's public school. I specifically remember watching a puberty video in 4th grade, as well as the grades after that, but according to the nurse, kids these days are hitting puberty earlier - YIKES!! Tomorrow will be my 3rd trip to wmart this week - got the wrong size shoes! Apparently, my feet have shrunk, but with my size, that's a good thing ;)  
**derek**Did we have the..talk...in school in 4th grade in the 70s/80s? I remember in 6th-8th grades of course. Seems the public schools want to do this earlier and earlier with kids. I can go further with this, but I won't. I had to go to the big W twice in the last week. Last week I left the glass razor I bought from W behind at a dealer a day after buying it, so I had to get another one. Good thing it was only $2.50 for a rubber-grip one.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Wow! I enjoyed this post. I, too, think you should get the 2nd pair of shoes. I have done that when I find a shoe I really like. Then you won't have the grief of finding them for a while. I agree with jamiahsh...Taylor is quite a young lady who is very secure and well adjusted to want both her parents there. Way to go Lisa and Chris.  
**taylhis**@mysmichelle - no need to apologize, I like when people leave me comments! The more the better! Oh man! We do have Baskin Robbins in Ohio, but unfortunately not here in the country. The nearest one is about an hour away in the big city, and I was just there yesterday - bummer! Thanks for letting me know though! Those specials are awesome. I really enjoyed them while I was pregnant! Hope you enjoy the roller derby! Maybe you should start a blog of your own so I can read your take on it? Or just leave me another comment...  
**Mysmichelle**I apologize for posting twice - but I wanted to let you know Baskin Robbins is having 31 cent ice cream cones tonight, if you have them in Ohio  
**Mysmichelle**Once again all I can say is - "I get tired just reading about your days" so glad you found your shoes though, I'm of the mind you should go back and get the spare pair, it won't be a waste think about the way inflation is.....you'll save money on the next pair I'm sure of it. Roller Derby Saturday I'm taking like 6 people - who knew Nashville had a roller derby team? Best wishes to you and your family!!  
**jamiahsh**AH... sprawled out in the back of the Griswold (er... Shaf) station wagon headed to California! How much car travel has changed. The fact that T wanted both of you at her talk speaks volumes for her character. I'm proud of you, Taylor! You are an AWESOME young lady :)

# Slippers In The Store

We took a family walk down to Walgreens last night, and about halfway there, I happened to look down and noticed that my husband was wearing his slippers.Â  We proceeded to give each other a hard time, neither one understanding the other’s point of view.

MINE:Â  It’s embarrassing.Â  I don’t really concern myself with what others think for the most part, but I also know that many people are judgmental and will treat you differently if you have the appearance that you either don’t take care of yourself or are dirt poor.Â  I don’t want to make either statement about my family, and I don’t like drawing attention to myself or my family.Â  I definitely don’t want our daughters to have any excuses to not want to go places with us as they approach their teen years, when they will fashion plenty of these excuses themselves.Â  I will teach them not to care what other people think in that way as much as I can, but teens will be teens.Â  Besides, the signs on public places say, “No shirt, no SHOES, no service.”Â  Technically, slippers are not shoes, and I like to follow the rules.

HIS:Â  I’m comfortable.Â  Who cares what people think?Â  If they judge, that’s their problem.Â  The signs on the doors of public places are referring to no BARE feet.

I told him if I wrote to Dear Abby, she would say wearing slippers in public is not appropriate, and he challenged me.Â  So I said I would make a poll on my blog.Â  What do you think?

**Should my husband be able to wear slippers where and when he wants?**

* Yes - leave the man alone and let him wear his slippers
* Yes - but you should nag him about it until he wants to stop wearing the slippers in public
* No - it's inappropriate
* No - he should not wear slippers to the store because his wife asked him not to

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

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**What would you think if you saw a man wearing slippers in the store? Go ahead and check as many as apply.**

* I admire that guy's freedom! He doesn't care what other people think!
* What a slob!
* I wish I could wear slippers in the store.
* I feel badly for his wife and kids.
* I wonder if slippers are part of the "no shoes" policy?
* Why would someone wear slippers to the store?
* Did he forget to put his shoes on?
* That guy could learn a thing or two from Mr. Rogers.
* I'm not shopping at a store where they allow people wearing slippers.

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

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**If your spouse wanted to wear slippers to the store, you would...**

* let my spouse do what he wants without saying anything.
* Refuse to be seen with him in public.
* Hide his slippers next time he takes them off.

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

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### Comments

**justj**jamiahsh, sponge bob scares me. ;)  
**What would be a good job for my mother to do? | Treating Arthritis**[...] Slippers I&#1495 T&#1211&#1077 Store | M&#1091 Food Chain Gang [...]  
**A 30,000 Piece Puzzle In My Cookie « Morat’s Blog**[...] last minute thing) I said “Not today.” Â Hmm… kind of reminds me of another tangenteer’s latest [...]  
**jamiahsh**@ justj... I see nothing wrong with wearing SB pajama bottoms in public. HAHAHA! Of course, if people knew me... ;)  
**taylhis**I don't have any slippers to wear for "revenge" especially novelty ones. I wear these Croc imitation sandals (that are totally breaking) as slippers, so I guess those could be considered the same as slippers in public - embarrassing. But it's not like I have been able to find any other shoes to wear! So maybe he is just as embarrassed by my "breaking beach shoes" - the kids won't want to be seen with EITHER of us pretty soon! Haha, derek, that you should mention how ugly Crocs are. My generic ones are very comfortable, but then again, they were $3 and have lasted me years... But Carol is right - the woman is often held responsible for these things; I guess I just shouldn't care. But it's not like the slippers were practical - he had to chase my son to keep him from running into the street (he was closer, and I was tending another kid), and the slippers fell off as he ran. He's lucky he didn't break an ankle! So I forgot to talk about the safety issue, which is the most important part. I guess it just irked me that my opinion was taken so lightly and also argued against. The polls (and the post for that matter) were all in good fun - thanks for your thoughts and comments!  
**derek**Okay, that is about all I am comfortable answering. I had two answers I wanted to give for the second question, but it would only allow me to pick one, so I just chose between the two. For the third, where's the "I'll put on my slippers and join you?" This can be taken in more than one way of course- either, "Hey, good idea" or "I'll just put on these ridiculous novelty slippers and see how s/he likes it!" A safe answer since it can go more than one way. :)  
**derek**How about slippers that look like other footwear? I had slippers once that looked like sandals. Besides, hasn't at least one company profited from comfort over looks? That would be those ugly Crocs I'm talking about. As for the polls, I think I will tread carefully here and try to choose some "safe" answers if there are any... ;)  
**justj**No, I am not going to touch this with a ten foot pole. The only good answer is no answer. ;) At least they weren't Sponge Bob pajama bottoms....  
**Carol**I can see both sides. As someone who always had to look like a professionals daughter when in public, I always rebel against dressing up. This from an era where dresses meant slips and hose! Now, when I don't hve to dress up , I don't. Murphy's law though, whenever I run uptown real quick to grab something, I ALWAYS run into a parent and/or former student looking my worst! On the other side, it seems like even in these enlightened times, the woman is always held responsible (often unfairly) by what the spouse and kids do. I noticed this alot when people would ask me why my then husband was not in church. I would mostly say, Ask him (which they wouldn't!) But life goes on and I am glad to live in a little town where slippers are acceptable in most places.  
**jamiahsh**Or what was on his feet. ;) The slippers aren't THAT bad, are they?!  
**jamiahsh**At least they were not Goofy slippers! We had pj day at the mart when I was employed there. I don't think it's a big deal that he wore them to Walgreens. He was comfortable and I doubt that people looked down to see what was on his shoes... they WERE covered. If my spouse wanted to wear slippers in public, I would let HER do so without saying anything ;)

# The First Time I Had To Call Poison Control...

…was today, and I hope it’s the last.Â  I have 4 kids, the oldest of whom is 10 years old.Â  So I’ve been doing this kid thing for more than a decade, pretty much a third of my life if I shave off a couple of years, which I’ll gladly do.Â  My older kids are girls, so why am I not surprised that the boy is the one who prompted the call to Poison Control.Â  The good news is, everything is fine.

This morning, Beeber (an affectionate nickname for my son Christopher because this is what his older sister called him when she was 2) was out of my sight for just a few minutes – I think I was cleaning up some sort of mess he made as usual.Â  In the back hall we have a pet cabinet (which will now be moved) where we keep leashes, dishes, rawhides, etc.Â  Back by the pet cabinet, I found an open, empty package from a dog’s heartworm pill.Â  It was opened neatly, and it didn’t look like it had been opened by a 21-month-old expecting to find candy.Â  I checked his breath and his teeth (the heartworm medicine looks like a chunk of dog food – I would think if my son had eaten it, then some would be stuck on his teeth), and there were no signs that he had eaten it.Â  Perhaps the last adult to give the dogs the medicine had put an empty package back in the cabinet.Â  Or, knowing my son, he might have just fed it to the dogs.Â  But I had to call Poison Control to be sure; the chemicals listed on the box sounded frightening.Â  Poison Control said they didn’t expect a problem, which I thought was a strange response but a better one than I had hoped.Â  I thought they would at least tell me warning signs of trouble or something, but I’m just glad they gave the all clear and that we didn’t have to make a trip to the ER or worse.

Ah, Poison Control, the number every mom should know:Â  1-800-222-1222.Â  They are very calming, friendly, and they can actually speak English unlike a lot of places that we call these days, so don’t hesitate to call them if you think your kid might have gotten into something they shouldn’t have.Â  Better safe than sorry!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/04/yuck-face.gif)

### Comments

**taylhis**@mysmichelle - I'm glad your now 16-year-old was ok after the acetone incident. You will have to let me know how you like the Roller Derby!!  
**Mysmichelle**Never forget the day my now 16 year old got into her daddy's acetone.......a chemical he used in his hunting and fishing crafts I had to call poison control, but like you said they were calm and re assuring. Hope all is good with you and your family and I'm planning on going to the roller derby next Saturday!!  
**taylhis**The kids bring home Mr. Yuk stickers from school. I've put them on some things, but am waiting on doing everything until Beebs is a bit older - at this age, I can really see him being ATTRACTED to the green cartoon face, despite the tongue.  
**derek**You're welcome. If you look up Mr. Yuk on Wikipedia you can read some interesting information too, and find out how to get some free stickers if you wish.  
**taylhis**@derek - thanks for the link; I enjoyed the video. I'm glad to see they did a good job of not making Mr. Yuk cartoony or friendly in anyway. The tone of the song was very "yucky". As I wrote in the caption on my picture of Mr. Yuk that didn't show up for some reason, some kids are too little to understand what he means. And then there is the whole "forbidden fruit" thing. Tell a kid he can't touch something with a little green face on it, and he might just be more curious about the poison bottles that are forbidden. But as soon as Beebs gets a little older, I will show him the video. The other girls can watch it now. THANKS!  
**jamiahsh**BEEBS, Beebs. Glad you are all right my little buddy. Stop freaking your mom out ;)  
**justj**So sorry to hear that. I'm glad everything is well. I don't believe we ever had to call poison control. For that I am grateful.  
**derek**Oh, sorry- I am glad c is well. Really, I am- I just forgot to add the sentiment to the comment! :o  
**derek**This post deserves this youtube link. As I was on Team Mr. Yuk last summer, I put it on the DVD I gave my cabin :) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLsONa3gKIQ>  
**Daily Bread | My Food Chain Gang**[...] MY LIFE AS A WIFE & MOM: Parents, Kids, and Pets… Oh My! « Am I A Denzel Fan? The First Time I Had To Call Poison Control… [...]

# Daily Bread

My Daily Bread spoke to me today.Â  *[Our Daily Bread](http://odb.org/" \t "_blank)* is a little book that contains small daily devotions.Â  I keep mine in my bathroom; that way I can flip through it while I’m bathing a kid, or, er, whatnot.Â  Lately I’ve been struggling with being overwhelmed by back-logged home repair and organizational projects that I know I really shouldn’t waste time and energy worrying about.Â  Some people would say’ just do it’ – then I’d be less overwhelmed as the things start to get done, but with 4 kids, I just don’t have the time (see my post about [Poison Control](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2010/04/23/the-first-time-i-had-to-call-poison-control/" \t "_blank) and you’ll see what happens if my kids are left unattended for mere minutes), and I’m tired all the time and also kind of lazy.Â  So anyway, I’m trying to just let go and not think about my To Do list, and here is the Daily Bread for today; maybe it will help others in my boat too:

*Itâ€™s been a long, cold winter, and I am eager for warm weather. Iâ€™m tired of seeing bare trees and lifeless brown leaves covering the ground. I long to see wildflowers poke through the dead leaves and to watch the woods turn green once more.*

*Yet even as I anticipate my favorite season, I hear my motherâ€™s voice saying, â€œDonâ€™t wish your life away.â€*

*If youâ€™re like me, you sometimes hear yourself saying, â€œWhen such and such happens, then I will . . . or, If only so and so would do this, then I would do that . . . or, I would be happy if . . . or, I will be satisfied when . . .â€*

*In longing for some future good, we forget that every dayâ€”regardless of the weather or our circumstancesâ€”is a gift from God to be used for His glory.*

*According to author Ron Ash, â€œWe are where we need to be and learning what we need to learn. Stay the course because the things we experience today will lead us to where He needs us to be tomorrow.â€*

*In every season, there is a reason to rejoice and an opportunity to do good (Eccl. 3:12). The challenge for each of us every day is to find something to rejoice about and some good to doâ€”and then to do both.*

*Just as the winter turns to spring,  
Our lives have changing seasons too;  
So when a gloomy forecast comes,  
Rememberâ€”God has plans for you. â€”Sper*

*Every season brings a reason to rejoice.*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**To Everything, there is a season and a time to every purpose, under Heaven.  
**derek**Yes, look to Him always and rejoice!

# Am I A Denzel Fan?

I’ve heard a lot of people say they are Denzel Washington fans, and I didn’t really get it.Â  But then I watched [Inside Man](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0454848/" \t "_blank), andÂ  I enjoyed it.Â  I then saw [Book of Eli](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1037705/" \t "_blank) in the theaters, which I really liked a lot, and it’s become one of my husband’s favorite movies of all time.

Last night we watched the 1998 movie [Fallen](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119099/" \t "_blank), also starring Denzel, and it was one of the best crime-thrillers I’ve seen in a long time.Â  As usual with these types of movies, I hesitate saying too much because I don’t want to ruin anything for anyone.Â  Let’s just say that I highly recommend Fallen; especially if you like the genre; especially if you like Denzel.Â  Always intriguing; at times it was genuinely creepy, though never gory, and most importantly, it did not leave the audience distracted with guessing possible twists – just a good crime drama which left one waiting to see what unfolds next.Â  John Goodman, James Gandolfini, and Donald Sutherland all provide excellent performances rounding out the acting roster.Â  At one point, there was an expression on Denzel Washington’s face that was utterly perfect for the circumstance at hand, and that’s when I realized that I was starting to become a fan of his acting.Â  If you would have asked me before today who my favorite movie actor is, I would have said Tom Hanks.Â  I loved Forrest Gump, Splash, League of Their Own and Toy Story, and I thoroughly enjoyed a host of other Hanks films: The Terminal, Castaway, and Big just to name a few.Â  Hanks’ diversity, comedic abilities, and every-man qualities make him fun to watch.Â  So after thinking about all these great movies again, I guess I would still maintain Tom Hanks as my favorite movie actor, but because I judge movies more from a whole-picture perspective, Denzel’s films are starting to catch my eye – he knows how to pick ’em!

I’ve seen Bone Collector (push-knob car locks have never been the same), but it’s been a long time, and I don’t remember much about the movie except that I liked it (and those darn push-knob car locks).Â  So now, being a Denzel Washington fan, I will have to watch Bone Collector again.

So the point of this post is?Â  See Fallen – it’s good.Â  And we have SO broken the stinker movie trend around here.Â  Hallelujah!!Â  And thank you Denzel!

### Comments

**Carol**I first appreciated Denzel as Bobbie on Hill Street Blues when he played a policeman. That might have been one of first roles.  
**taylhis**@Bois - WOW! Thanks for all the info! I will definitely be interested in checking out some of these movies in the future! I haven't seen any of them yet. Thanks so much for commenting! And I'm glad to read that Denzel plays many more characters than cops - I was starting to wonder about all of the cop roles Denzel has played.  
**Bois**I enjoy all of these films (except Pelham 123 which doesn't deserved to be re-made to begin with), they are good action/thriller movies and Denzel W. never disappoint bringing realism in all of them but what about Denzel's movies for which he's seen as a World class talent ? Here some of my favorites : Malcolm X : His portrayal of Malcolm X is quite simply beyond description, it's just one of these performances that leave you speechless, one of cinema's most brillant performances. It's also my favorite film from Denzel W. The Hurricane : Another acting tour de force by Washington, a role that demands a great deal of physicality and emotional range and there isn't a moment when he isn't entirely convincing, he's at the very top of his game here. Cry Freedom : He's again sublime in the complex role of South Africa activist Steve Biko, he play this role with such subtlety, passion & accuracy that he's never less than fascinating to watch, it's without a doubt one of his finest performances. Glory : The classic, epic civil war movie wouldn't be the same without Washington's iconic performance for which he earned his first oscar. He Got Game : A deglamourized Denzel Washington (with a big afro) play the role of an ex-con, imprisoned for the accidental murder of his wife, he's now a looser father rejected by his childs, it's a wonderful, heartfelt performance. John Q : A favorite among average people (especially women), I dare you to not cry at Denzel heartbreaking portrayal of a blue collar, desperate father who will do anything to save the life of his sick son, one scene in particular is exceptionally moving. Man On Fire ; Same as John Q, it's a favorite among average people, it's also one of my favorite Denzel's performance, as well as the young & talented Dakota Fanning, they are wonderful together. Devil in a Blue Dress : An overlooked neo-noir movie who has an engaging story, a great 40's L.A. atmosphere, magnificent direction and stunning performances by Denzel Washington and Don Cheadle in his breakthrough role. Much Ado About Nothing : All the roles I've mentioned before are all emotionally & psychologically complex, dramatic work, here is a great, charming shakespearean comedy with an all-star cast, Denzel play the Prince Don Pedro of Aragon and he does very well, no surprise since he's primly a stage actor. Co-sign on Training Day (A volcanic, mesmerizing performance) & Philadelphia (He's the best thing about it, imho). keep up the good work.  
**taylhis**I actually saw the new Taking of Pelham 123 - I didn't even know it was a remake. But I really don't remember it, so I guess I didn't find it that good. And I definitely don't remember Denzel in it... let me guess, was he a cop? :) He should be careful about the typecasting...  
**jamiahsh**YEP... GREAT ACTOR! Let me see if I can find some other movies to recommend. Training Day? Remake of The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3? Courage Under Fire (a bit older... early 90s); Pelican Brief, Philadelphia (with your favorite actor... T.H.) I actually have Bone Collector. Ok... that's enough.

# Something New

We were looking for a family-friendly activity to do with our kids on Saturday.Â  The zoo was out since we’re chaperoning a Girl Scout field trip there next Saturday.Â  Our original plan was to take our veryÂ  furry and smelly dog to get groomed, but when we called around for prices, the quotes were much more than we wanted to spend on something that will just have to be done again in a few months.

So my husband searched around and found [this: Roller Derby](http://www.fwderbygirls.com/home.html" \t "_blank).Â  Do you remember Roller Derby?Â  It was popular in the 70’s and 80’s, and there was a recent movie about it called [Whip It](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1172233/" \t "_blank), which was also Drew Barrymore’s directorial debut.Â  We saw the movie not too long ago, and it was enjoyable, but now I’m going to have to watch it again after seeing the sport played live.

Roller Derby is a sport played on roller skates by women.Â  I asked my husband why men don’t play, and he said they’d get carried away with the aggressiveness and kill each other.Â  I think there are some men’s leagues, but they aren’t professional like the women’s league.Â  So anyway, a basic game of Roller Derby has two periods separated by a halftime.Â  Each period has several “jams”.Â  Basic game play consists of a pack of skaters skating around a circular track.Â  There is one “jammer” on each team, and she is supposed to break through the other teams’ pack of players, scoring a point for each opposing team member she passes.Â  There’s more to it, but those are the basics.Â  The action is fast, the sport can be brutal, and fights occasionally break out.Â  It’s a lot of fun to watch!!Â  Especially if you’re brave enough to sit in the “suicide seats” where you sit on the floor next to the track.Â  Our friends were brave enough to try, and they came out in one piece!Â  If you are interested in watching a bout or maybe even trying out to be a Derby Girl, check out the website of the [WFTDA – Women’s Flat Track Derby Association](http://wftda.com/" \t "_blank) – they have a list of teams so you can find one near you.Â  Here is a video from their website explaining the very basics of Roller Derby:

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.

It was a great time – fun for the whole family, and I highly recommend it as something different to do.Â  Tickets are pretty cheap – we paid $12 for each adult and $7 for my oldest daughter – the rest of the kids (5 and younger) were free.Â  For that, we got about 5 hours of entertainment.Â  The atmosphere is family friendly (despite some of the dirty innuendos some of the players’ names imply that would go right over most kids’ heads), and there are clowns running around providing additional entertainment.Â  At halftime, my kids got to go out in the arena and play a racing game with the clowns, and they also do skits and make free balloon animals.Â  Each kid getsÂ  a little noise maker when they walk in the door, and they also have a Hokey Pokey time and do the bit where they throw beach balls around the audience.Â  While it was family friendly, my little ones were bored at times (they didn’t understand the sport) and our little guy, who is not even 2, kept us from watching much of the action with his shenanigans.Â  The lady who was waiting for me to finish with the changing table in the bathroom said, “I’m never bringing her to something like this again!” as she pointed to her little girl who looked about my son’s age.Â  So you might want to prepare yourself with lots of snacks, activities, and candy if you bring your kids.Â  The kids ended up having a lot of fun, mostly because of all the yummy concessions Dad bought them and the little toys they got to take home.Â  Hubby and I are going to check out a bout sometime for date night without the kids though so we can actually get into it and watch the game.Â  And hopefully, there will be closer scores with a little more excitement –Â  we witnessed twoÂ  blowouts.Â  In the first game, the Fort Wayne SWAT team got creamed by a team from Rockford, IL (where we used to live, what a coincidence!), and we left the second game early since it was getting late and the score was Fort Wayne – 154, Dayton – 13.Â  OUCH!!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**HAHA! Consider it rhetorical ;)  
**taylhis**I've lost my way in this conversation. Was that question directed at me? I don't know how to answer... :)  
**jamiahsh**Starlight Express, Please Answer Me Yes I Don't Want You To Go.... Boy, AM I Glad someone noticed the similarity. Did the show spell the decline in popularity of the sport?  
**derek**Starlight Express, Starlight Express Are you real - yes or no ? Starlight Express, Starlight Express... Sorry... :D I've never been to a roller derby, but some of it at least sounded fun. Well, it was something to try once with the kids, right?  
**taylhis**@Mysmichelle - good to hear from you; it's been awhile! Looks like there are plenty of teams in TN - ones in Memphis, Knoxville, and Nashville. Here's the link to the Nashville team: http://nashvillerollergirls.com/ Seems like they have a few bouts left this season!  
**Mysmichelle**I wonder if they have it in the Nashville area, I love roller derby  
**jamiahsh**Yeah, really does sound fun. Who woulda thunk that something popular 20 years ago (or more) was here in our corner of the world!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Sounds like fun.

# 2010 Academy Of Country Music Awards

Today is one of those days that come only twice a year – one of the two annual country music awards shows.Â  I’ve been super excited all week, well, for months actually; even if a few of the nominees are anonymous to me.Â  Country music is changing, and I just don’t have the time to keep up with who the new artists are and what their sound is like.Â  Consider that my disclaimer for doing badly on my picks, haha.Â  Here is the list for the major nominees with my picks in green.Â  I will change them to red as the show airs if I get them wrong, but I’m being optimistic by putting them in green – as winners are announced, I will change the category color to red for wrong and green for correct.Â  Good luck to everyone, guessers and nominees alike!Â  Whatever happens, I know I will have a great time watching as always!!

Entertainer of the Year:  
â€¢ Kenny Chesney â€¢ Toby Keith â€¢ Brad Paisley â€¢ George Strait â€¢ Taylor Swift â€¢ Carrie Underwood â€¢ Keith Urban â€¢ Zac Brown Band  
*(Now that hurt.Â  I’m not a big fan of Taylor Swift, but she won Entertainer of the Year at last fall’s CMA awards, plus she is favored to win by industry experts Reba McEntire and Blake Shelton.Â  Unfortunately, this is not about who I* ***want*** *to win, but who I* ***think*** *will win.)*

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

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

Top Vocal Group:  
â€¢ Lady Antebellum â€¢ Little Big Town â€¢ Randy Rogers Band â€¢ Rascal Flatts â€¢ Zac Brown Band  
*(Another ouch factor pick – I love Rascal Flatts and want to see them win – they deserve to win; they’re awesome!Â  But Lady Antebellum has so much buzz, so again, logic prevails for this pick.Â  I actually hope I’m wrong here, but only if Rascal Flatts takes the prize.)*

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

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

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

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

Album of the Year:  
â€¢ â€œAmerican Saturday Nightâ€ â€“ Brad Paisley â€¢ â€œLady Antebellumâ€ â€“ Lady Antebellum â€¢ â€œPlay Onâ€ â€“ Carrie Underwood â€¢ â€œRevolutionâ€ â€“ Miranda Lambert â€¢ â€œThe Foundationâ€ â€“ Zac Brown Band

Single Record:  
â€¢ â€œNeed You Nowâ€ â€“ Lady Antebellum â€¢ â€œPeople Are Crazyâ€ â€“ Billy Currington â€¢ â€œRed Lightâ€ â€“ David Nail â€¢ â€œToesâ€ â€“ Zac Brown Band â€¢ â€œWhite Liarâ€ â€“ Miranda Lambert

Song:  
â€¢ â€œCowboy Casanovaâ€ â€“ Carrie Underwood â€¢ â€œNeed You Nowâ€ â€“ Lady Antebellum â€¢ â€œPeople Are Crazyâ€ â€“ Billy Currington â€¢ â€œWhite Liarâ€ â€“ Miranda Lambert â€¢ â€œYou Belong With Meâ€ â€“ Taylor Swift

Video:  
â€¢ â€œBoots Onâ€ â€” Randy Houser â€¢ â€œNeed You Nowâ€ â€” Lady Antebellum â€¢ â€œWelcome To The Futureâ€ â€” Brad Paisley â€¢ â€œWhite Liarâ€ â€” Miranda Lambert â€¢ â€œYou Belong With Meâ€ â€” Taylor Swift

Vocal Event:  
â€¢ â€œHillbilly Boneâ€ â€“ Blake Shelton featuring Trace Adkins â€¢ â€œHonky Tonk Stompâ€ â€“ Brooks & Dunn featuring Billy Gibbons â€¢ â€œI Told You Soâ€ â€“ Carrie Underwood featuring Randy Travis â€¢ â€œIâ€™m Aliveâ€ â€“ Kenny Chesney with Dave Matthews â€¢ â€œSeeing Starsâ€ â€“ Jack Ingram featuring Patty Griffin

TOTAL SCORE:Â  5/13 – Not my best, but slightly better than I thought I would do, I guess…Â  FUN SHOW, and that’s all that matters!Â  Don’t think I’ll be winning the $1,000 from CBS.com though!

### Comments

**taylhis**Ok, so I've realized that some of these comments are spam, but I got a kick out of them, so what the heck. Besides, Ralph Lauren Polo Shirts has a point - I DID have joy producing this article! :)  
**taylhis**@Shirl Seel - Actually, Taylor Swift won the CMA Entertainer of the Year in 2009. She did not win any ACM awards, however, and those were the ones I was writing about in this post - they aired last night. I see what you're saying though... Did you notice that Taylor Swift was the first to jump to her feet when she DIDN'T win the Top Female Vocalist prize? That was classy. Thanks for your comment.  
**Shirl Seel**I can't believe the CMA snubbed Taylor Swift. She's so cool!  
**Shirl Seel**Taylor totally should have won some awards from CMA (Country Music Awards). How rediculous.  
**ralph lauren polo shirts**Took me time to go through every one of the comments, but I truly adore the write-up. It proved to become really helpful to me and I'm certain to the many commenters here! It is often nice when you can not only be informed, but also engaged! I'm sure you had joy producing this article.  
**jamiahsh**YEAH CARRIE! Her phone is buzzing!  
**jamiahsh**In order from the top... Taylor Swift (think that is the obvious choice); Darius Rucker; Carrie (WHHOO HOO); Rascal Flatts; Brooks + Dunn; Jamey Johnson; already announced; Eli Young Band (I bow to the expert); already announced; Need You Now; done; done; I Told You So  
**jamiahsh**Some of the people sitting at our table of 17 at Texas Roadhouse were actually debating whether the show was on tonight... or last night. I was tempted to call and ask you ;)  
**derek**My guess is someone I've never heard of and/or a song I've never heard will win in each category. ;) Enjoy!

# Dove Tale

For the past month or so, our family has been keeping tabs onÂ  a mother dove sitting upon her nest, nestled way high on a ledge upon the neighbor’s tall house.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/04/baby-doves-4-2010-005.jpg)

This is the nest after Mom had left it

She sat there all day, every day; through rain, shine, and even a few nasty thunderstorms.Â  And then one day, she was gone.Â  I thought about her all day, wondering if she had abandoned her nest, especially since we never got to see the hungry open mouths of the baby doves (squabs?).Â  A few hours later, I spied this scene in the tree right in front of our house:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/04/baby-doves-4-2010-003.jpg)

It’s Mom with two babies!Â  I guess doves grow faster than the traditional robins whose nests we are used to watching.Â  The dove chicks, er, squabs (as a quick internet searchÂ  led me to believe they’re called) hatched and left the nest before we even realized it!Â  A day after the above picture was taken, Mother dove was gone and the two babies sat in the same place, cuddling and preening.Â  They sat there for about 2 days, and I was worried that Mom had left them too early and they would starve.Â  Some more quick internet research told me that Mourning Doves grow rather quickly, and that the mother leaves the babies shortly after they leave the nest – so our doves were behaving normally.Â  I also learned that the mother and father doves take turns sitting on the nest.Â  The male usually takes care of the daytime duty, while the female relieves him at night.Â  Since both genders look alike, unless you are watching the nest constantly, you won’t notice the switch.Â  I was wondering how she didn’t get extremely bored sitting up there 24/7!

Every day these little guys grow by leaps and bounds, and this picture was taken only one day after the above picture, note how mother has left the babies to fend for themselves:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/04/baby-doves-4-2010-007.jpg)

The day after this picture was taken, there was only 1 baby left in the tree, and now there are none.Â  We enjoyed watching these little guys grow up, and I hope it’s true when they say that a pair of mated Mourning Doves will reuse the same nest over and over again – I’ll be watching the nest and waiting!

### Comments

**I Am Published! | My Food Chain Gang**[...] you’re local, pick up a copy to see my picture; it’s on page 5 For the rest of you, follow this link and you can read my post about the baby doves – the photo that was printed in the newspaper [...]  
**jamiahsh**AH... more "pets" to add to the menagerie!  
**derek**Ah, the mourning doves. I used to think it was "morning" instead, as I remember their song from early mornings- wake up too late, no dove song.

# Dead Forever

A cute Spring video I shot the other day of my 3-year-old daughter Disney explaining what would happen if a ball rolled into the street and got hit by a car:

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**The ball will be dead, aww. Well, if hit right it will go flying and never be seen again, so might as well be. :D +1 on the Christopher comment  
**jamiahsh**You go, dude! Out of the mouths of 3 year olds lies the secrets of the universe ;)  
**mary911**Tee Hee! How cute!!!! :)  
**Phyllis Beyer**How adorable. I like Christopher getting tangled in his helmet strap.

# A Break From The Stinker Trend

My husband and I have been watching some stinky movies lately.Â  Many of them have had something in common, but I don’t want to say which ones or what their common trait is for fear of making these movies predictable and even worse for people who might decide to watchÂ  them.Â  I will just name the titles of the movies we’ve watched lately that weren’t any good along with some quick notes:

[Edge of Darkness](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1226273/" \t "_blank) (recent Mel Gibson mess), [Shutter Island](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1226273/" \t "_blank) (so looking forward to this one and it let me down), [Memento](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0209144/" \t "_blank) (man loses memory and uses Polariods to remind himself of his mission in life), [Fight Club](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0137523/" \t "_blank) (made us permanently question imdb.com’s rating system – this one got an 8.8 and we hated it), [The Skeleton Key](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0397101/" \t "_blank) (Kate Hudson voo-doo flick – need I say any more?), [The Machinist](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0361862/" \t "_blank) (the best part of this movie was Christian Bale’s acting – what does that tell you?), [Angel Heart](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0092563/" \t "_blank) (more voo-doo, this time from the 80’s with Robert DeNiro and “Denise” from the Cosby Show which will never be the same for me again – I saw more of Denise than I ever needed to see; there was little about this movie that wasn’t disturbing – why they are bothering with a remake in 2011 is way beyond me), [Surveillance](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0409345/" \t "_blank) (I liked this one a little, but my husband did not.Â  One of the rare movies upon which we disagreed.Â  Bill Pullman was pretty good), [The Collector](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0844479/" \t "_blank) (a horror movie that wasn’t quite as bad as the other mentioned above.Â  VERY gory, and the amount of squirms and gore did not outweigh the good things about the movie).

Some of those movies are newer and we saw them in the theater; others are older releases watched at home.Â  There just isn’t much coming to the theaters these days.Â  The Nightmare Elm Street remake is coming soon, but my hopes are not high for that one –Â  the Halloween remake was awful, and the redone Friday the 13th wasn’t much better.Â  I did enjoy My Bloody Valentine 3D that came out a few years ago, but then again, I never saw the original.

At least we’ve been offered a break from all the stinkers.Â  We saw the Steve Carell / Tina Fey comedy-adventure flick Date Night for **our** date night the other night, and it was enjoyable.Â  Better than I thought, actually.Â  Steve Carell plays an everyman suburban husband who takes his wife out for a date night, and they say they are another couple in order to get a table at a swanky restaurant.Â  Problem is, the couple they pose as are mixed up in no-good business – hijinks ensue.Â  Steve Carell wasn’t given much to work with for his character, but it amazes me how he brings life to every one of his roles and makes every character different from one another – how does he do that?

And surprisingly, we got a break from our stinker-streak for at home movies too with a Sarah Michelle Gellar suspense thriller that was actually quite enjoyable, despite my usual disdain for the actress.Â  It’s called [Possession](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0368563/" \t "_blank), but don’t let the title fool you – it was a pretty good suspense movie with a crummy title.Â  The movie follows a young couple who are very much in love and celebrating their first wedding anniversary.Â  Complicating their lives however, is the husband’s convict brother, who has just been released from prison and is staying with them.Â  There is a horrible car accident, and both brothers end up in comas with the brother-in-law waking up thinking he’s the husband…Â  sounds like a cheesy soap opera, but it was well done, and we liked it.Â  From what I’ve been reading, it’s a remake of a Korean movie called Addicted; I might have to check out the original.Â  There is also an alternate ending, but I’ll stick with the ending I saw – the alternate sounds dumb.

I’m just glad that we broke our stinker-streak, even if it did have to involve Sarah Michelle Gellar.Â  Consider this blog post your warning to stay away from the ones I listed above – some were almost bad enough to add to my “horrible movies” list; one that includes such bombs as The Love Guru and The Night Listener.Â  You’ve been warned!!

### Comments

**Annalee Schaich**tina and steve are so funny! date night was so great!  
**derek**And unsurprisingly I haven't seen a single one of those movies, but that's no surprise as I have never been known to be a movie buff. I will probably see the Carell/Fey movie sometime in 2011 from the library- it did sound interesting when I read about it.  
**taylhis**I won't delete your reply - I was referring to "general you". I don't know that you could offend me that much! :) Yes, it's the one where she goes to a huge plantation house in Louisiana.  
**mary911**HA! No, actually I did like that movie....that was the one where she went down to this house in Louisiana, right? Like a big plantation house? It's been a while since I've seen it, but I do remember I liked it.... Please don't delete my reply!!! I've never deleted any of yours.....yet! ;)  
**taylhis**@mary911 - Did you really like Skeleton Key? I can't tell if you're joking with me or thinking of another movie or what... I did kind of like the ending, a little. It could have been worse. I'm glad you commented. I like to complain about movies I don't like, and I'm really interested to hear from those that disagree with me, as long as they're not rude about it. A few people have already told me they like Fight Club, which I figured since someone out there had to be voting favorably for it since it got the 8.8. But I like to hear different opinions - part of the point of the blog. Besides, if I don't like your opinion, I can just delete your comment! haha :)  
**mary911**Hm, I actually enjoyed Skeleton Key. LOL.....  
**jamiahsh**I dunno... The Elm Street remake tv ads have only popped up here about a week ago. The movie to avoid at all costs... Hot Tub Time Machine has had ads all over for months and surprise... surprise once it opened... bye, bye ads ;)  
**jamiahsh**Hearing lots of good things about Date Night... hopefully, I will be able to find a date and time to see it!

# I Don't Want To Play Inside All Day...

But some of us don’t have a choice where, or even if, we get to play all day.Â  And it’s tax day, and shame on you if you haven’t done yours yet!Â  I don’t know about you, but where we live, it’s oh-so-nice out – I’m talking 80Â° weather!Â  But you might be stuck inside doing your taxes…

So here is a song just to torture you.Â  I’ve seen this on Sesame Street twice now, and I just think it’s so cute; especially when Elmo sings along!Â  It aired again the other day, so blog time!Â  Sorry if you were stuck inside all day for work or other unpleasant tasks.Â  Take comfort in that there will be a whole spring and summer’s worth from where this came from – I â™¥ Spring!

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**yep... financial aid forms would cause a parent to need to do that sooner rather than later. Maybe one day I'll do the last minute thing but not THIS 49 minutes ;)  
**justj**No, I got to go out this evening. My taxes were done early this year. My darling daughter's school kind of forced me to do them early. Dang financial aid forms.  
**derek**I just sent out over $2000 in taxes... Of course, I've been setting aside 25% of my income for this very purpose since last June when I started this job, so no surprise. Oh, $1000 of that is for my 1st quarter 2010 taxes. My first 80 degree day yesterday resulted in mild sunburn... :(  
**jamiahsh**I just can't stay inside all day/ I gotta get out/gimme some of those rays! It's a sunshine day!  
**jamiahsh**SOOOOOOO FUN! Just had a bunch of little ones over here to see what the noise was, Kyli shouted "ELMO!"

# God's Strong Love For Fools

I came across this article the other day by Janine Dorsey of the Tampa Tribune; it’s called “Don’t Laugh; It Could Happen To You: Common Reasons For Emergency Room Visits Are Common and Serious”

If that title alone doesn’t intrigue you, then go ahead and skip this post.Â  But I found the article to be both interesting and amusing, so I’ll share some highlights:

Federal regulators review a sample of those visits for signs a product might need to be recalled. Those records provide a view into the dramatic injuries of Americans who seem able to hurt themselves with almost any product made.

One woman fell from a galloping horse while texting.  
Another woman’s bangs caught fire as she peered into a toaster.  
More than 818 emergency room trips in the past four years involved “chicken” – dead and alive.

Boxes of cereal (cut fingers), cans of pork and beans (falling from a cupboard onto one’s head), wood chippers (yes, people stick their hands in) and trombones.Â  Hundreds of people suffer piercings gone wrong, thousands fall out of their mobile homes or have objects intractably lodged in orifices.

“Every day, people come in and you just think, ‘You gotta be kidding me,'” said Brian Peckler, an ER doctor for 15 years, now at Tampa General. “I mean, what makes a guy think using a fish hook to clean out ear wax is a good idea?”

Everyone knows by now that talking on the phone is distracting, and now that cell phones have become even cheaper than land lines in many cases, people are finding a variety of ways to hurt themselves while using the phone:

A 19-year-old male, on the phone while lifting weights, drops a barbell on himself.

A 21-year-old male, riding his bike and texting, crashes, scrapes his face.

A 37-year-old male cutting chicken while on the phone slices his hand.

A 25-year-old male, texting, walks into a telephone pole’s guide wire and tells emergency room workers “he might have gotten zapped.”

Hundreds of injuries are blamed on the phone in its capacity as a weapon: They’re used as missiles or as a bludgeon to beat people on the head.

And then there is something that’s become obvious to me ever since I had a son almost two years ago –Â  men are more apt to hurt themselves than women.Â  There are more women than men in this country, yet men account for 56% of the ER visits, according to federal data.

Men suffer injury in 80 percent of pressure washer cases. Nine in 10 injuries involving “mobile home” and “alcohol” were suffered by men. And 96 percent of “nail gun” cases were men.

“Guys are definitely dumber than women in this regard,” Peckler said.

One 37-year-old man tried cutting branches with a circular saw – on top of a running wood chipper. The saw cut off several fingers, which fell into the chipper.

Having a brother appears dangerous as well. Regardless of who was injured, ER records implicate the brother twice as often as the sister.

And my personal favorite part of the article:

“Demonstrate” appears in no small number of cases where less-than-skilled people tried to show off martial arts moves, wedding dances, pogo-stick skills and cheerleader routines.

Though many people consider themselves expert enough to demonstrate something, Robert Cano at University Community Hospital sees scores of cases that prove otherwise.

“Almost nothing good comes after someone says ‘Hey, watch this!'” Cano said.

Note the 52-year-old mother, demonstrating judo to her daughter by flipping her husband. Torn left knee.

Other cases: The 25-year-old man demonstrating to children how to climb on monkey bars when his shoulder “snapped.” Or the 16-year-old demonstrating a softball technique who stepped on a rake that smacked her in the forehead.

Or the 55-year-old woman showing her grandson how to use a pogo stick – she fell and smacked her head.

And finally, the ER doc’s favorite story:

Peckler at Tampa General marvels at accidents that should have been fatal but weren’t.

His favorite case: the man who was supposed to be watching his 3-year-old, but decided to change his car’s oil in the driveway.Â  Seeking a safe holding area, Dad put the child in the car and crawled underneath to drain the oil.

The child knocked the gear shift from park to neutral, and the car’s tire rolled over the man’s chest.

He suffered no major injuries, Peckler said. But how could anyone survive?

Peckler shrugged and said, “God’s strong love for fools.”

Indeed.Â  Just be careful next time you hear someone say, “Watch this.”Â  Maybe you should get the phone ready to dial 9-1-1.Â  Then again, after reading how inclined some folks are to hurt themselves while using the phone, perhaps a better response to “Watch this.” would be “No thanks.”

### Comments

**Backyard Thrill Rides (Don’t Try These At Home – Watch Youtube Instead!) | My Food Chain Gang**[...] in action.Â  And by the way, more than a few of these trials reminded me of that article I read and wrote about a while back about reasons for common ER visits called: Don’t Laugh, It Could Happen ToÂ  [...]  
**Paris France Vacation Packages**I was told having a pet makes you live longer, thank you my cat.  
**Yun Geddes**I have 2 dogs and a cat! i luv them sooo much! my animals are the best....i luv animals too  
**derek**There's a whole website devoted to people making stupid choices resulting in injury or death- the Darwin awards. Of course, one has to die or otherwise remove oneself from the gene pool to win more than an honorable mention. Chipping one's fingers after slicing them off doesn't quite cut it.  
**justj**Hmm, I think I only made one trip to the emergency room for myself. I was around 4. Of course, I tend to be very careful with all of my power tools, and I've had some dumb luck. And I did read the warning that trying to stop the saw with your hands is a bad idea.  
**jamiahsh**I would imagine that you have had multiple such calls, Mare ;)  
**mary911**I call it....job security....oh yes I do!!!  
**jamiahsh**Or "Fortune Favors The Foolish." The softball player stepping on the rake seems awfully familiar.

# Small World

Well, we missed our yearly trip to Disney World this year, so it feels like ages since I’ve been on the Small World ride.Â  That isn’t what this post is about anyway.

13 years ago when we started dating, I met my future husband’s mother, father, and grandmother for the first time at his grandmother’s house.Â  She lived beside a lake, and I have fond memories of walking their new 8-week-old adorable Cocker Spaniel puppy Murphy around the lake with my new boyfriend, with whom I had already fallen in love.Â  A few years later, we were married, and my father-in-law was tragically diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease).Â  The disease is awful; one’s mind remains intact while muscles in their body begin to fail.Â  My father-in-law was soon confined to a wheelchair, and one day while his caretaker was taking him for a walk, his beloved Murphy ran into the street and was hit by a car while my father-in-law was forced to watch, completely helpless.Â  Murphy was taken to the vet, and miraculously, she had no major injuries.

After my father-in-law passed away, one of the tough decisions we had to make was what to do with Murphy.Â  My mother-in-law worked all the time and didn’t feel it was fair for Murphy to be alone much of the time; she thought my husband and I should take her.Â  I would normally do my best to take in an animal in need, especially a dog as sweet as Murphy and especially back then when I had only one child.Â  But at the time, there was so much going on that it was impossible.Â  I will spare many details, but among other things, we had a new baby, there was a crisis with our business, and we knew we would have to be moving in the near future – it’s difficult to find an apartment (especially in the Chicago area where we lived at the time) with the pets we had –Â  one dog and one cat – let alone with adding another dog to the mix.Â  So it broke my heart because I knew my father-in-law would have wanted Murphy to stay with us, but I said no.

We did our best to find her a good home; we spread the word, and my mom put up fliers at the school where she worked – someone heard about the story of Murphy’s “dad” and was interested.Â  So she took her home, and months later, we heard that she had been made a part of their family; evenÂ  getting her own professional Christmas pictures taken.

All was well, 10 years passed, and from time to time, my husband and I would think about Murphy.Â  The woman at my mom’s work moved on to another job just a year or so after taking Murphy, and they fell out of touch, so we often wondered what became of them.Â  It had seemed like we had made the right choice and that Murphy had found her family, but you just never know…

And then today I got this email from my mom:

*Hi Lisa,*

*Thought you would want to know…..Murphy (Vince’s dog) passed away last week.Â  She was with the same family all this time.Â  They are very broken up as she became part of their family.*

*The way I found out…..their son came in to school for a conference on his 6th grade daughter.Â  Small world.*

*Love, Mom*

Of course I am sad to hear that Murphy passed away, but I am also relieved to know that she was part of someone’s family all this time.Â  It’s a relief toÂ  know that her getting hit by that car didn’t have an impact on her long-term health.Â  I have closure knowing that she lived a long and happy life, and I can finally say that I know we made the right decision all those years ago.Â  I think Vince would have understood and been happy about Murphy’s new family.

### Comments

**derek**I remember Murphy- sweet indeed. I'm glad he had a home with a good, loving family who could pour attention on him for these last ten years.  
**jamiahsh**That WAS heartbreaking. I know how difficult it was for you and C to say no to taking Murphy in. That must have been really traumatic for you. But THANK GOD someone as loving and caring as you two took him in and he lived a long, happy life. How wonderful you must have felt to get your mom's email. I love hearing about your beginnings as a couple adds even more insight into two WONDERFUL people!

# Finishing Out The Wonderful Weekend

After our fun Friday game night and awesome anniversary celebration on Saturday, Sunday after church we decided to take the kids to Chuck E. Cheese.Â  We decided to bring along Sammie’s little 5-year-old friend (the one who is moving to Mexico – the new one, or New Mexico if you don’t speak 5-year-old), and that turned out to be…Â  an *interesting* decision, for lack of a better word – more on that later…

We had a blast at Chuck E. Cheese –Â  we don’t live really close to any like many people do, so it was kind of a new experience for my kids, and they had a lot of fun.Â  We found some great internet coupons, and we were able to escape with minimal monetary damages – plus the kids didn’t blow through their tokens nearly as quickly as I had expected; thanks no doubt to my husband’s brilliant token allocating.Â  My son, who will be 2 in July, just loved Chuck E. and called him “Mouse” pronounced “Mow” like rhyming with “Ow”.Â  He kept saying, “Where Mow”; it was so cute!Â  Here’s a video; he’s saying “Right there, mouse”.

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

And luckily I didn’t capture any of this on film, but I have to give a bit of a public service announcement here.Â  Sorry if it gets graphic and disgusting, but just remember we had to witness it; you just have to read my blog about it.Â  If you go to Chuck E. Cheese or just out in public in general, please keep your pants on.Â  I know it sounds obvious to most of us, but you would not believe how many, er, how much we saw that we did not want to see.Â  I guess those low-rider jeans are in style, but I don’t like them.Â  And I especially think that women who have small children should not wear those at all, especially at a place like Chuck E. Cheese where you are constantly bending down to talk to or pick up your kids or squatting to get tickets or whatnot.Â  Use your imagination if you don’t know what I’m talking about because I certainly don’t feel like describing it.Â  Thank goodness we hadn’t planned to eat there or appetites would have been lost – YUCK.Â  Enough said.

We had a great time, except that my daughter’s 5-year-old friend was extremely hyper and by no means a good listener.Â  She was the kind of kid who made me truly appreciate how well-behaved my own kids are, and I’m still working on un-doing some of the bad habits they learned on the hour-long car ride to Chuck E. Cheese – like putting Mike & Ike’s in their noses and spanking butts.Â  At Chuck E. Cheese, they have a kid-friendly check-in system, so we wanted to let the kids roam aÂ  little bit, but this was next to impossible since our little friend was the kind of kid who was constantly climbing on the outsides of rides while other kids were on them.Â  Then, she came up with two little finger rings, and my husband asked her where she got them.Â  She led me to someone’s table, and I was horrified to realize that she had taken the rings from the table.Â  Could have been an honest mistake, but I could tell by her face that she knew she didn’t really “find” them – at least she was honest about where she “found” them.Â  Luckily she had no trouble putting them back, and kudos to Hubby for being so head’s up.Â  Maybe it sounds mean, but we high-fived each other all day that she is moving.Â  Don’t get me wrong, she’s not a bad kid and she and my daughter get along great, but our 5-year-old is our biggest challenge behavior-wise and having a friend prone to misbehavior would not be a good thing for her.Â  Besides, she’s only 5, and she will make other friends – friends that will listen to their parents as well as to their friends’ parents.

Overall, a great day to finish out a fun-filled weekend!Â  Even though it will probably take me all weekÂ  to recover sleep, it was well worth it!Â  

### Comments

**taylhis**Perhaps moms at Chuck E. Cheese can benefit from these t-shirts made for plumbers I just read about: http://www.duluthtrading.com/95587.aspx  
**jamiahsh**We took a trip to Texas IN JULY over my birthday in '83 I believe went to Showbiz and I do remember Billy Bob and all the rest. The CEC that is in the Fort was a Showbiz before the buyout and there was a CEC at another location. Many a little one had a birthday party there. Yes, the animatronics do seem a bit geriatric, comparatively.  
**taylhis**A while back, I looked up some stuff about Show Biz too since it was a fixture of childhood - get good grades, go to Show Biz. In Kindergarten we took a field trip where they showed us the control room for the robots and what was under Mitzi the Mouse's sweater - wires. Why you would want to show a class full of 5 and 6-year-olds that the robots weren't real, I don't know, but it was a fun field trip that I still remember. When our Show Biz changed to Chuck E. Cheese, it went downhill. Feeling nostalgic, I looked up Show Biz, and you can actually find pics on the web and probably videos, I don't remember. I had a bday party at Show Biz, even though Billy Bob scared the pants off me - it was the claws. Here's a link to a Show Biz fansite: http://www.showbizpizza.com/ And video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGWJbcTvL\_M Is it just me or do those animatronics seem more advanced than the ones at Chuck E. Cheese here 25 years later? And now that Chuck E. Cheese is down to ONE robot, tsk tsk. There is a whole bunch of Show Biz nostalgia out there - just google it!  
**derek**I don't think I remember you having a youtube account. I just checked out the other two videos you have posted there as well. No comments though I see on any of them. Cute videos. Interesting tidbit I just learned from Wikipedia- I thought that Chuck E Cheese bought Showbiz Pizza, but it was actually the other way around. When Mr. Atari (Bushnell) filed for bankruptcy back in 1984 Showbiz took that opportunity to buy CEC, and eventually renamed/rethemed all their stores with the CEC name and theme.  
**jamiahsh**No "New Moon" in the foreseeable future, eh? WOW... I just got the innuendo from that comment. YUCK! Honestly, I was referring to the movie ;)

# Our Eleventh

This past Saturday, April 10, 2010, marked 11 years of marriage for my husband and I.Â  Since it was a weekend, and we treasure that as family time, we didn’t think about calling the babysitter to get some alone time.Â  A generous friend stepped up and offered to watch the little ones for a few hours for Hubby and I to have some alone time, and we contemplated our options that morning.Â  I love the zoo, but it seemed like too big of an endeavor to travel all the way to Toledo after staying up until 3 the night before for game night.Â  We had an awesome time Friday night, but note to self – no more game nights the day before our anniversary!Â  Boy, were we tired on Saturday!Â  So anyway, we ditched the Toledo idea, and we thought about just staying home since Zambrano was scheduled to pitch for the Cubs, and he is always entertaining.Â  Finally, my husband came up with a great idea – we’d go to Buffalo Wild Wings, and our friend could take the kids across the street to Menards to play while we sat and watched the Cubs game at Wild Wings.Â  Before you think I’m nuts, I should mention that Menards (at least our location, anyway) has a hugely awesome indoor play area for the kids – they have many of their playground sets, play houses, and sandboxes on display for people to see and for kids to play in while parents shop – our kids love it and always have a blast, plus it’s free!

So Hubby and I sat at Buffalo Wild Wings and watched the entire Cubs game on Saturday!Â  And, as a special Anniversary present to us, Zambrano led them to victory!Â  They started out playing terribly, but turned themselves around (which is rare for the Cubs!), and actually looked pretty good by the end of the game – I’m talking diving catches, great plays, homeruns, and most importantly, turning a 3-0 deficit into a 4-3 victory!Â  YES!!

And I have to add that Buffalo Wild Wings was actually a great, albeit non-traditional place to celebrate an anniversary.Â  Not only did they not mind us sitting there for hours watching the game, but they were happy to accomodate us in letting us choose which channel we wanted, AND they gave us a hat with 4 balloons attached to take home for our four children.Â  AND a free anniversary dessert!

After watching the Cubs win, we got the kids and took them over for some go-carting.Â  Always fun, and this is the first time in a long time no one had to sit out with a baby!Â  Our son is old enough to ride this year, and although he was apprehensive at first, it only took him until the first turn when he began squealing with joy!Â  First time he rode with Dad (because everything is less scary with Dad), and I was able to snap this pic before we took off:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/04/4-10-10-our-anniversary-Christophers-first-go-cart-ride-001.jpg)

Then I got to take him on the second time, and he was such a wonderful little passenger; he had so much fun!Â  As I was riding in the beautiful weather with my little guy next to me, I had the thought, “It doesn’t get much better than this!”

Happy Anniversary, Honey, it was a great one, as always!Â  And thank you for eleven wonderful years of marriage and for four beautiful children!Â  I love you!

### Comments

**derek**I don't know- those scenes you wrote about seem mighty familiar like I've been there or something... ;) The Cubs game got me a $1 lunch at Meijer on Saturday- hot dog, chips and pop. Anyway, this isn't about me so Happy Three-Days-After-Your-Anniversary! :)  
**jamiahsh**May you share many more wonderfully special, memorable anniversaries. So glad that I have a Super L&C couple in my life. Cheers to the best!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Sounds like you had an absolutely wonderful day. Happy Anniversary to you both. Chris, I can't believe I have had you as a son for 11 years already. Thank you for making my daughter so happy and for the 4 wonderful grandchildren you both have given me. I love you all.  
**justj**As I did say very early on Saturday morning, Happy Anniversary. You are one of the nicest couples I know. My best aways to you and your family.

# Thoughts (from a PO'ed Cubs fan) On Opening Day...

Well, this was going to be a blog post where I was going to stay upbeat.Â  I was going to talk about the positives and (as it became apparent) the negatives of the 2010 Chicago Cubs team, but I was going to do it as sort of an objective sportscaster…Â  until the bottom dropped out, and I realized, for the first time on the opening day of a season, that the Chicago Cubs might just have to be written off in APRIL…

There have been seasons where the Cubs look great – they might make me nervous, but even in those years, providing they get a few lucky breaks and play some great baseball, they have a chance to make it into the post-season, if not the World Series.Â  And then there are the years where they can be completely written off; years where even the most optimistic of true fans can tell that our beloved Cubbies won’t get much further than the dog days of summer, if we’re lucky.Â  I remember a year when I had to write off the Cubs in May.Â  It was late May, but May, nonetheless, but it had become apparent to me that the Cubs were not going anywhere and that I had better explore the idea of a back-up team; not because I love the Cubs any less after all of their failures but simply because I love baseball, and I needed to have a team to follow into the post-season…

But I digress…Â  back to today; the Cubs 2010 season-opener…

First inning was great – the Cubs were up 3-0…Â  until the Braves got their turn to bat, and Zambrano (the famous hot-tempered Cubs pitcher) fell apart.Â  While he did deliver on his promise to curtail his outbursts, that didn’t stop him from choking.Â  First the Cubs lost a fly ball in left field between 3 players – one of those ‘who’s-gonna-get-it-anyone-but-me’ scenarios that should not exist in games where the players get paid millions of dollars to play baseball.Â  Next, in the bottom half of the same first inning, Zambrano gave up a homerun, got an error (with an idiotic play – the ball got through the infield, but good fielding managed to make up for it and got the out at first.Â  Apparently, Zambrano, who was covering first, got so high off the save of the play that he decided to throw to third base to get the runner, but he was so hepped up on his save at first that he overthrew third and got himself an error, which led the Braves to score – UGH).Â  So back to my list of things Zambrano did wrong…Â  So then, in his trademark frustration, Zambrano proceeds to bean a batter with the ball **and** give up yet another homerun – and he was finally out of the game, but at least he left the field tantrumless, per his promise…Â  at least?!?

Then I find myself at the top of the 5th inning when there is a double play on the Cubs – a line drive was hit, but the runner at first couldn’t get back to the base in time – terrible base-running!!Â  Honestly, it looked worse than spring training out there!!Â  Again, these guys get paid millions for this?!?Â  WHERE is the coaching?Â  I find myself wondering, just like I did at the end of last season – has Lou Piniella just given up?Â  But isn’t it too early in the season for that?!?

Next, to end the top of the 5th inning – Nate McCloud (on the Braves) makes a great catch – it was a great hit by the Cubs, but the Braves seem to have a team – why can’t WE catch balls like that?!?

And then, at the top of the 6th – McCloud makes a diving catch…Â  but wait, he drops it.Â  He picks it up so quickly that the umps rule the ball caught and runners out – Kudos to Cubs coach Lou for not losing it and abstaining from performing one of his famous dirt-kicking tantrums, which is more than I can say for myself…Â  total crap, and a few choice words were said in my living room…Â  but to my credit, the kids were upstairs.

Bottom of the 7th – some Cubs pitcher named Samardzija walks 3 in a row but still gets to stay in the game somehow – maybe the team really does think it’s still spring training?Â  Then there is a huge error, but thankfully, I had to go to the bathroom so I missed it.Â  Good thing too, I haven’t yet learned how to control my cussing during baseball and my kids were still awake…Â  And then…Â  what’s THAT?Â  Someone hits a ball way back into the outfield which bounces into the stands, and the ball is played wrong, plus the throw to third is terrible…Â  And that’s it, I’m done.Â  I’ll watch the rest of the game and maybe offer some final thoughts, but the bottom line is this – I am sad to say that the Chicago Cubs did not show up to play baseball today.

At least the Detroit Tigers, a team I chose long ago to be my back-up team due to their close proximity to where I live plus the fact that they are in the division of my nemesis team, the Chicago White Sox, won their opening game, albeit against the Kansas City pushovers.

And as for the Cubs…  
It’s not about the 11 run deficit; the fact that the Cubs lost 16-5.Â  If they had tried, been well-coached, and played good baseball, it would just be me here pouting.Â  Fact is, they played terribly.Â  It’s one thing to have a bad game; that can be forgiven.Â  But when you’re a team who has so many dedicated fans, and you have so much to prove…Â  how can you possibly recover from a debut this horrible?Â  The Chicago Cubs looked like they don’t even know how to play baseball.

I do have a tendency to over-dramatize things, so here is my plea to what I fear are the hopeless 2010 Chicago Cubs:

Surprise me.Â  PLEASE.

\*\*An addendum…Â  After this sorry excuse of a baseball game, I did a google search for ‘cubs logo sad clown face’ – thinking it would be easy for me to find a Chicago Cubs logo that someone had morphed into a sad clown face -after over 100 years of disappointment, does it really seem that far-fetched?Â  I did not find what I was looking for, but I found [this amusing blog entry instead](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ted-goeglein/prisoner-of-cubs_b_169662.html" \t "_blank)…

### Comments

**taylhis**Ok, spambot, shmambot - bogus comments deleted!  
**taylhis**@derek - oops... I knew I shouldn't be approving all those pingbacks, but it's not like I have a lot of time to sit and figure out what's legit - I don't know enough about the internet. Oops.  
**derek**Looks like a spambot latched on to this post- all those trackbacks are for the same topic, which ain't the Cubs or even baseball... Well, it's only the first game- we'll have to see how things go I guess.  
**taylhis**@justj - Maybe so, but one award-winning player doesn't make a good team. I remember always seeing KC at the bottom of the standings in their division. When I looked it up, stats prove this - of the past 20 seasons, KC finished above .500 only 4 times. Seven of those 20 seasons they came in last in their division, and they haven't placed first in their division since 1985. So Cy Young award / great pitcher or not, in my book, they've stunk for years :)  
**justj**I'm not sure how much of a pushover the team from KC is when last year's Cy Young award winner was on the mound. Detroit did push his pitch count and got him out after 6 innings. They scored 6 off the bull pen.  
**Phyllis Beyer**We don't pick our team. We are given a different team each week. I would never bet against the Cubs....my husband and daughter may disown me.  
**taylhis**Wait... You bet against the Cubs and that's a good thing? MOM! ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Here is a positive note on the Cubs game yesterday.....I had Atlanta in the 13+ run pool and could win $25.00 if I don't have to split with anyone.  
**jamiahsh**I thought they had the channel listing wrong, too. I detest one-sided announcing... unless of course it is being broadcasted on the home teams network.  
**taylhis**@jamiahsh - you're right, the announcers were extremely one-sided. At the time, they actually had me thinking I was watching the game on TBS since the announcers were obviously Braves fans, but now I realize it was on ESPN - yuck.  
**jamiahsh**All I can say is... at least my teams loss was close and exciting. Sorry to hear that the Cubbies lost so horrendously. I did see the best part of the game (the top of the first) and left before it REALLY got out of hand. The ESPN announcers seemed to be terribly one sided which always makes it worse. AH, WELL... only one way to go from here!

# New Easter Traditions

Over the past year I’ve learned a lot.Â  Many people can say the same, for life itself is one big learning experience.Â  So while I’ve learned a lot about many things, I have also grown spiritually by leaps and bounds ever since we joined a wonderful church family in March of 2009.

As my entire family grows spiritually, we’ve come to realize how much more there is to Easter than eggs and bunnies.Â  The coloring, decorating, hiding, seeking, and eating of Easter eggs is always so much fun on Easter, and this year was no exception.Â  As parents, my husband and I treasure all of the milestones, big and small – we even treasure the little sleep we get when we stay up late to prepare the Easter Bunny’s baskets for our children and wake up early to frantically hide the perishable eggs before the excited little ones wake up.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/04/Easter-weekend-early-April-2010-020.jpg)

The girls and their colored Easter eggs

But last year, we added a new tradition to our Easter weekend – attending a beautiful church service where we were taught (in my case) and reminded (in my husband’s case) of the real meaning of Easter Sunday – the sacrifice of God’s only Son and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We attended church again this Easter Sunday, and we were pleased to see that our worship center at church was overflowing – standing room only; filled with people who were excited to share His Glory with their family, friends and loved ones.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/04/Easter-weekend-early-April-2010-041.jpg)

4 cuties ready for church on Easter Sunday

This year, we also added a new tradition to our family’s Easter celebrations.Â  My thoughtful sister had sent the kids [Resurrection Eggs](http://www.christianbook.com/resurrection-eggs-english-spanish-text-updated/9781602001831/pd/001831?kw=001831&en=froogle&p=1013824&cm_mmc=CBDfeeds-_-froogle-_-gifts-_-001831" \t "_blank) in the mail the week before, so after we colored our edible eggs, we sat down together and listened as my husband read the story of Easter Sunday aloud.Â  Along with the book came a set of a dozen plastic eggs, each containing a little token illustrating the story of Easter Sunday – there was a little donkey, a cross, a whip, a cloth, a crown of thorns and more.Â  The kids took turns opening the eggs, and it really got them thinking about the meaning of this special holiday.Â  I think the Resurrection Eggs really helped them to understand the meaning of God’s sacrifice.Â  After the story was read, they continued to play with the eggs for over an hour, and then they brought down the entire set for me to put away until next year – that says a lot right there because putting away toys after they’re done playing with them is not exactly one of our kids’ strong points!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/04/Easter-weekend-early-April-2010-008.jpg)

My girls exploring Resurrection Eggs with their Daddy

So it was a wonderful Easter, filled with family, laughter and love, and I am grateful for every minute.Â  As we add these new traditions, Easter is becoming a favorite holiday of mine, and I am very excited to continue all of these Easter traditions next year!!

However you celebrated, whatever your faith, I hope your Easter was happy, safe, and fun!!

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**What a special day you had with your family. I am sure that as they grow up they will remember these special times and carry on the traditions with their families some day. You and Chris are wonderful parents. My grandchildren look absolutely adorable in their "Easter outfits".  
**taylhis**Yes, Resurrection Eggs are cool. A friend from church was frustratedly commenting to me about how she couldn't find any Jesus-related Easter trinkets at Walmart for her grandkids, so that made me appreciate Resurrection Eggs even more. I've added a link in my post which I meant to put there in the first place...  
**derek**Resurrection eggs- what a cool idea! I'm glad you enjoyed a good Easter. As for me, after being a part of six Good Friday and Easter services, it was nice to just go to a restaurant with five others of my family and enjoy lunch.  
**jamiahsh**The kids look wonderful all dressed up. Little Beebs... awww.  
**jamiahsh**That is sooo amazing and special! Hope you keep adding to the traditions to celebrate the special days! AWESOME!

# OPENING DAY IS HERE!!!

GO CUBS!!!  
GO CUBS!!!  
GO CUBS!!!

Well, I just went to check my countdown timer on my blog site; it should say there are mere *hours* left until the Chicago Cubs open their 2010 season…Â  but I can’t find the countdown timer on my site.Â  And I can’t find it in the widgets section either.Â  Since I have two kids fighting and one crawling around on the dining room table, I think it will be quicker to just write a little post about the opening day of baseball – I don’t include last night since the Cubs didn’t play – rather than try to fiddle around with the countdown widget.

So YAY!!Â  Baseball season is finally here, and the Cubs open against the Braves today at 3:10pm Chicago time – I have made arrangements to shirk my responsibilities of making dinner, and hopefully the kids will be good for the first hour of the game until my husband comes home from work.Â  I don’t expect to watch all of the games or even most of them, but I figured I deserved a bit of a break for opening day – hey, it’s been a LONG winter without baseball, as always!!

GO CUBS!!!  
GO CUBS!!!  
GO CUBS!!!

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.

*(oh yeah, and GO Indians – just because they are an Ohio team who just happen to play the White ~~Sux~~ Sox today!!)*

### Comments

**justj**Finally opening day. I was able to listen to part of the Detroit game while drive home from FT Wayne. Didn't hear the end, I need to check scores.  
**jamiahsh**I'll have to check my timer... still one event left.. it was there last night! Hope the Cubbies get off to a better start then my team. 9-7 Boston. But they lost the first game of the season last year, too ;)  
**taylhis**Oh, there it is... must be on an hour delay? I don't know, I'm just glad it's there since I lost the timer! Go Cubs!!  
**taylhis**Well, my countdown timer is of no use to me after today anyway... but I feel your pain, derek. Hey, how did you find my post, anyway? I've been sitting here for the last 20 minutes trying to figure out why it says 'published' but is not on the home page?  
**derek**The countdown plugin is gone. I wanted to to add something to my timer as well and couldn't find it. Then I went to the plugins section where awaited a message at the top saying countdown.plugin (or whatever the name) had been disabled because it couldn't be found, or something like that. Alright, what did you do with it Justin? Put it back! Er, please... :o

# Hazards Of The Trade

Back in 1999, when I was expecting our first child, I remember having the WGN Chicago news at noon on the tv in our teeny-tiny downtown (Rockford Illinois) apartment.Â  I was in the (hallway of a) kitchen making lunch, when I heard a long screech of tires coming from the tv.Â  The fact that I was able to get from the kitchen into the living room to see the tv even in my expanded pregnant state should tell you how small that apartment really was…Â  So I made it back in front of the tv to see the reporter **get hit by a car** –Â  scary!Â  Luckily she was ok, but the news anchors at the studio were a bit shook up and forced to forge ahead in the newscast, not knowing the fate of their co-worker.Â  Every now and then, I remember this incident, and I’ve looked for a clip of it on the internet to no avail – until the other day when I finally found it.Â  And just because it took me so long to find it, I will post it – perhaps others are looking for it also, who knows.Â  Remember, the reporter was not seriously hurt in the accident –Â  she hurt her leg and has since recovered from her injuries.Â  Unfortunately, she was laid off last year, but the lay-off had nothing to do with the accident that had happened almost a decade earlier and everything to do with the station’s budget cutbacks because of the terrible economy.

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.

When searching for the above clip, I came across the following video of a Dutch weatherman getting nailed by a car, but don’t worry – this is not as graphic as it seems because it is a fake clip; it’s actually a commercialÂ  for tires.

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**Yes, I am glad she is okay (since the second one was fake there was never any doubt as to his condition). Sorta reminds me of some clips of cross-country races I saw once where the spectators got a bit too close to the action- apparently not uncommon from what someone wrote.  
**jamiahsh**Thank goodness neither of them were gravely injured.

# Another Two Feet Of Snow?!?

Did you know that residents of the Midwest and the Great Lakes region are to expect one last hurrah from Old Man Winter with two feet of snow expected?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2010/03/two-feet-of-snow.jpg)

APRIL FOOL’S!!!Â  Have a good one – And BE NICE!!!

### Comments

**taylhis**I remember chaperoning a field trip to the zoo on May 1st when it snowed a few years ago - not a big snow, just a ground covering, but enough to make the poor kids' juices freeze, which meant they got a slush for snack!  
**jamiahsh**You know... April is known for producing big snows from time to time. But hopefully not this year!

# Thought For The Day

I recently came across this neat story in an article about volunteerism:

*There is a story about a man walking along a beach.Â  He notices that the starfish have washed ashore and will soon die in the baking sun.Â  Then the man sees a young child picking up the starfish, one at a time, and throwing them back into the ocean.Â  Noticing the hundreds of starfish and the small size of the child, the man says, “Son, you will never be able to save them all.Â  What you are doing will not make any difference.”Â  The little fella looks at the man, picks up yet another starfish, and tosses it back into its saltwater haven.Â  “Matters to that one.”*

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

I think this is a cute story that very effectively describes the fears that many people have about volunteering – their heart may be in the right place when they want to help, but then they begin to have doubts, like “I’m just one person, what could I possibly do to help?”Â  orÂ  “I don’t have a lot of time, so I probably just shouldn’t bother committing to anything.”Â  The bottom line is, if you have any extra time at all, as little as one hour a week, and you’d like to help others, there is a place in your community that could use and be grateful for your volunteer work.Â  So if it’s something you’ve been thinking about doing, let go of your insecurities, find someone to answer your questions, and find a place that suits your interests where you can pitch in and lend a helping hand at the same time.Â  Your calling might be at a food pantry, nursing home, animal shelter, community theater, hospital, senior center, community service agency, delivering for Meals on Wheels, etc – the list goes on and on.Â  If you really want to take the time to help others and give back to your community, don’t let excuses run your life –Â  just do it!!Â  If you really can’t find anywhere to volunteer in your community, try contacting your local churches to see if they have any community programs for which you could volunteer, or perhaps a family in need of some helping hands; you never know what you may find!

### Comments

**Cassandra Gjesdal**I couldn't agree more, thanks for writing.  
**Hilton Grauman**very good insight, I really enjoyed reading this, keep it up!  
**derek**Great post, taylhis. :)  
**justj**Very nice. I like that and the "Pay it Forward" idea. When someone does something good for you, you do something for someone else. Good ideas.  
**taylhis**@Phyllis Beyer - which saying? Does your bookmark have the entire starfish story on it?  
**Phyllis Beyer**Actually it is one of my favorite sayings. I use a bookmark with that saying on it and read it often.  
**jamiahsh**And that volunteering invariably helps not only the organization involved but also the one who goes forward after listening to the person who tells him that "one person can't make a difference."  
**jamiahsh**Beautiful post! The needs of the many outweigh the need of the one... or the insecurities of that one.

# More Mental Floss

A while back now, [I made a blog post](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/09/29/mental-floss/" \t "_blank) about a site called mentalfloss.com, which is a collection of interesting, somewhat useless but incredibly entertaining tidbits about pop culture, history, travel, and a bunch of other topics.Â  Here are some links to other articles on mentalfloss I found interesting, and since I collected this list a long time ago and left it in my drafts, forgotten, I went back to check the links.Â  While I was checking, I got so sidetracked on mentalfloss again…Â  their miscellaneous info about anything and everything is really addicting!Â  I collected some of the best ones for you, so that you don’t have to risk hours and hours of your free time by going to mentalfloss.com yourself and clicking on link after link after link   
See if any of the following capture your interest, and if you make it back here to tangents, leave me comments to tell me what you like!

[An airplane graveyard in The Mojave Desert](http://blogs.static.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/33186.html" \t "_blank)

[Abandoned hospital in East L.A.](http://blogs.static.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/28071.html" \t "_blank)

[31 unbelievable high school mascots](http://www.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/30849" \t "_blank)

[10 unusual playgrounds from around the world](http://blogs.static.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/34277.html" \t "_blank)

[10 technologies we stole from the animal kingdom](http://blogs.static.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/33696.html" \t "_blank)

[7 crafty zoo escapes](http://blogs.static.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/20578.html" \t "_blank)

And last, but definitely not least…

[A collection of videos of dogs welcoming home their soldier owners](http://www.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/40324" \t "_blank) – this is unbelievably sweet; these are the happiest dogs in the world!!!Â  (I cried)

### Comments

**Explaining the Easter Bunny | World Top News | Google Hot Trends | Yahoo Hottest Searches | www.WorldTopNews.Info**[...] More Mental Floss | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**derek**Okay, time to read blogs again. :) Some of those high school mascots were a riot. Too bad they didn't have a logo for the school of deaf leopards. One of them was just bad though- the Poca Dots. Original though. The other links were interesting, especially the zoo escapes. Thanks.  
**Mysmichelle**I cried too. Didn't even make it past the first one. How cool.

# My Issue (IsSHOE)

I HATE shopping for shoes.Â  For as long as I can remember, I’ve gotten a pair of shoes and replaced them with the same type of pair when they wore out or when I needed to change sizes – no need to see what went well with my outfits or anything like that for me.Â  It started with some black slip-on Keds that I kept replacing for a few years, then when I played sports I moved on to black Adidas with shoe-strings; followed by some cheapie black velcro shoes from Walmart (when we first got married and were really poor), and finally my black Brahma Bravo boots – each pair of those would last me about 3 winters, and they were great for the summer too.Â  I guess I like black shoes.

So for about a year now, I’ve had a bit of a shoe issue – they’ve stopped making the Bravo style of the Brahma boots.Â  The soles on my current pair of Bravos have been worn down so far on one side of each shoe that water seeps in if its particularly rainy, and my feet ache if I wear my shoes all day – time for new shoes.Â  As I said, I realized this about a year ago now, and that’s when I began to search.Â  I thought it was as easy as going to Walmart and picking up a new pair of Bravos, but alas, I can’t find them.Â  I scanned the various offerings of work boots, but I just don’t want anything with a steel toe, and I certainly don’t want to spend more than $30.Â  And of course black ones would be nice, can’t find those either.Â  I put the shoe issue on the back burner all summer last year until winter became inevitable, and I found myself near a Payless Shoe Source in October, so I wandered in and had aÂ  look.Â  Sure enough, they had a pair of black boots that fit my fancy **and** my feet – SOLD!Â  I was extremely pleased that my months-long search had culminated in me finding comfortable black boots in my target price range – under $30, and they were waterproof to *boot*, oh brother…

But not more than a month after purchase, my new boots began to crack – apparently they were SO waterproof that the waterproof shell was just that – a shell; so hard to keep out the water that it couldn’t be flexible enough to handle the movement of my feet without cracking.Â  So now winter was really starting to bear down on us, and I was stuck an hour away from any Payless.Â  I lived with the cracking boots all winter, still loving the way they looked and the way they kept my feet warm and dry, but I was also very disappointed.Â  When an awful set of circumstances culminated to basically grind our household to a halt in December, it looked like I was stuck with my boots – didn’t have the time nor even the money to get to the faraway land of Payless to exchange the cracking boots.

But then things got better, and we were finally able to afford the time and gas to get to Payless and return the boots.Â  Even though it had been more than 3 months since purchase and the boots were cracked (though that really wasn’t my fault – they shouldn’t have cracked within months, err, one month of purchase!), Payless took them back and gave a full refund, no problem.Â  It only took me an hour and half to pick out a replacement pair (I guess I never realized that I might be picky about shoes, but my husband’s huffing and puffing at me on that date night made me re-evaluate…Â  a little), but after walking around the strip mall for 5 minutes, I knew these were not going to be my new boots.Â  But I had forgotten to bring a spare pair of shoes with me –Â  uh, oh.Â  My choices were:Â  1) waste more of date night going shoe shopping until I found the right shoes, then return these awful new boots to Payless, or 2) wear the uncomfortable boots for the rest of the night, then beg my mom (who was coming for a visit that weekend and lived in the vicinity of like, 5 Paylesses) to return the boots for me.Â  I chose option #2 (thanks Mom!), and that’s why I’ve been wearing the years-old Bravo boots with the worn down soles ever since.Â  Every time I get a spare moment; sometimes with the kids, sometimes without, I make it a point to stop in the shoe section of Walmart, Target, Meijer, wherever – to continue the hunt of finding myself a new pair of boots.Â  I’ve taken home about 3 pair now, but I’ve been happy with none of them.Â  Now that winter is officially over, I’ve attempted forgetting about finding boots that will get me through snow and tried downgrading to a good pair of walking shoes, but I’ve returned at least two pair of those as well – and there is another pair still in the box in my front hall closet, ready to be returned – they just dig into my ankle bone in a way that makes me *crave* high-tops; I can’t help it!

The other day, I tried searching online for the Bravo style of Brahma boots, but they only make them in an ugly Wheat color and not even in the half-size I need.Â  I was thinking I could order something on Walmart.com and return it to the store if (when) I didn’t like it, but I couldn’t even find anything in my price range that would work for me.

So back to my point – I HATE shoe shopping; I loathe it.Â  Many women love it and have a pair of shoes to match every outfit they own.Â  I’ve always valued myself as different from the average (extravagant) woman in that respect – I’m pretty basic in my wardrobe needs…Â  my husband and I share many clothes actually, and it’s not because he wears trendy woman’s clothing – I opt for cheap, comfortable men’s wear.

But how I would like a nice, inexpensive pair of good (hopefully black) walking shoes (preferably boots, but I’m willing to drop that criteria at this point in my frustrating shoe battle).

**Is this really too much to ask?**

### Comments

**A Trip To Walmart That Made Me… Happy?!? | My Food Chain Gang**[...] and for me to give my cashier an earful about my quest for shoes.Â  I’ve been toiling over my shoe issue for about a year, and now I found the exact ones I wanted, for the price I wanted – YAY!!!Â  [...]  
**derek**Erm... All I can say is I hope you do find the shoes/boots/footwear that work for you soon!  
**Mysmichelle**LMAO.......that cracked me up My daughter wears 10 1/2 try ebay  
**taylhis**@mysmichelle - thrift stores are great! I've never tried shoe shopping there though... I think I failed to mention the humongous shoe size I wear, and so the selection in my size is never very good. For awhile, they didn't even carry much above a size 9 at Walmart. This is part of the reason why I'm usually looking at men's shoes. @Mary911 - hmm, a shoe store... In this age of Walmart, I didn't even think of that, but maybe I will try... depends how MUCH more I will have to shell out. I'm looking forward to being filthy rich enough to hire a personal shopper to do ALL my dirty work for me :) Last time I went into a shoe store (as a teen looking for shoes for Homecoming), the shoe salesmen asked me my shoe size and didn't believe me when I told him, so he measured my foot, and sure enough, I was right about my own shoe size. His reply? "Hmm, your feet don't LOOK that big". I guess that was his way of complimenting a teen girl? Nice.  
**mary911**I'm not a shoe shopping fan either. My input on this matter is this....maybe it would be worth it to spend a little more and go to a shoe store where they will fit you with a shoe. Then they would last longer because it would be a higher quality shoe, and your feet would feel better. I'm all ready for flip flop weather (I have them on now, in fact.) Good luck with whatever you do.....  
**Mysmichelle**I find GREAT shoes for CHEAP at my local thrift store.... So funny with you and I, I LOVED a pair of Durango boots I had and replaced them with exact copies for half of my life until they quit making them too...... I have moved on though and as I absolutely refuse to participate in the overpriced economy of names that don't mean anything to me I choose to do most of my shopping for clothing for myself AND my kids on ebay (where I get absolutely great deals) and in thrift stores Good luck with your treasure hunt......  
**Extra grip in martial arts? | Martial Arts Footwear**[...] My Issue (IsSHOE) | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**kloe**Haha, that's a great way to look at it!  
**jamiahsh**Have fun with that treasure hunt ;)  
**taylhis**Good point, kloe - it's no secret that the economy has stunk for the past few years, and so the price of necessary things like shoes has raised while the quality has lowered. As far as spending more for comfort and quality - I just can't bring myself to try, at least for myself, I just wouldn't appreciate something more expensive, should I find something that fits all the criteria. Not only am I old-fashioned, but I feel like if I'm going to spend a little more for quality or comfort, it will be for my kids shoes or clothes. Finding something that fits all of my criteria for myself is for now, like a treasure hunt, and that viewpoint can make it fun - GAME ON!  
**Where to get Adidas ZX 700 Vintage Style Running Shoes for cheap? | Black running shoes**[...] My Issue (IsSHOE) | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**kloe**"Is this really too much to ask?" Maybe. I don't know if you have noticed, but the price of clothes (shoes) has raised in the recent years and its quality seem only to get worse. Finding a good looking (even if basic) AND comfortable pair of boots for 30 $ or less seems near impossible to me. Of course, I AM one of those shoe-loving women but I also do believe that spending a little more for quality and comfort is worth it. Good Luck ;-)

# Shortest Movie Review Ever

Just watched Fight Club – one of the worst movies I have ever seen.Â  I can’t believe we wasted over 2 hours of kid-less time on this piece of you-know-what.

The people who voted (yes, all 357,160 of them) for this on imdb.com to give it an 8.8 out of 10 and made it #16 of their top 250 movies of all time should be ashamed – makes me hesitate to be advised by any of their ratings in the future.

I am not going to waste any more of my time writing or thinking about this movie.

### Comments

**taylhis**Well, everyone is different, and I was actually hoping to get some mixed reactions to my post, so thanks for your thoughts!  
**kloe**I actually liked that movie! By no means the greatest of all time, but still pretty good. a bit disturbing at times though...  
**Justin**I've noticed that Fight Club gets a "Love/Hate" reaction in most cases. I was pretty into the movie and thought it was a good storyline (plus Edward Norton is my favorite actor) - but I can understand the other point of view.  
**taylhis**@justj - thanks for the suggestion, but I wouldn't say I "missed" using the tag line - as I said, I didn't want to put any more thought into that movie after spending all evening watching it. I do miss my 2+ hours of time wasted... Since you know the tag line, does that mean you've seen it? If so, I'm sorry ;)  
**justj**You missed using the tag line from the movie for your review: "First rule of Fight Club is: You do not talk about fight club." Now we know why. ;)  
**jamiahsh**I've never seen it. Never wanted to. Probably never will.

# Almost Time...

Well, baseball season is almost upon us finally, and I’m really starting to get the itch – not that I’ll be able to watch many games anyway since when we’re actually home to watch tv it’s dominated by Noggin and the Disney Channel…Â  but I can dream, right?

So the other day, I did a search on youtube.com for “Cubs baseball” so I could give my son an early taste of what he’ll hopefully enjoy watching with me all summer.Â  I found a gem of a song by Steve Goodman, a grammy-winning artist who passed away from leukemia at the age of 36.Â  Mr. Goodman was a die-hard Chicago Cubs fan his entire life, and sadly, his favorite team never made it to the playoffs during his lifetime.Â  They appeared in the World Series in 1945, 3 years before Goodman was born, and then they clinched the Eastern Division title for the National League in 1984 – securing a place in the post-season just 4 days after Steve Goodman passed away.

I always knew about Steve Goodman from the awesome song, “Go Cubs Go”, a song they play at Wrigley Field after every Cubs win.Â  I seem to remember hearing the song over the intercom at the end of a school day one year when I was growing up – principal must have been a Cubs fan…

But anyway, in addition to “Go Cubs Go”, Goodman penned and performed other musical works of art; some about the Cubs, some about Chicago, and some about neither.Â  Here is the one I found today and enjoyed, however bittersweet its title and message “A Dying Cubs Fan’s Last Request”.Â  I chose to post this version of it, rather than the one that shows Steve Goodman singing it on the rooftops of Wrigley – that’s just too sad.

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

And just so that this post doesn’t end on a down note, here is the old favorite “Go Cubs Go” – let’s hope this is the year the Cubs make Steve Goodman proud!

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.

CUBS OPENING DAY – 17 DAYS, SOME ODD HOURS – GO CUBBIES!!!

### Comments

**taylhis**@derek - oops, sorry about the video - I probably could have chosen a different one with the same song. Glad you liked the music - Steve Goodman had a way with words, and I really like all the inside Chicago and Cubs jokes in the first one; it's quite a catchy tune.  
**derek**I want to say this kind of music isn't my thing- but I just couldn't stop listening to them. It's too bad the second video is ruined by a long segment at the beginning proudly bearing the video creator's name with no mention of the song artist. Go, Cubs go!  
**jamiahsh**the yanks play BOSTON... Blah blah blah. Nothing like kicking off the season in horrendous fashion.  
**justj**Detroit plays KC.  
**taylhis**@jamiahsh - Atlanta Braves How about the Yankees? And justj - same opening day for the Tigers? Who do they play?  
**jamiahsh**Yep... 17 Days, some odd hours, and counting. Who do the Cubbies Play?

# Night Of Nightmares

Last night, I had the worst dream I’ve ever had in my life.Â  I didn’t realize it was a dream while I was having it, but I remember waking myself up on purpose anyway – it’s difficult to explain, as many aspects of vivid dreams usually are.

The gist of it was –Â  a member of my family (who in real life has been estranged from the family for 25+ years) was buckling my kids into her car for a sleepover.Â  She began doing so at a frantic pace, which alarmed me, so I called it off.Â  But before I could do anything, she was pulling out of my driveway with the kids, and I was screaming at her that this amounting to kidnapping and I was calling the police.Â  She didn’t stop.Â  My two older girls found their way home, but she still had my younger two – they’re 3 years and 20 months.Â  Meanwhile, the pre-planned game night at our house (but it didn’t look like our house) was beginning to take shape as guests were arriving.Â  A friend from college (who I haven’t seen since) shows up with my cousin (the kidnapper’s daughter) as his date, and she is sullen and seems really angry.Â  We manage to get out of her that her mother hasn’t been herself lately and somehow come to the conclusion that she is intending to commit a murder / suicide.Â  Where the police were at this point, I don’t know, but for some reason, I couldn’t go out and look for them myself, and I was inconsolable.Â  It was the most helpless, panicky, horrible feeling I could imagine, and I had to watch my parents watch their daughter go through this as well – the whole thing was just awful.Â  Even though I didn’t know it was a dream, I squinched my eyes shut and woke up – thank goodness.Â  It was one of those where I woke up out of breath, my eyes darting around my bedroom.Â  I realized it had all been a dream, and I suppressed the urge to get up and have a reassuring look at my kids – what good would it do to interrupt their sleep?Â  Besides they’d be getting up soon enough – I could see the light starting to come in through the window.Â  But when I looked at the clock, it was only 1:45 am!Â  What the heck?Â  I had felt like I had a full night’s sleep!Â  For once (and I honestly can’t remember the last time I felt like this) I felt well-rested and actually *wanted* to get out of bed – and I didn’t want to put myself in the position to have another horrible nightmare.Â  So I laid there and mentally composed my blog post depicting my terrible dream, and I was able to fall back asleep.Â  The dream I had next was actually quite a comical episode involving a (non-threatening) alligator in a restaurant.Â  When my alarm went off hours later, I was back to normal – tired as can be, not ready to get up…

There must have been something going on last night because my 5-year-old told me about a nightmare she had had involving a circle of chicken pox.

So was that light coming into my room at 2 in the morning the light of a full moon?Â  Do full moons cause nightmares or vivid dreams?Â  I know my family and friends in law enforcement tell me that they are extra busy and have some of their most interesting calls on full moon nights, but now I remember driving home last night and seeing the moon – and it wasn’t full.Â  So why was it so bright in my room last night?Â  Most nights I can’t see without my flashlight, but last night I could see easily – I had just assumed it was the sun rising until I looked at the clock…Â  that one’s a mystery that remains unsolved.

I have some guesses as to where certain parts of the dream came from – I had been reading *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* before I went to bed.Â  Could my dream have been my own version of a boggart (a magical creature from the series which is a shape-shifter that takes the form of its intended victim’s worst fear – ie, something bad happening to my kids)?Â  And I was listening to an old Don Williams song in the car yesterday ([If You Could Read My Mind](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26kqgyMjyKM" \t "_blank)), which reminded me of a time when I was a little kid and Don Williams was playing as we were heading to my aunt’s house (the kidnapper in my dream).Â  I don’t know why my college friend suddenly appeared or why he was dating my cousin, but the game night significance could come from the game night we have scheduled for tomorrow…Â  just a few theories; I think the bottom line is obvious – dreams are WEIRD!!!

*(and this is unrelated – but as I was looking for the Don Williams song, I came across this wonderful version of [In The Ghetto](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWg2vLEyRZc" \t "_blank) by both Elvis and his daughter Lisa Marie Presley – a posthumous duet.Â  I’ve made my youtube references as links in this post rather than videos so as not to force anyone to watch/listen to anything if they don’t want to)*

### Comments

**derek**UFO? Nah. Government experiment maybe...? :o I hope you had a good night's sleep last night and are having a good game night now. :)  
**mary911**Ugh....I feel for you. I hate nightmares. Talking about them is good though. Hopefully you are well rested for tonight....  
**jamiahsh**I understood just fine... was it clear with lots of stars maybe? I was walking at about 10pm and it was beautiful.  
**justj**Yep, I read it wrong. No idea why your room was so bright.  
**taylhis**@justj - oops, you read me wrong - I said I saw that the moon WASN'T full, and that I still don't know why my room was so bright at 2 am... UFO maybe? ;) Sorry for not being more clear.  
**justj**Terrible nightmare. Losing people you care about always makes the worst nightmares. Don't know what to say on handing those. I'm wondering about the full moon you saw. The moon was early in crescent phase last night Link http://www.moon-phases.net/calendar/index.php  
**taylhis**@mysmichelle - thanks for your comment and insight. I've never (consciously) thought about if my children will grow apart as adults. I hope they will be friends, but doesn't everyone hope that for their children? As far as the aunt in my dream - I don't really think about her much, she came out of no where - I'm not really sad about the situation. I think I have plenty of downtime away from the kids, I just don't use it wisely. We have a wonderful babysitter who is trustworthy and has really reasonable rates, so I can take the kids there when I need a break. Problem is, I use that time to work, like cleaning the house, doing other household chores or volunteer work for the non-profits for which I volunteer (well sometimes I use it to blog, let's be honest!) instead of doing other fun stuff I might enjoy more - what that would be, I don't know which is probably why I don't do it. I don't know if JJ wants to hear about my dreams - we've taken a step backward lately in the training since my son was banging on his cage and terrorizing him. He seems happy still, but I can't pet him anymore. But maybe he'll enjoy my (non-contact) company - I should try that. Thanks for your thoughts on dream interpretations!  
**Mysmichelle**I'm going to comment here - really dreams are so personal and revealing I feel wierd about saying this but you know the part about it being an "aunt who is estranged" "kidnapping your children". Is where the significance lies. Uh, you know when someone is estranged they are basically lost and you can't look for them. I don't know what the issues are/were that estranged the aunt but you should ask yourself if you fear a simular fate for your children? Anyway like I said its weird to analyze a dream in such a public forum, but dreams are really your own mind saying SOMETHING. Different moon phases affect people (well water really of which we are about 90%) differently. I myself am more heavily affected during the dark of the moon. Lest you doubt the moon really has this power and is consistent enough to make a statement like that..........the moon MOVES the ocean and the tides can be predicted. If it makes you feel any better just from the little tidbits I see here I know you are a great mom. You just need a little more mom alone time I think. Oh yeah and I think you should discuss your dream/s with JJ. Animals dream too.  
**taylhis**@Jamiahsh - you're right, you don't have to watch the videos until you click on them, but I thought embedding them in my post sort of obligates the reader to watching more than if there is simply a link... I don't know - I'm tired!!  
**jamiahsh**You actually don't have to watch a posted video until you click on it... correct? What a horrible dream... it would have freaked me out, too! Very well could have been your boggart. Then turned into a non-threatening alligator in a restaurant.