Created in the cloud with Saaspose.Words. http://saaspose.com

# That's A WHAT?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# The Halloween Haunting Of Munger Road

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

# Halloween Whosits

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

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

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

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

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

Happy Halloween!

### Comments

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

# Zip Line Zaniness

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# He Is A-Ok!

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Finally, The Wedding!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Why I Loathe Fundraisers - 2009 Edition

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

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

### Comments

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

# New TV!

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank goodness the child was not physically hurt.

### Comments

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

# Ready, Set, Relax!

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

### Comments

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

# He's Walking!!

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

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

### Comments

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

# 80s Toys

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Blast From The Past

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Boys Are Gross!

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

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

### Comments

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

# Jon And Kate, What About The 8?

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Bee Vs. Me

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

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

RIP, Bee!

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

### Comments

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

# Mental Floss

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

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

### Comments

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

# Time To Blog...

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Outlaws And Hideouts Revisited

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Lincoln Legends Part II - Robber's Cave

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# What's That Called?

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

### Comments

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

# The Informant!

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

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

### Comments

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

# YEEOWWW!!!

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

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

### Comments

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

# And I Thought The Sky Safari Was Cool!

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

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

### Comments

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

# I'm A Winner!

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

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

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

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

**Congratulations once again.**

**Sincerely yours,**

**Lisa David**

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

### Comments

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

# Disney Vs. Universal - Round 1,642

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# One Of Those Days...

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Many MOPs Are SAHMs

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Lincoln Legends

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# FOOTBALL! Time To Blog, Except...

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

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

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

GO BEARS!!!

### Comments

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

# Four Day Weekend, Already?

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Another Installment of Cute

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Putting The Fun Into Labor...

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Supressing My Whim For Another Parrot...

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

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

### Comments

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

# Legitimate School Interruption or Propaganda?

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

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

### Comments

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

# Tale Of Tartar

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Quite Possibly My Worst Nightmare

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

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

### Comments

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

# Redbox Junkies

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# What Will Happen To Marvel Island?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Match.com - For Gorillas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*But whom will Yeboah choose to charm first?*

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# At Least She's (Physically) OK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Random Night Of The King

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Poults

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

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

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

Having the two of them together during the day is so fun!Â  A lot of busyness and some mild frustration, but only because of the many messes Beeber makes and the fact that they’re both still in diapers.Â  I really need to work on Disney’s potty-training.Â  She has her little potty and likes to go in it, but it’s not always a priority for her…Â  One of the secrets to harmony in a family with more than a couple of small children is *divide and conquer*.Â  My children are so much better behaved when they are broken into groups of two or sometimes even three.Â  It’s really neat to give each sister the chance the be the BIG sister, and Sammie the Kindergartner gets her chance with Disney in the morning before her afternoon Kindergarten, and Disney gets to be Beeber’s big sister while the two older girls at school.Â  Back to school time is so fun, and my oldest daughter is really excited about attending her first football game Friday night!Â  I was a little hesitant to let her go; especially after Wednesday evening when I hung out with a pack of 10 seventh grade girls (a new endeavor of ours – we will be leading youth groups on Wednesday nights!Â  More on that later; I’m still grasping the um, entirety of the situation).Â  Seeing that my daughter is only 3 years away from the ages of these boy-crazy, cellphone-obsessed, “like”-spewing, makeup-toting ‘tweens tempted me to buy the **totally** [awesome house on the way to Fort Wayne](http://www.homes.com/listing/82466773/10629_Sr_37_HARLAN_IN_46743) and lock my 9-year-old daughter in the top of the turret!

But I love where I live and wouldn’t dream of leaving, no matter how cool that house is (or how far it would leave us in debt).Â  The bottom line is, my daughter is a great kid, and I have to learn to trust her to hold her own – she’s not going to be *that* type of kid!Â  She acts mature and logical most of the time; helping her little sisters and brother and she deserves to get away from all the little kid stuff in our household to step out with her friends.Â  Perhaps volunteering with this (insanely girly) group of girls (have you ever noticed that if you close your eyes, you can mistake a group of pre-pubescent girls for a gang of wild turkeys??) will prepare me for what’s ahead with my 4 home-grown tweens and teens.Â  At least that’s what I’m hoping…

*(In case you’re wondering about the title of this blog post…Â  Poults = baby turkeys.Â  I have 3 daughters and one son.Â  Within a decade, my house will no doubt sound something like a turkey farm!)*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**agreed... i think the best of parents are those who take an interest in what their kids are doing... it shows they care. And T is a very right, responsible young lady which at this point is a testament to her loving parents.  
**Phyllis Beyer**It sounds to me like you already have a handle on how to get thru the teen years. The key is to stay involved with your kid's friends and always know where they are. You're right....Taylor is a very smart girl and I think she knows right from wrong.  
**jamiahsh**Sorry... never had the pleasure.  
**taylhis**Yes... you really have to experience the inside of a girls' locker room to get the full effect - YIKES!  
**jamiahsh**Interesting... never thought about what the sound of a pack of insane tween/teenage girls would sound like.

# A Note To Add To That Last Post...

I will be one of those frantic parents in the Walmart checkout line on the first day of school.Â  I’ve never been there to witness them myself, but I know they exist; I’ll find out for sure tomorrow when I join them.Â  Yes, I planned ahead well enough to buy the necessary school supplies, but what I failed to do was to supervise the middle-schooler who was excitedly stuffing her new backpack, apparently ignoring the direction to “pack what’s on your list”.Â  Not really her fault – like I said, I should have been supervising her more carefully.Â  But as a result, our 4th grader now has a locker full of 4th grade school supplies AND Kindergarten school supplies (she brought them to school last Friday during orientation), while our Kindergartner has an empty backpack.

We could follow our oldest daughter into her new middle school tomorrow to repo her sister’s school supplies, but I’m pretty sure being the only student whose parents follow her into school (especially with little brother and sisters in tow) could cause her emotional damage beyond repair.Â  I’ll take my chances at Walmart.

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**What a good parent you are....braving WalMart rather than embarrass Taylor. Way to go!  
**derek**Less in the store than black friday, but all crammed into the school supplies section... :o  
**jamiahsh**I'm sure the mart will be slightly less than the extravaganza that is Black Friday. However, I doubt if you will be the only parent doing last minute shopping. Have fun :D  
**Megan**aww:) I didn't think Taylor was going into 7th grade! lol. I guess every school has their term or grade(s) that they refer to as middle school. Ours turned out to be 7th and 8th grade. I was gonna say something in the earlier post but wasn't sure..so what is middle school for your school starting at 4th grade?

# Back To School!

Well, summer is officially over – school starts **tomorrow**!Â  I could be like everyone else and say “where did the summer go?”, but for me, it actually didn’t go as fast as I would have thought.Â  We were so busy; though it was good-busy; not like so-much-work-to-do-busy.Â  But much fun was had and I enjoyed every minute!Â  Last week was spent at school open houses and orientations, as well as a training event at our church to allow us to volunteer with our church’s student ministries.Â  That was an interesting evening – it began with us volunteers breaking off into groups of about 15 and making lines.Â  We were given a spoon tied to a string which was wound around a “spool” ie, an empty tube of toilet paper.Â  The first person in the line (me) was to put the spoon down their shirt and pants and give it to the next person who was supposed to put it *up* their pants and shirt, then to the next person who was supposed to put it down the shirt and pants, effectively “threading” the line of people together.Â  Kind of strange, I thought, but what’s going to happen once we’re all “wearing” the string???Â  It was a little scary, but luckily, the threading was the entire ice-breaking activity, and the rest of the evening was pleasantly spent listening to a guest speaker while munching on all kinds of orange snacks (orange was the theme for the evening – I never really thought about how many party snacks are orange before!).

Today we had so many activities and volunteering planned for church that we were on the go from 8:30 in the morning until about 3:30 in the afternoon.Â  Busy, but it was time well-spent, especially since we finished up the day with Kidstuff (a cute show with a wonderful message for the kids) and then a carnival with LOTS of treats and fun for the kids; they had a blast.Â  Good thing too – we need to get settled down early tonight in order to get our oldest to school by **7:30 in the morning**!!!Â  She is starting middle school, and yes, to those of you who have asked – she will be switching classes, kind of like the “block” style they had when I was in middle school.Â  My daughter has a homeroom, but then she switches for language arts and math and perhaps other subjects as well.Â  And they do gym class strangely – there are 4 classes: gym, music, technology (typing, etc.), and art, and they take one of these 4 classes every day for 9 weeks and then switch to another.Â  That sounds pretty cool to me!Â  I would have LOVED it if I only had to worry about gym for 9 weeks of the year!Â  But, being in middle school also means that she has to change for gym class, poor thing – I remember that aspect of middle school making a lot of kids really nervous.Â  And at orientation last week, the principal gave us parents a talk about making sure we wash the gym clothes – the kids are getting to “that age”, she said, which prompted me to whisper to my friend nearby, “I’m not ready!”Â  But my daughter IS ready for middle school, and she seems to be making her way from tween to teen in no time –Â  UGH!Â  Poor thing got her first pimple just in time for the first day of middle school, but she doesn’t seem to mind too much, so we’re not making it a big deal.Â  It’s not like we’re publishing it on the internet for the entire world to read or anything…Â  But what are moms for?Â  She can thank me when she’s older and finds this through some sort of google search or something.

Our second oldest is starting Kindergarten.Â  This is our “difficult” child; our strong-willed one.Â  Samantha has a mind of her own, and some of the things she says leave us in stitches – others leave us shaking our heads, but we’ll stick to the positives here.Â  It seems that Samantha has the same KindergartenÂ  teacher that her sister had a few years ago, and my husband and I are chuckling to ourselves about the unintentional “joke” we’re about to play on our local school system.Â  We are wondering how many years it will take for word to spread amongst the teachers in town about how much of a…Â  well, *difference* there isÂ  between Samantha and her big sister…Â  No need to go off about it here, like I said, we need to call it an early night, but it will suffice to say that any teacher of Taylor’s who gets Samantha 4 years later will probably be surprised 

I was going to write about the younger two as well, but it’s bedtime already and this post is long enough – that’s what I get for not blogging regularly, I guess, an Ã¼ber-post!

### Comments

**derek**I should back off a bit and say that there are schools around here as well that have such mixes. One school in Des Plaines for example is K-8. They are not separated in any way. Well, there is a "middle school hall" and an "elementary hall," but 4th and 5th grades are in the so-called "middle school hall," all specials teachers (art, gym, music) teach K-12, and other resources such as the LMC are shared. They seem to do fine as well. Another school I know is actually two buildings joined in the last decade or so. K-6 and middle school are separated, but share resources as well. In short, as L says it can work in at least some cases.  
**mary911**One of my deputy's wives starts her first year at Bryan MS as the new social worker...(I'm not sure if that's her new title or not). I remember being so excited about getting to switch rooms for classes....however it wasn't until 7th grade. I think it's great that Samantha is unique. My family was the same way, but in the other order. My oldest brothers were the ones that maybe proved to be a bit more of a challenge....so by the time I came along, the teachers were ready....however, much to their delight, I was the perfect student....a blessing, I'm sure SOMEONE would say....(Ok, it's getting deep in here and I only have flip flops on....) I pray Samantha keeps her spunk!  
**taylhis**I don't know that I would classify it as a debate... I think the bottom line is that kids are different in different places. Because I was a resident of both types of places (urban and rural), I can totally see Derek's concern with the mixing of the grades - I would NOT approve of the concept given the class sizes and the fact that the urban kids mature MUCH earlier. In the rural area, the class sizes are much smaller, the mentality is different among many parents (many have more time for their kids and aren't as consumed by work), and the staff can make it work. Some places around here have K-12 schools and they work just fine!  
**jamiahsh**Interesting debate. Our our junior high school housed 6th-8th but the 6th grade was on the other side of the building. The new school now holds 6th-12th grade. I believe jr. and sr. high are on different floors.  
**derek**Separating the grades is definitely a good thing- young adolescents of 7th and 8th grades should be nowhere near 4th and 5th whether it be on the bus or in school.  
**taylhis**We shall see - I think she will do well. The good news is that the grades are very separated in the building, and the buses are also separated by grades. I think the experience will do a nice job preparing her for high school.  
**derek**I really have to shake my head at the decision your district made to put 4th and 5th graders through the middle school experience. I suppose one positive note is that they are getting out of the way a new school system \*before\* they start going through...other changes. There are some who say even 6th grade is too young, but having been in such a system (being probably the youngest in my class to boot!) and having no negative feelings about it, I don't necessarily agree on that one, but I know 6th grade elementary has its benefits too. 7:30 start time for T is going to be tough, but from her perspective she has some extra time in the afternoon! :)  
**jamiahsh**oops... sorry, WAY TO GO!  
**taylhis**WTG = ? not familiar...  
**jamiahsh**WTG, C. Sorry \*but not TOO\* sorry that I'm not there anymore for your overnight trips :D  
**taylhis**No trace of fog!!! Everything went smoothly, so I hear anyway - sweet hubby did everything (including the dreaded wmart trip) while I was asleep. He said he was bored after the baby woke him up at 4 in the morning! UGH! And yes, middle school starts at 4th grade.  
**jamiahsh**Hope it is clear and sunny tomorrow morning. And no traces of the terrible f word and we all know to which word I am referring.  
**jamiahsh**Hmm... I seem to remember 4 siblings who had a similar experience throughout their years spent gracing the halls of the E-town Local School system. I remember at least one teacher asking number three if he was going to be like number one or two. Now a few of them are being graced by the offspring of the original four.... three of the four, anyway :D I don't know who to feel sorrier for: the students or teachers.

# An Old Friend, A New Perspective...

A few weeks ago, we learned a friend from way back was going to be in the area on his way from Illinois to Florida with his family, so he came by and brought the fam.Â  That in itself was very unusual – after 10 years of friendship and various business associations and partnerships, we had somehow never gotten around to meeting his family in person.

But on this day earlier this summer, they all stopped in, and his wife and two kids (the oldest was off on some kind of school function) were really very nice, fun, and interesting people – we had a great day together.Â  Their kids, although quite a bit older than my kids, were nonetheless kept entertained by my kids, especially their pet rats.Â  Overall, it was a great visit with a nice family –Â  we really should have gotten together sooner!

And I have some advice for our friend: appreciate what you have, buddy.

I don’t know why he does some of the things he does, but he sometimes acts, um, I’ll call it restless, and now that I know how awesome his wife and kids are, it’s going to be that much more difficult for me if I continue to hear about any more dumb choices on his part.Â  He seems to be going through some sort of mid-life crisis, so I can only hope that he finds what it is he’s looking for without hurting those wonderful people who love him!

### Comments

**derek**I'm sure you all have figured it out by now, but even though I share some attributes with this person ("a friend from way back"- at least I hope!- and "Illinois"), she is not talking about me, though maybe the mid-life crisis part could apply... nah. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Very sound advice  
**mary911**What a difficult situation for you to be in....yes, I hope his midlife crisis dissolves soon. Happy thoughts, happy thoughts.....

# Kid Currency

Sometimes Dr. Phil *does* give good advice.Â  Among my favorite Dr. Phil advice lines is: “every kid has his (or her) currency”.Â  Unfortunately, our second-oldest daughter’s (age 5) currency (referring to something that can “buy” a kid; in other words, cheer up a sour mood) happens to be one of the girlie things her parents despise most: makeup.Â  She is starting to encounter the all-too-familiar plight of being a younger sibling: big sister leaves home bound for all kinds of fun adventures that little sister is not old enough to do; swimming at the pool, sleepovers, girl scout outings, the list seems endless when you’re ‘not old enough’…Â  It’s hard to be the little sister and to get left behind – I know because I was there!

So anyway, the other day, our oldest daughter left for the pool, and Sammie was really upset she couldn’t go with – but I knew just the cure: makeup!Â  I had bought a few makeup kits on clearance just after the Christmas season, and since I don’t wear makeup, what better use for it than to cheer up a sad little girl?Â  We don’t want the kids wearing makeup out in public or to school, and we especially don’t want it leading to an “addiction” – a teenage girl who won’t leave the house without her makeup on, yuck!Â  But for a special play-treat once in awhile to cheer up a left-behind little sis or two, makeup is just what the doctor ordered and works like a charm!

### Comments

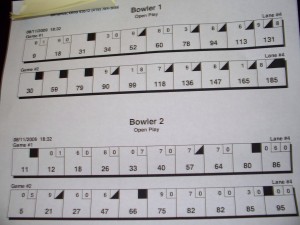
**mary911**Ha ha Jamiahsh!!! What a wonderful mommy-daughter date! I do nail painting parties for my nieces and my friends daughters! They love it!!!  
**jamiahsh**I remember being the younger brother at times being left behind. Makeup didn't do a thing for me.. oddly enough.

# Bowling For Columbine

While I’m on the topic of date night (see my previous post)…

This week we did not feel like mini-golfing again on date night, so we went bowling instead.Â  I did so well, we got a printout of the scores, much to my husband’s dismay – I’ve already mentioned how he has bad luck at physics-dependent sports like bowling and mini-golf.Â  And I got tons of practice at bowling as a kid – I was in a weekly bowling league for I don’t know how many years.Â  Later in high school, I took bowling in gym class and joined intramural bowling after school where IÂ  was crowned, “Female Bowler of the Year” for the two years I was in it –Â  not a difficult feat, seeing as how there were under 10 girls involved, but still, if we had had a competitive bowling team in high school, perhaps I would have been a high school athlete, hehe!

I’ve spent about 23% of my adult years pregnant (!) and most of the rest of those years raising small children who would wreak havoc with a bowling ball, so needless to say, I have not had a chance to hone the skill I developed as a youngster.Â  I do enjoy the occasional bowling game,Â  though, and rarely do I top my previous bowling average from back-in-the-day: 132.Â  Well, the other date night, not only did I top my old average for the two games we played but I somehow tied my all-time high score!Â  Well, anyway, here are the scores, and this reminds me to make joining a weekly league a priority when the kids get a little bit older!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/8-11-09-bowling-scores-0021.jpg)

And about the title I chose for my post…Â  I just finished reading the book *Columbine* by Dave Cullen, and it was a fascinatingly detailed account of the 1999 Colorado high school massacre dissected from just about every angle.Â  If you like to read true crime or just want to know every detail about the massacre (it holds a special fascination for me since it was unfolding just as Hubby and I arrived at our honeymoon destination after a 24-hour road trip back in ’99), you should read this book.Â  It’s both sad and informative, and the author does mention that the Michael Moore movie, Bowling for Columbine, has little to do with the circumstances involving the high school massacre.Â  But, Bowling for Columbine is a catchy title nonetheless, which is why I borrowed it, not because I’m a Michael Moore fan.Â  Actually, we saw a parody of his movies the other day, and I will be sure to include the movie review in an upcoming post called “It Was A Redbox Summer”.Â  Stay Tuned!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I just have one thing to say: What is it with you two and road trips? Has there ever been a trip you have taken in which there has not been some tragedy unfolding? but yes... great scores.  
**justj**Good scores. I haven't been bowling for in a year or so either. Sounds like fun.  
**Chris**I am so proud of your scores! That was awesome! Watching you do so well was so much fun. It was so exciting when you needed that last strike in the 10th frame if you were to get your high score â€” and you did!! I LOVE YOU! (IGNORE IT ON MINI GOLF)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Great scores Lisa....way to go!  
**derek**C's scores look more like the scores I would get. My high isn't much higher than your game #1...

# Full Moon = Mini Golf?

Earlier this month, I got a whim on date night for us to go mini-golfing.Â  Apparently I was not the only person who felt this way – the local mini-golf course was packed end-to-end with groups of golfers – on a Wednesday night!Â  We began our putting only to find ourselves stalled at every hole waiting for the group of 4 in front of us – which backed up the group of 2 behind us, etc.Â  We didn’t realize it was this crowded when we began golfing otherwise we probably would have chosen something else to do (not big fans of crowded places), but it ended up being lots of fun; we found plenty to chat about while waiting to play the next hole.Â Â  Among the topics were the strange occurrences befalling the behavior of our golf balls.Â  My husband’s normally bad luck (especially at laws-of-physics sports like mini-golf and bowling) seemed to be exaggerated, especially by my good luck.Â  An example – my husband took his shot, then I took mine, and my ball hit my husband’s ball sending it further from the hole, while mine bounced off his and into the hole for a hole-in-1!Â  Unintentionally, of course Â  After a few more of those wacky incidents and (to my dismay) the appearance of dozens of live frogs in the mini-golf pond, we had had our fun and were finished.Â  But on the way home, we couldn’t help but notice the full moon beaming overhead – a coincidence or is there something about a full moon that makes people want to mini-golf?Â  Friends in the fields have shared with me that hospitals and law enforcement agencies are extra busy on the nights of full moons – interesting.Â  How about you guys?Â  Did any of you have a sudden golfing urge last Wednesday night / early Thursday morning?

### Comments

**mary911**I was all ready for the full moon busy-ness that night at work, but it really wasn't. I was actually kind of bummed. At the beginning there was some weird stuff, but everyone must have decided to play nice and go mini-golfing..... ;)  
**jamiahsh**OOOHHHHH... the full moon. Craziness abounds.  
**justj**I think I was doing lights for a play that evening. I remember the full moon on the way home.  
**Chris**Oops - wrong post! Well, you did great at Mini-Golf too. What can I say? I married an amazing woman!  
**Chris**I am so proud of your scores! That was awesome! Watching you do so well was so much fun. It was so exciting when you needed that last strike in the 10th frame if you were to get your high score --- and you did!! I LOVE YOU!

# The Hot Tub On The Expressway

Because we had such a wonderful time at Splash Universe, the indoor water park in Shipshewana, Indiana, we decided to take the kids to Splash Bay, another indoor water park, this one in Maumee (Toledo), Ohio.Â  Again, we had a blast!Â  Following is a summary of both parks.Â  To abbreviate, I’m going to call Splash Universe in Indiana “IN” and Splash Bay in Ohio “OH”.

Water Slides:Â  LARGE: IN has 2 large water slides that you travel down in inner tubes (though they are essentially the same slide – same design), while OH has 3 large ones and only one of those is for inner tubes.Â  I personally prefer very tame water slides, so my favorites are the tube slides.Â  The other 2 water slides at OH are much bigger, but the blue one pushed me underwater at the end, and the red one is one of those “toilet bowl” ones – the slide opens out into a huge bowl or funnel, and the rider drops down through the middle into a swirling 7.5 foot deep whirlpool – no thanks.Â  Not for me nor my little ones, but my husband and my daughter’s teenage friend really liked it, and we enjoyed watching them from the balcony outside the snack bar where you could see into the bowl and watch them drop.Â  MEDIUM SLIDES: IN had many more smaller water slides – kind of like playground slides in water.Â  OH had a few, but more on those in the kids’ play area section.Â  SMALL SLIDES: IN had 2 tiny slides in a small baby area, perfect for my 2-5 year olds.Â  OH did not have any baby slides.

Swimming Area:Â  There was not much room for swimming in the IN water park.Â  Off of the lazy river, there is a little pool with a bench around the perimeter for families to sit, but not really anywhere for anyone to swim – something I found quite strange for a water park.Â  At OH, the kids’ play area has a bit of extra room for swimming in 2 places, although the depth is only 3 feet – better than no swimming at all though!Â  Neither place has a pool exclusively for swimming, however, nor my favorite water park element – the wave pool.

Kids’ Area:Â  Both parks have a large water playground for kids where they can squirt each other with various contraptions and go down slides and stuff.Â  Both places also have a zero-depth entry pool with a soft floor, which is great for really small kids getting ready to crawl and walk.Â  Both parks alsoÂ  have a Lily Pad Crossing, where kids can use overhead ropes to help them cross a path of stepping stones across a pool – this was really popular with my 9-year-old daughter and her 6-year-old boy cousin.Â  OH also has a really cool “shark” – a piece of playground equipment that is bolted to the floor of a 3-foot pool.Â  The kids can try to climb on the shark, the adults can try to shake them off and even climb on it themselves – the thing was really popular among guests of all ages.Â  OH also has a basketball hoop and floating balls which was a lot of fun for Hubby and me – providing we could get a long enough break from the kids to play a game.Â  Overall, I liked the OH kids’ area much better, but my husband liked the IN one better for just one reason – the 500-gallon tipping water bucket!

Lazy River:Â  In an indoor water park, lazy rivers are basically moats that carry an inner tube rider around the room.Â  I really enjoy these, even thoughÂ  indoor ones are slightly less cool than outdoor ones, just because they can’t get very long nor travel very fast.Â  The OH one was accessible directly after the water slides, and this was a pretty cool design, but the OH one was not very fast – I really enjoyed the feeling of getting swept down the river in certain parts of the IN lazy river.Â  It was really fun to try to time our trip down the lazy river so that we would meet up with the kids after a trip down the slide.

Hot Tubs: The hot tub at IN is adults only, and we never made it over there.Â  That reminds me, the temperature in the IN water park was always very warm – TOO warm when entering while wearing street clothes.Â  In contrast, the OH park is actually kept kind of chilly for my taste, and the water wouldn’t really warm up until a few hours before the park closed at night.Â  My kids were often cold in the regular water at OH.Â  But the OH hot tub was my favorite part of the entire park.Â  It was incredibly relaxing, and there was even a waterfall you could sit under.Â  AND, you could swim outside!Â  The weather was somewhere in the mid-70’s, so it was beautiful to sit outside in the hot tub, tucked in kind of a hidden corner just off the expressway where you could watch cars pay their toll and go about their days, but they couldn’t see you unless they knew better than to take a peek under the water slides.Â  And that’s another thing – since the water slides go out of the building, you can sit in the hot tub and see water sliders travelÂ  above – we would have our daughters and their friend put their hands against the water slide and wave to us; it was so fun!

In Summary:Â  For me personally, I preferred the OHÂ  water park over IN, just because I liked the hot tub a lot and even though they only had one tube slide, it was a really great slide!Â  I liked the more open areas for swimming and the basketball court OH provided, and I loved watching my daughters try to conquer the shark.Â  IN was fun for other reasons, especially having fun with a larger group of family, but if we’re just talking about attractions, then I definitely prefer Splash Bay near Toledo OH.Â  I don’t think I can get an unbiased answer if I ask my kids – what could beat being at an indoor water park with their grandparents, cousin, aunt and uncle and great uncle all at once?

*By the way, don’t ask for pictures.Â  If you think I was going to take our camera into any place with all that water, you must not know about my uncanny ability to lose and/or destroy cameras!*

### Comments

**Chris**I'm just writing to say I LOVE YOU!  
**jamiahsh**Why would people not be pleased being filmed underwater? I recall a trip on which we went on a snorkelling/whale watching expedition and I seem to remember being shot amongst the underwater life. think I kind of blended in. HEHE  
**taylhis**Good detective work - nope not this past scorching weekend. And it's not that I wanted to record underwater, it's that I knew my camera would end up IN the water! That's a pretty cool camera, but I don't think people would have been too pleased with being filmed from underwater!  
**derek**Mid-70's?? Must not have been this past weekend then... I just read about a camera that can be used underwater- ah, here it is: [Underwater Camcorder lets you record in and out of the water](http://www.geek.com/articles/gadgets/underwater-camcorder-lets-you-record-in-and-out-of-the-water-20090731/)  
**jamiahsh**Oh, yes... camera problems would definitely make me not want to try to tak photos. I think the funnel slide sounds great!

# I Can't Get Enough Of The Cute Animals

I received a few more of the email forwards withÂ  pictures of cute animals, so I thought I’d combine them into one post.Â  So here are some cute animals – enough said.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/deletebirdcat.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/deletebirdcat1.jpg)

That little parakeet is preening his smiling kitten buddy – something birds only do to the ones they love!Â  And these pandas were displaced when an earthquake shook their forest home, but they’re getting good care now.Â  What I wouldn’t give to sit right in the middle of that pen!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/deletepandas.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/deletepandas1.jpg)

And, for the finale, check out this cat who loves boxing!

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

### Comments

**jamiahsh**aww... i would take the chance anyway... esp if I was trained. Loved the boxing cat, also!  
**derek**That video was hilarious! As for the pandas, I think I would take a pass on sitting in the pen, at least if mama was around- they may be pandas, but they're still bears!

# As If We Needed ANOTHER Reason To Stay Up Late...

Yesterday was gong to be a huge catch-up-around-the-house day for me; I had big plans – unpack the suitcase from our unwillingly shortened venture earlier in the week (my son has decided to be the first one of our kids who doesn’t travel well.Â  He won’t sleep away from home, and he cries in the car – not cool for a family fond of road tripping), catch up on my email, and read and write some blog posts, among other things.Â  I got through the email and caught up on my fellow tangents bloggers posts (this task was made especially easy since [one of us](http://justj.tangents.org/) has seemingly disappeared), but I never got around to writing any posts of my own.Â  Time just slipped away from me yesterday; everything seemed to take forever.Â  I had a huge shopping to do at my **favorite** place (bold represents sarcasm) Walmart.Â  I was so tired that I got to the store and was waiting in the customer service line before I realized that I had forgotten the credit card at home – ugh.Â  At least I only had one kid with me to reload intoÂ  the car, otherwise it would have taken even longer.

Aside from the busyness and the fact that I should go to bed earlier but never will, I’ve been sleeping much better lately – that Claritin is a life-saver!Â  Still can’t get a cat though – we took the kids to the Humane Society the other day (just looking – we actually left without a new pet, hmmm, don’t think that’s ever happened before!), and I just gazed at a cat and sneezed; I didn’t even touch it!Â  What a shame because our friends have 2 litters of teeny tiny adorable farm kittens right now!Â  But back to why I was so tired that everything took forever yesterday.Â  My husband was asked to review the local community theater’s youth production for the newspaper, so we took the kids (minus Sir Climbs A Lot) to see the show.Â  Well, show**s**, actually, the turnout was so great for the youth theater this year that there were actually two plays.Â  And a few of our game night friends were involved, so it was fun to see them on stage.Â  But by the time we got home and got the kids settled down to start writing the review, it was past 11:00!Â  And because the turnout for youth theater was so great (which is an awesome thing), we had 37 kids to mention in the review.Â  And here’s the doozy – 37 kids to mention and no program!Â  There was an error at the printing company, and the programs were not ready for our special dress rehearsal pre-screening on Thursday night.Â  The director made us a partial cast list, but it still took awhile to figure out who was who enough to write a review.Â  Luckily, the kids had done a nice job and the shows were adorable, so some of it was easy writing, so we were chugging along (well, I was playing a video game since Hubby was chosen to write the review and needed my computer, but I was helping) when all of a sudden, something comes FLYING into our living room.Â  And no, it wasn’t the usual parade of kids – I mean flying literally.Â  It was a displaced wild bat (we have pet rats, not a pet bat – yet), and it was flying panicked around our living room.Â  I’m not afraid of bats, but it was a sudden thing to happen at 1ish in the morning, so I cowered next to my husband until it left the room.Â  I was really afraid it would fly into the halogen lamp – I’ve smelled the roasting bugs that became victims of the halogen; a bat in there would leave quite a mess, poor thing.Â  So anyway, now we had to locate the bat and show him the door.Â  In case you’re reading this and you’re horrified and re-thinking any future visits to our house, be assured that like fellow rural NW Ohio older homeowners (wait, I said that wrong – I’m not old, the house is!) we’ve had a bat in the house before.Â  And like the previous occurrence, this one was captured without incident and returned to the wilderness.Â  But first, we had to build a bat relocation contraption and stumble around on chairs at 1:30 in the morning trying to catch the thing.Â  But we managed, and he happily flew away when released outdoors, and it was still before 2 in the morning.Â  But my poor tired husband still had to finish that review – which is where I got my post title; I can’t believe that bat interfered with my sleep cycle!Â  All was said and done and we were both asleep just before 3, followed by a busy (and forgetful) Friday with a game night which led to another late night.Â  Yawn.Â  So why am I sitting here blogging instead of napping?Â  Oh yeah – 4 kids = no napping.

### Comments

**derek**...as a boy scout (no s). Proofreading is everything!  
**derek**I remember encountering bats when visiting Eagle Cave several times as a boy scouts. I wonder if it's still open- many caves are being closed due to the bat fungus.  
**taylhis**Heard about that - it was the first time a game between those two teams went scoreless for 14 innings, glad it turned in the Yanks favor. Cubs condolences accepted - and it wasn't Zambrano who gave up those runs - he is on the DL which is even worse! In one night, they lost a game, lost first place, and lost Zamrbano - i-yi-yi!  
**jamiahsh**And a FANTASTIC game night once again... even if the Cubbies lost (NY beat Boston 2-0 in FIFTEEN innings)  
**jamiahsh**Yes... bats are fun especially in the middle of the night! I have been awakened by one of the flying critters and had to show him the window (open of course). But with all the excitement and lack of info and sleep, I thought the review turned out nicely. Great job!

# Faith

Well, we found a church home in March, and it’s been going very well; we love it there.Â  The month of August is filled with church opportunities for us – a few classes we’re taking, a carnival for the kids, I’m volunteering in the Welcome Center, and we just went to a retreat at a beautiful Christian campground in Michigan yesterday.Â  But this post is not about THAT type of faith – it’s about a dog named Faith who was born with only a stub instead of front legs.Â  They had to remove his stub, and his mommy and first owner rejected him.Â  His new owner named him Faith and taught him to walk and get along without his front legs just fine.Â  How cute is this?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/delete-faith2.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/delete-faith.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/08/delete-faith1.jpg)

Thanks to Elizabeth for sending this to me!

### Comments

**derek**I remember reading about this some months ago- very interesting story, thanks for the reminder!  
**mary911**Ok, who let him get on the computer???? ;)  
**Chris**I don't see what the big deal is... I walk around on two legs all the time... J/K What a great story to share! :-) I love this blogger! ;-)  
**jamiahsh**Amazing story. Is it often that a dog rejects her pups even if they are different in some way? Curious, but at least he was given a god home. Great name, too.  
**Megan**I heard about this on t.v. It is soo amazing how well Faith gets along..so cute...  
**Phyllis Beyer**How sweet. I love this story.

# It Runs In The Family

My aunt sent me the following picture of my cousins at the Cubs game the other day down in Florida – it’s a screen shot from WGN.Â  At least they got to go to the game where the Cubs beat the Marlins at LandShark Stadium!Â  In case you’re wondering, the Cubs are doing very well right now – over .500 and just a half game out of first place.Â  They’ve been playing some GREAT baseball and are very fun to watch these days – GO CUBS!

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

### Comments

**derek**I thought I read before that they were in first place? Shows how well I keep up with these things. Some say going to minor league games is the better experience these days due to the expense of major league games and other things. I have that option should I choose to exercise it with two teams within reasonable driving distance.  
**Megan**I LOVE going to baseball games! But some friends wouldn't recommend going with me...I tend to pay more attention to the players than to the game;)  
**mary911**I've never been to a professional game of anything. I've been to Komet Hockey games, and that's it. I think if given the opportunity, I'd probably like it. I'm a real people watcher type person....maybe not a serious fan like you all.....so maybe not a good idea to go with any of you....you may leave me!!!! ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yes and the Yanks just saved themselves yesterday from being swept by the ah, hehm other Chi-town franchise (not mentioning any names) and are now a half game ahead of the Red Stockings for first in the AL East. Go Cubbies ;)

# Why We've Already Packed Away The Baby Walker...

Because he’s a boy.

The other day, IÂ  was sitting in the living room when some action in the area of my son’s walker (the thing the baby stands in that has wheels on it, allowing them to walk easier) caught my peripheral vision.Â  I silently watched as he turned around and proceeded to climb up and out of his walker, backed down the front of it, and quietly sat on the floor like nothing had happened.Â  Then it dawned on me that I hadn’t even put him IN the walker in the first place!Â  I checked with my husband, and he hadn’t put him in there either, and later that evening it was verified as we watched him do it again – my son had put *himself* in his walker in the first place before he climbed back out again.Â  He acted like a pro, so who knows how many times he’s done this, but needless to say, the walker has been packed away before he even used it to help himself walk.Â  But that leads me to my point – we’ve had 3 girls and now a boy, and we are starting to see the major differences between little boys and little girls;Â  the most noticeable at this point being that boys **climb EVERYTHING!** My son can climb before he can walk.Â  He’s been climbing stairs for awhile already, and the other day he climbed the table in the laundry room, and he can almost climb up onto the couch.Â  I can’t imagine what it will be like when he CAN walk, YIKES!!!

### Comments

**Chris**I don't get it. DOH!  
**mary911**I think you've just figured it out!!! Tee Hee!!! ;)  
**taylhis**ugh... no doubt he will. Let me guess, did you hit your head when you fell out of the tree? I've noticed that it's very easy for little boys to find things on which to hit their heads! Is this why women are smarter? ;) joking, joking...  
**derek**Sounds like one smart guy with the walker. He'll be climbing trees outside in no time- just make sure he doesn't fall out of one like I did when I was 9 or 10. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yep... he climbed the stairs here the other night, as well (of course, I was right behind him :D ). Adventurous little guy. Of course, my siblings were just the opposite 3 boys and 1 girl in that order.

# The End Of The (Band) World As We Know It...

Our town holds the distinction of having Ohio’s oldest city band – it’s over 150 years old.Â  Remarkably, this city band has had only 3 directors since 1888 – the current director has conducted the band for 48 years!Â  But at the age of 96, this was his last year with the band – and last Wednesday’s concert was his last.Â  The turnout was incredible – for a small rural town, an audience of 1,000 was beyond expectations, I think.Â  Usually, we can hear the band concerts from our backyard, but there was a threat of rain for this last concert of the season, so they moved it across town where they could have it under a roof.Â  We drove over for just a little bit, and even though we stayed in the car in the parking lot (sleeping kids), it was very enjoyable to listen to the band in the night air.

I would have liked to play for the band under this band director, just to meet him and be a part of town history, but my schedule does not allow for this as a hobby right now.Â  I guess I’ll have to wait until my kids are grown and I can play under the direction of the city band’s **4th** conductor since the 1800’s – providing I still have the skills to play in a band, that is –Â  I am quite rusty even now, let alone years from now!Â  But as I was saying, the city band as we know it is about to change…

### Comments

**Chris**Is that my trumpet D? I played trumpet for about 3 months in middle school. hehehe... By the way Taylhis... LOVE YOU!  
**derek**I have a trumpet I haven't used in 20 years...  
**jamiahsh**I do, too. Known him since my high school days. Paid position (maybe not a lot... who cares, anyway) and Krause possibly directing?! Do they have a spare tuba?  
**taylhis**I like Terry - he's very nice. I hope he gets the job if he wants it.  
**Megan**Being as he was my band director since I was in fifth grade...it will be interesting to see how different it will being under his direction as an adult.  
**jamiahsh**Would have loved to have gone and watched... maybe one day we can join. HEHE... that would be fun... playing under Krause's direction :D  
**Megan**You should:) I bet it would be a challenge with four kids and being involved with theatre. We only practice for an hour one night a week starting the end of May. Then the band concerts are one night for an hour a week until close to the end of July (which you know). Plus, and I didn't know this till after I first started..you get paid:) We voted for the next band director and Mr. Krause was on the ballot...seems like he has a really good shot at band director.

# A Nielsen Family

It began with $3 cash being enclosed in a letter – we had been selected to be a Nielsen family.Â  You know the Nielsen company – basically, they gather information about how many people are watching what on tv in order to determine how much commercials should cost.Â  So anyway, they sent $3 cast, and I have to admit, that piqued my interest.Â  They called with a short phone survey, and a few weeks later, we received a large envelope with 4 booklets (tv diaries), and $30(!) cash.Â  There were instructions; all we had to do was record what we watched on which tv for a week.Â  But it turned out to be easier said than done…

Recording what is watched on all of the tv sets (what year were those diariesÂ  printed – who says “tv sets”?) in our household turned out to be quite a challenge!Â  First of all, we have a parrot in the laundry room, and his tv is on all the time.Â  I don’t always know what is playing, but I do know that the bird loves The Price Is Right.Â  So I made a little note in our tv diary for that tv and mentioned that it’s on all the time for the pet parrot and that he especially likes The Price Is Right.Â  I made sure to notate that I don’t know if he prefers Bob Barker or Drew Carrey, though…

And then there is the kids’ tv, which is in their room.Â  I know they watch a whole lot of the Disney channel, but I don’t know what’s always on it.Â  Because it’s summer, we didn’t watch much tv in the living room; we mostly use that tv for movies on DVD.Â  It was challenging to remember to write down details every time a tv was watched, and if we forgot, it was hard to remember what was watched.Â  So at times the task was daunting, but we had already accepted the payment, so I felt that we had to follow through with the project.Â  Overall, it was a neat experience, and if they value our input, there will be a lot more of The Price Is Right, The Office, and hopefully Cubs baseball on tv 

Just for the heck of it, I took a picture of one of the tv diaries and the envelope:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/late-July-09-005.jpg)

Overall, a fun experience, but next time I might have to decline depending on how old the kids are when our names come up again.Â  It was very difficult for me to have to complete “homework” with 4 small children underfoot – hard to say if it would be worth the $30 again…Â  maybe if the kids are older and can fill out their own diaries…

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Right... I thought there was some sort of box involved... must have changed and made it more difficult for the family. I'm not sure how people are selected. Someone must be paid to sit behind a large number of phone books all day long.  
**taylhis**It's funny; I didn't know anyone either, but then I mentioned it to my uncle and he said he's gotten picked several times. And I learned in my Mass Communications class in college that they were done by putting a special data-recording box on top of the tv, hmmmm... That certainly would have made it easier!  
**derek**I never knew who all took part in these Nielsen ratings. Now at least I know one family. :)  
**taylhis**You could have; they said to record for guests as well. But the survey week is over, and I've mailed the diaries back already - sorry!  
**justj**Can we come over and tilt the ratings?

# A Bridge Over Not So Troubled Water

I received a cool picture via email the other day – a river bridging over another river!Â  It’s man-made of course, but what a feat!Â  It bridges the River Elbe in Germany and connects two important shipping canals.Â  The project was put on hold indefinitely when Germany was split during the last century and was finally completed in 2003.Â  I think this is pretty cool, so I’ll share it and thank fellow tangents.org blogger [Jamiahsh](http://jamiahsh.tangents.org/) for sending it to me.Â  I don’t know why he didn’t put it on his blog, but IÂ  figure he probably would have gotten a chance by now if that’s what he wanted to do with it Â  Check it out:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-river.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-river1.jpg)

For more information about the bridge, [click here.](http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,990878,00.html)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**Very cool. Road trip? I'm in.  
**jamiahsh**Really cool though... sounds like a road trip to me ;)  
**jamiahsh**HMMM.... I wonder the same thing... ah, well.

# "It's Kind Of Like A Kid's Birthday Party..."

The title of this post is a quote from my favorite tv show, The Office.Â  Now I must go on a brief tangent to find out when this awesome show starts for the season – there it is, September 17, ugh, almost two months to go!Â  Time to add a countdown to the site…

Tangent over.Â  Anyway, in the tv show The Office, they have an annual awards show called The Dundies.Â  The lovable yet jerk of a boss, Michael Scott, gives (mostly silly) awards to his staff, and the workers generally are not thrilled about the Dundies.Â  A character named Oscar Martinez says the following about Michael and his Dundies:Â  *“The Dundies are kind of like a kid’s birthday party, and you go, and there’s really nothing for you to do there, but the kid’s having a really good time, so you’re kind of there? That’s… that’s kind of what it’s like.”* The reason I’m sharing the quote with you is because it floats through my mind every time I invite our family friends to one of my kids’ birthday parties.Â  I have 4 kids, one born in every season, so we have a birthday party around here every few months.Â  For the older ones, we invite their friends from school, and we invite family and a few of our adult friends to the parties for the younger ones.Â  I really hope no one is ever bored – it is, after all, a bunch of adults sitting around at a kid’s birthday party.Â  We don’t play “pin the tail on the donkey” or break a piÃ±ata; it’s just a reason for a bunch of us adults to get together, chat, and have some cake.Â  This is exactly what we did this past Sunday at my son’s first birthday party.Â  He had a really great time, and so did his sisters helping him open the presents.Â  He turned blue from his birthday cake, which he absolutely loved, of course!

BEFORE:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/christophers-1st-bday-party-7-19-09-007.jpg)*(his bib says “My 1st Birthday”, but he hated it and is trying to get it off in this picture)*

AFTER:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/christophers-1st-bday-party-7-19-09-013.jpg)

He also got lotsÂ  of great presents –Â  some adorable outfits and cool toys that actually kept him busy for more than 10 minutes!Â  He likes his new toys so much that he’s been playing with them non-stop!Â  They’ve actually kept him out of trouble – well, kind of, he did have two baths out of necessity already today and he spilled a glass of water all over my computer wires, but that’s nothing for him.

So thanks again to everyone who attended – he especially loved it when everyone sang ‘happy birthday’ to him!

### Comments

**derek**Sorry I never got back to you on the party. Sounds like it was a good one. As it was, I was needed this weekend at my church as a lot of leaders were absent for some reason.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Wouldn't have missed it for anything. I also, can't believe he is 1 already.  
**jamiahsh**You didn't miss the party... you were just fashionably late ;)  
**Megan**It's always a blast at your house! Did Christopher even get any cake in his stomach? lol...So cute:) So sorry to have missed the party:( I can't believe he is 1 year old already!  
**jamiahsh**ever bored?! Incredible! How could anyone be bored with 4 entertaining kids. 9-17-09...

# Library Update

A few blog posts ago, I made a plea to save Ohio libraries because the governor was proposing a budget plan that included a major cut in library funding.Â  The vote went through the state legislature, and the budget was re-worked in such a way that the libraries received less than half of the budget cut that was originally proposed, so YAY!Â  Our voices were heard!Â  In this economic crisis, it is understandable that funding is going to be cut on certain community resources, so let’s hope that our libraries can figure out a way to continue their many services without changing too much in light of these cuts.Â  I received an email back from one of the congressmen, so I thought I’d share it below.Â  Not that the letter was written personally for me, but it’s nice to have my efforts acknowledged.Â  Hopefully my friends who work for the state can keep their jobs in light of the budget re-working!

DearÂ Ms.  
Thank you for contacting me with your concerns over Governor Stricklandâ€™s proposal to reduce the general revenue transfers to the Public Library fund by $227 million over the next two years. A vital aspect of democracy is that all citizens are able to express their views, and I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with me. Although I was not able to respond to you prior to the budget vote, please know that your correspondence as well as messages from across our region and the state had a major influence on my work on this bill and, ultimately, how I voted.

Due to the economic situation that the State of Ohio is encountering, all agencies and departments have been forced to absorb cuts in state funding. Fortunately, during the conference committee, an agreement was reached to reduce the Governorâ€™s proposed cut to library funds so that libraries statewide will experience only an $84 million cut over the next two years. While I realize that this is still a considerable reduction, it is substantially lower than the $227 million originally proposed by Governor Strickland.

Again, thank you again for contacting me with your concerns onÂ the budget. If I may ever be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to write or call.

Sincerely,



Steve Buehrer

State Senator

1st Senate District

### Comments

**mary911**Hm, that looks a LOT like the one I got!!! Yes, indeed, YAY!!!!!!  
**derek**Good news indeed, in light of what could have happened. :)  
**jamiahsh**Confidence and determination score once again!

# VIPs For A Day (part three of.... well, I'll try to make this the last part)

If you’ve read my first two blog posts about our trip to King’s Island, then you know that I’ve rambled and chronicled, and now I’m blue in the face and ready to move on.Â  I would like to rate most of their rides though for those who are curious and/or contemplating a visit to the theme park.Â  Somewhere there is a Discovery Channel show about the 10 Most Extreme Roller Coasters I’d like to see – I hear King’s Island has 3 or more on the list!Â  Going to hope that it’s on youtube…Â  If you haven’t read my previous post, here is my ride experience scale: 1â™¦ = not so good, while 5 â™¦ = awesome!

**The Racer** – 3â™¦.Â  A wooden racing roller coaster that doesn’t really race.Â  According to our guide, people on the different racing trains would trash-talk each other so much that they built a wall to separate the two train colors.Â  When we rode, the first time the blue train was not operating, and the second time, the trains did not go at the same time.Â  Still a fun wooden coaster though!

**Flight Deck** – 1â™¦.Â  Formerly called Top Gun, but whatever you call it, we did not like it.Â  It’s a roller coaster whose car is suspended from the track above the car, which basically amounted to a lot of swinging.Â  Ok for me, not my favorite, but it made my husband sick.

**Vortex** – Â¼â™¦ – This one only gets a quarter star to put it on the map –Â  my map key didn’t exactly contain a zero, so let’s give it a quarter star just because it’s a coaster.Â  But otherwise, yuck.Â  Jerky, but without any real thrills.Â  Reminds me of the Shockwave they used to have at Six Flags Great America in Gurnee Illinois.Â  Funny how I used to ride that over and over, especially near park closing when it would empty out.Â  We would just stay on Shockwave until they kicked us off!Â  But as an adult, the ride type doesn’t work for me.

**Invertigo** –Â  3â™¦.Â  I need to go back on this one when it isn’t lunch time!Â  I think the Flight Deck/Invertigo/haven’t had lunch yet combo did me in as IÂ  felt a bit queasy after this one.Â  Basically, you go up and through a loop, and do the same thing backwards.Â  The cool thing about this one is that you face other riders, which I actually don’t know if that’s a cool thing or not – our guide recommended we try sitting on either the front or back of this one so we didn’t have to face strangers on the coaster.Â  I did enjoy how this one whizzed through the station though, and like I said, I will have to try it again on a full stomach.

**Sponge Bob 3D Ride** – 4Â½â™¦.Â  I really liked this one!Â  A lot of fun, and much more movement than its counterpart at UniversalÂ  Studios, the Jimmy Neutron ride.Â  It’s a 3D Sponge Bob movie where the seats move as you move about Sponge Bob’s world.Â  The scenery is great, and not only is it 3D, but the rider actually gets to move along with the movie.Â  As a bonus, the movie is very funny, and I loved the story!

**Whitewater Canyon** – 4Â½â™¦.Â  You know the type – a large round boat makes it way down a “river”, complete with rapids, drops, and waterfalls.Â  I always love this type of ride and much of the fun is riding it with your friends or evenÂ  strangers trying to see who is going to get the most wet!Â  The day we went, it was an unseasonal 70Â°, and getting wet wasn’t quite as enjoyable as usual.Â  This is actually one of the smaller versions of this type of ride that I’ve been on, and the boat seated 6 people instead of the usual 8, 10, or 12 as I’ve seen before.Â  But this version has an added element of fun – friends, family, and people who have ridden the ride can take revenge on riders by putting in a quarter for a chance to launch a water cannon at passing boats.Â  This part is lots of fun, although they need to get the change machine working so more people can squirt!Â  We went on with some kids who didn’t get wet enough in their opinion, so they rode again while we kept watch at the water cannons and succeeded in getting them SOAKED!

**Backlot Stunt Coaster** – 2â™¦.Â  Lameness.Â  But remember, I’m used to Universal Studios since we try to trek to Orlando yearly.Â  This has nothing on Universal.Â  But I suppose for younger kids, it could instill a feeling of bravery as they race past exploding police cars.Â  It goes kind of fast up a winding track, which is kind of different, but other than that, the excitement kind of fizzled, and the ride isn’t all that long.Â  The brightly colored cars you ride in are super-cute, but does that really matter?

**Adventure Express** – 1Â¾â™¦.Â  This is also kind of lame, which is alright, not every coaster has to be top thrill.Â  But this one is like Big Thunder Mountain Railroad at Disney, but that is bigger and faster.Â  Adventure Express was going alright until the rider finds himself in a climatic tunnel, climbing a lift past moving robots and everything.Â  Then when you reach the top – nothing.Â  Nada.Â  Literally – the ride ends here.Â  What the ?

**Scooby Doo and the Haunted Castle** – 4Â½â™¦.Â  You ride through scenes of Scooby Doo trying to shoot the bad guys with a laser gun attached to your car – cool!Â  Even better, I actually beat my husband on this one!Â  This ride is a lot like Buzz Lightyear at Disney, and I can never even get close to Hubby’s score on that one.Â  He must have had an off-ride though, cuz the second time we rode he beat me silly again.Â  Oh well, this ride is awesomely themed.Â  They remembered quite a few of the bad guys from the old Scooby Doo tv show, and there were sound bites galore.Â  The castle looks awesome from the outside,Â  and we even drove a Mystery Machine:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/kings-island-7-2-09-003.jpg)

Other fun rides at this park that deserve at least an honorable mention are the railroad (just a standard train ride, but oh-so-relaxing after a huge day of coaster riding!), the Wild Thornberry’s River Adventure (kind of a lame log-flume type ride, but still lots of fun), the Eiffel tower (we didn’t ride it, but it was gorgeous to look at), and Dodgem (plain ole bumper cars, but when is the last time hubby and I got to ride ‘n bump kid-free?Â  I don’t even remember!).Â  Because we splurged and got the guided tour, we even had time to catch some shows – an ice show and an 80’s review.Â  The ice skaters were pretty good; especially one guy who even did a triple axle!Â  The 80’s show was fun, even though many of the performers were incapable of both singing and dancing at the same time.Â  There was a specialÂ  Michael Jackson tribute, even though he had passed away only a week before our visit.Â  But there were afros, mullets, big bangs, leg warmers, bright colors, even giant Rubik’s cubes, and it was fun to sing along to the rockin’ 80’s tunes.Â  One did get the feeling however, that not one member of the show had any idea of what the ’80’s was actually like…

So there you have it.Â  I’ve reviewed and rated the rides I rode and found worth a mention.Â  If you are thinking of visiting, you should know that King’s Island also has a huge kids area, and many more rides I didn’t mention.Â  We tried to stay away from any rides with a lot of spinning or anything that looked too crazy (especially this one called Delirium):

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-delirium_lrg.jpg)

It looked a little too crazy/dizzy for me; maybe if you go to King’s Island, you can try it and let me know what it’s like in the comments!

### Comments

**Varicose Veins Treatment :**Spongebog is always very cheesy and funny, i like this cartoon character~';  
**Light Fittings**spongebob is crazy funny, who does not love spongebob anyway hehe'\*\*  
**Sydney Collins**what i like about spongebob is that he is sarcastic and funny`,;  
**Wyatt Richardson**spongebob is really funny but she sort of overacts sometimes."'-  
**Nevaeh Green**Spongebo and Patrick are really great characters. love them.;-,  
**justj**I really like rollercoasters, but I'm not sure I would ever get on that ring on a stick ride. Looks like I would lose my lunch on that one.  
**mary911**LOVE the picture of you guys in the Mystery Machine!!!! Freddie and Daphne, eat your hearts out!!!! :D  
**jamiahsh**Whitewater Canyon I remember. 70 degrees and still willing to get wet? My kind of riders! Performers in an 80s revue who don't remember the decade? COME ON! Young whippersnapers :D

# A Future In The Superbowl?

Here is a commercial I had not seen until a friend sent it to me in an email forward.Â  As I was sitting here chuckling over it, my two oldest daughters became curious and came over for a look.Â  They loved what they saw, and I had to play it 3 more times!Â  I don’t think it’s in regular circulation yet, but if it is, I haven’t seen it.Â  Of course, I never watch tv anymore!Â  Perhaps it’s waiting to be unveiled until the next round of infamous Superbowl commercials?Â  Enjoy!

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

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Probably laughing about the effects in less than 10 years. But cute! I see an E\*Trade baby/Avian troupe battle February 7, 2010. Isn't that a bit late?!  
**taylhis**I agree with Derek - they animate it with computers. But they did a nice job; the animation is really smooth! Though something tells me that we'll be laughing about these effects in 10 years!  
**Phyllis Beyer**How cute! How on earth do they film something like that?  
**derek**The CGI says modern commercial, yet the cassette boombox and roller skates scream otherwise. Hmm... But yes, cute.  
**justj**All I can say is: Where were the knee pads and helmets on those kids? ;) Cute!

# Our (Thirty) First Year Checkup

My son had his 12 month checkup at the pediatrician the other day, and all is well!Â  It was kind of strange though, when the doctor asked my husband if **I** snored a lot.Â  My husband admitted I do, and then the doctor proceeded to make me breathe for him.Â  What the heck – is this a normal part of how a one-year-old baby is examined, by exploring the mother’s snoring habits?Â  The doctor then started describing some of my behavior as of late – you are tired all the time, and you feel lazy.Â  Right on!Â  He said he could tell just by looking at my puffy eyes that I probably have allergy problems, which is inhibiting my sleep patterns – did I mention that our pediatrician is also the county’s medical sleep expert?Â  So he recommended that I start taking Claritin and some nose drops.Â  I tried the nose drops yesterday, and already I could breathe better through my nose better than I’ve been able to in months – funny how you don’t notice things like this, but I’ve been so busy, I thought I was just tired from all the busy-ness, and I didn’t really notice that I wasn’t able to breathe much through my nose.Â  I did notice that I’ve been itchy constantly – my eyes, behind my face, and now, I have this nasty spider bite on my knee I got on the 4th of July that will not go away – I itch constantly!Â  I’m really hoping the Claritin works, and I can be back to the energetic mom I so want to be!Â  Hey, maybe the allergy medicine will work SO well that I can get myself a pet cat ðŸ˜‰

So anyway, like I said, everything is going great with my son.Â  I just thought it was weird when the focus of the doctor’s appointment turned to me.Â  He is doing great; he is 30 inches long which is exactly average for his age.Â  He weighs 21 lbs, which makes him a little on the smaller side, weight-wise, so we have to try to fatten him up.Â  The doctor also said he should be standing more, but then again, I had scheduled his appointment for during his nap, so we had to wake him up to see the doctor.Â  I don’t know about you, but I wouldn’t exactly be thrilled about standing up for someone in the middle of my nap either!

### Comments

**derek**I could probably use something like Claritin myself, except I am paranoid about future liver problems many drugs cause. Glad to hear CVA is doing great.  
**jamiahsh**I wouldn't be happy if I got woken from a nap to go to the doctor. But weird and wonderful how it turned and seems to help you. Eat, Beeber, EAT! HAHA!!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Very interesting....I remember when you were younger you needed an inhaler for a year or so. Sorry, but I don't remember any specifics.  
**mary911**Huh, I thought my laziness and tiredness was because I was tired and lazy!!! Who's your doctor??? Glad the little guy is doing well! And glad his momma is improving!!! :) Have a great week!!!

# VIPs For A Day (part two of even more parts)

So, where did I leave off when I blogged about our kid-less [day trip to King’s Island](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2009/07/06/vips-for-a-day-part-one-of-more-parts/) amusement park?Â  I don’t remember; I got kind of side-tracked and have made a few unrelated blog posts since then…Â  But no matter, I’ll just begin by rating the rides at King’s Island; my scale is 1-5 â™¦’s, 1 being not so good and 5 being a perfect ride experience.

**The Beast** – 4Â½â™¦.Â  I have an in-depth description of this one in my previous post, but I will recap again – very cool wooden roller coaster; built into the existing terrain of the Miami River valley in southern Ohio which means you can be speeding along not more than 3 feet above the ground, thinking you must travel a lift before you can drop, but that’s not the case!Â  This is the longest wooden roller coaster in the **world** with a 4 minute and 50 second ride time.Â  Like any wooden coaster, it can be rough and rickety (I was sure I threw out my bad back on one of the speeding curves, but thankfully, I did not.Â  Shhh, don’t tell anyone I ride coasters with a bad back, but it must not be that bad since my back was one of my least sore parts the day after King’s Island), but these sensations improve if you ride the front row – I HIGHLY recommend the front seats on this one!

**Diamondback** – 4Â½â™¦ – I also talked about the park’s newest addition in my previous post, so here is another recap.Â  Exceptionally smooth ride, with no upside-down air time.Â  Rather, the only air time is achieved when your butt *lifts* from your seat on the multiple drops.Â  The sensation of free-falling is achieved by the restraint system – one smallish plastic piece that sits between your legs – that’s it!Â  The picture I posted in my previous blog doesn’t do justice to the coaster, so here is another:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-diamondback1.jpg)I know certain readers of mine will notice that this is indeed a computer-generated picture, so I might as well just say that outright.Â  The first time we went on Diamondback, I **loved** it, and it would have gotten an even higher rating from me if it were not for the time we rode it in the front row.Â  Unlike The Beast, the front row of the Diamondback adds an entire new dimension to the ride – one I was happy enough without!Â  I respect our tour guide’s opinion that riding front on Diamondback is a must-do experience, and even though it wasn’t for me, I’m glad I got to do it once.Â  But it was SOOOO scary!

**Firehawk** – Holy (excuse my language) crap.Â  This is one doozy of a coaster!!!Â  Wow, I forgot to rate it, hmmm let me think…Â  3Â¾â™¦.Â  First let me explain what this coaster is, and then I can explain what would have made it better.Â  The riders load into Firehawk, and then the seats recline until the rider is *lying down*.Â  Not for the faint of heart – you are strapped into flexible (not hard plastic like most) shoulder harnesses, and then you are tilted backward until you are lying on your back – and it evenÂ  feels like your head might just be lower than your feet.Â  So anyway, lying down, the rider leaves the station, and proceeds to go up a hill, head first, facing the sky.Â  So of course you can’t see when you’re going to reach the top.Â  And when you finally do reach the top of the lift, you flip until you’re flying Superman-style through the trek of the coaster.Â  Overall, it was awesome, and I have to sayÂ  that I truly misjudged how ultimately different the horizontal sensation would be – it was VERY different.Â  What kept me from giving this coaster a higher rating, however, was this (and a discussion on the long ride home found my husband thinking the same thing):Â  For a unique roller coaster where you were supposed to feel like you were flying, especially for one of the first and only of this type (this is the only one in Ohio, I believe), they really could and should have simplified the design.Â  Instead of all the inversions, corkscrews and loops, they should have actually slowed down the coaster and left the rider suspended belly-down for the majority of the ride.Â  After people experienced that, THEN they could have added the speed and all the inversion stuff in an update version of the ride, and it would have been like a 2-fer – 2 rides, one idea.Â  The way it was, the ride was so fast that you really didn’t have the time to pretend to be Superman, and that was a shame.Â  The woman in our row the second time we rode Firehawk was, and I quote, “terrified”.Â  My husband told her it wasn’t that bad, and when he told her that, I was thinking, “What are you thinking?Â  It IS terrifying!”.Â  I just did not think that being on our backs face up on our way up the lift was the right time to tell a stranger that my opinion differed from my husband’s – it’s not like she could check my face for my true feelings.Â  The woman found out for herself.Â  I think she liked it though, as did I in the end, despite the changes I would make.Â  Another fun thing about this coaster is that while waiting in line (or by-passing the line on your VIP tour, highly recommended please see my first King’s Island post ), you get to pass next to the part of the ride where it first slows down as the riders come back into the station.Â  You can hear the riders’ very first reactions to the crazy configuration of this coaster, and that is a really cool time-filler!

**Flight of Fear** – 3Â¾â™¦.Â  It does feel strange to rate this and the previous coaster the same since they are two veryÂ  different ride experiences, so I feel the need to disclaim that I’m rating my overall ride experience.Â  Keep in mind that I am no longer in my 20’s, so I’ve lost my reckless abandonment.Â  I really like roller coasters, but I do draw the line and find some things too scary – so my rating system might vary from that of a true coaster enthusiast.Â  But anyway, I liked Flight of Fear, largely because it is like a much better version of Disney’s Space Mountain.Â  My husband likened it to the Aerosmith Rock N Roller Coaster at Disney’s ~~MGM~~ Hollywood Studios – which I loved, but IÂ  found it more like a much improved Space Mountain.Â  All 3 are dark indoor coasters.Â  Flight of Fear and Aerosmith have what they call linear induction launches, which is how smart people say “0-54mph in 4 seconds!”.Â  On the way home, I was browsing through (ahh, life without kids in the car!) the super-cool stat sheets our guide gave us as parting gifts, and I noted that Flight of Fear was the first ride in the world with the linear induction launch!Â  It was SO much cooler than Space Mountain; much more smooth and with inversions.Â  Space Mountain is herky-jerky, and there are no drops nor inversions – it’s almost kind of like, what’s the point?Â  THIS is Magic Kingdom’s thrill ride?Â  But then again, Magic Kingdom really isn’t like that – you visit with small children and/or for the small child inside yourself.Â  But my point is, Flight of Fear is SO much better than Space Mountain, but not quite as good as the Aerosmith coaster – perhaps something to do with Aerosmith’s black light flourescent graphics versus the plain darkness of Flight of Fear; I preferred the graphics.Â  For a tangent, here is an interesting story about Flight of Fear: as I mentioned, we had a guide for our trip to this park.Â  Other park visitors would see he was an employee and ask him questions throughout the day.Â  One of the questions was “Is Flight of Fear still open?”.Â  Our guide said yes, not really knowing what the guest was talking about until later during the behind-the-scenes tour of The Beast when the park’s PR Manager, Don Helbig (who has ridden The Racer, another wooden coaster, almost 12,000 times!Â  How does one even count that high, especially when being tossed around on a wooden coaster?) told us that one of his job’s challenges was to dispel the rumors about the park given life by the internet.Â  One of those rumors he talked about happened to be that Flight of Fear met its demise.Â  Not true – Flight of Fear is alive and well and also well worth riding, especially if you are a person who is used to Space Mountain.Â  I think I can pretty much guarantee you will like Flight of Fear better.

Well…Â  I have once again ~~talked~~ blogged your ear (?) off with my boring detailed account of an event.Â  I wanted to rate most of the enjoyable rides at King’s Island, but I must cut the post short for now – maybe I will be able to get the other cool rides in the next post if I cool it a little and shorten the detail…Â  Until then…

### Comments

**taylhis**Flight of Fear wasn't too short - I felt like it almost stalled in the middle, but I think that's just part of it. The Aerosmith one WAS really short, though it's been years since I've been on it also.  
**derek**If my memory serves, the Aerosmith coaster was really goo, but extremely short. Is Flight of Fear really short as well? Not compared to the Beast of course since \*any\* coaster is short in comparison. How about this- is it satisfying, or does it come to an end just as you're starting to really enjoy it? I think that was the problem with Aerosmith. They all sound like something to experience.  
**MY First Time | Morat's Blog**[...] Recent Posts MY First TimeSo Much For Sleeping In...VIPs For A Day (part two of even more parts)The Village GreenA bit of humorIt doesn't take long......My Little ManA Beary Super Birthday!Just [...]  
**Phyllis Beyer**I loved reading your accounts of the roller coasters. I must say, though, that at 62 I think they might be a bit much for me. Too bad they weren't around about 15 years ago. I'm glad you're still young enough to enjoy them. Do you remember how you got your roller coaster start? Riding the American Eagle at age 4 - you begged me and against my better judgement I let you ride.  
**jamiahsh**BORING!!!!!?????? Only makes me more excited about our Halloween trip! What a bumber that you don't get to experience the Superman-esque flight during Firehawk, but still sounds great. I CAN'T WAIT to ride the Beast again! I much prefer the Rock N'Roller to Space Mountain. I, too like the graphics inside.

# My Little Man

My son is ONE year old today – how time flies!Â  He is starting to look like such a little man:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/christophers-dedication-pictures-001.jpg)

This picture was taken at our church for his baby Dedication ceremony we had in June.

*Jesus said “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”  
Mark 10:14*

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY BEEBER!Â  WE LOVE YOU!!!**

### Comments

**mary911**What a beautiful boy!!! Happy Birthday Christopher!  
**jamiahsh**Happy BIG 1 big guy! What a thrill it is for me to have someone so special to me almost share the same birthday as I. So glad I got to share it with you today at the zoo! You really started to look like you actually wanted to see the animals which is good in your family. Awesome picture!  
**derek**Happy birthday CJ (Chris Jr.)!  
**Phyllis Beyer**Happy 1st Birthday to my very special grandson. Papa and I love you very much.

# Christian The Lion

My previous post became too lengthy, but I wanted to share the following video they had on the hotel tv.Â  Whether it was my relief that the baby had finally fallen asleep, or my being so tired after a huge busy day, the video made me emotional – I think it’s just a feel-good video.Â  I meant to show it to the fellow animal lovers in my family, but it skipped my mind that morning, so now they can see it here; it’s awesome!

Christian The Lion:

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

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Incredible! Nurture vs. Nature.  
**Phyllis Beyer**Totally awesome!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
**whatever**This was so neat to see. Love you Lisa!

# Down And Out In Shipshewanni

Well, life is back to normal, I guess you could say, whatever “normal” is.Â  My 3 girls were with their Grandma in Illinois for over a week, and they had an awesome time.Â  Our house was quite quiet and empty without them, so we made it our business to not be in the house much at all.Â  We were constantly on the go, getting to doÂ  lots of fun things withÂ  just the baby and even some things just hubby and meÂ  – great times!Â  More on that later since I need to finish writing about our trip to King’s Island, and hopefully entice some people to come along when we go back close to Halloween.Â  But for now, here is a re-cap of our trip to Shipshewanni – I’m respectfully poking fun at my mom, who has a tendency to sometimes mispronounce things – love you Mom!

So Monday, instead of driving to Illinois to pick up the kids, we met them and my parents, uncle,Â  sister, nephews, and brother-in-law in Shipshewana Indiana for two days of fun in an indoor water park.Â  Anticipating this trip for months, I was sure I was going to have a fun blog to write – a family trip with 7 adults, 4 kids and 2 babies sounded like fodder for a National Lampoon movie.Â  But strangely,Â  especially considering **this** group of people – you know who you are – nothing bizarre happened; no one in the group got crazy (except for our baby, but that will be addressed later on…), and we all had a blast!

I have to be honest and say that when we got to the water park, I was a bit disappointed to see that there wasn’t a swimming pool.Â  But as time went on, I became happy with the small size of the place since it was easy to keep tabsÂ  on the kids and find other members of the family to catch up and chat.Â  There were two large water slides where you go down on rafts, and we had an awesome time taking turns going down with everyone racing each other.Â  You could go down one or two-at-a-time, and after a while, our oldest got brave enough to try and found she LOVED the water slides!Â  Same with her cousin, and the two of them went down together – it was adorable toÂ  see the two of them work together to carry their huge raft up all those stairs.Â  I wish I had a picture, but it was impossible to have a camera in the water park – and please, with my camera luck, do you think I could have taken pictures in the water park and still have had a camera when we left?Â  Doubtful.Â  But anyway, we (exhaustively!) made our way up all those stairs time and time again to race our daughter and my nephew and even my mom and dad down the water slide.

They also had a kids’ pool with lots of things to play with and a soft floor for the babies to crawl on.Â  There was also a playground with 4 water slides –Â  the kind you go down without a raft – and I liked those too until I mistakenly went down one before it was cleared…Â  My husband was standing at the bottom of it holding our two-year-old, and I slid right into the back of his legs, bowling them over.Â  Thank goodness no one was hurt, and I’m sure it was an hilarious, stooge-like display of idiocy.

They also had a lazy river – my favorite.Â  You just grab a raft and float on down the river, and my 1-year-old son fell asleep because it was so peaceful to float down the river in my arms.Â  When we are rich, we are going to build a lazy river at my goat farm where I will play with goats, make cheese, and relax in my lazy river 

We split up for dinner, and my parents and uncle were nice enough to watch the kids soÂ  we could go out to dinner with my sister and brother-in-law.Â  We took the babies with us (our youngest sons are 2Â½ months apart), and they allowed us sisters and husbands some much-needed catch-up time; I think it’s been over 5 years since we went out together which is too long!Â  We went to an Amish-style restaurant, and at first I thought it was going to be a gimmick.Â  You know, yucky Sysco food disguised as Amish style food…Â  but thankfully, I was wrong.Â  The food was SO good!Â  The roast beef was incredible, the mashed potatoes homemade and not out of a package as so many are, and the chicken and noodles tasted like the noodles were also made from scratch.Â  Everything was all we could eat, served family style – YUM!Â  I highly recommend the Blue Gate restaurant!

So then we went back to the water park for a little bit until it closed, and then it was time to try to get the kids settled down for the night.Â  My parents were gracious enough to splurge (the entire trip was a Christmas gift from them) and get us a room with some extra space for our large family, and the two oldest girls had their own little bunk bed area with a tv and nightlights in their beds.Â  They were out in a jiffy.Â  Not the case with the younger two – our two-year-old Disney had to bunk with us for lack of beds while her one-year-old brother had a crib.Â  DisneyÂ  and I caught up on life and her week with Grandma while whispering under the covers while Daddy tried to get the baby to bed.Â  Soon, Disney was asleep which just left one standing…Â  and standing…Â  Christopher refused to go to sleep.Â  In a hotel, especially in a room adjoining my sister’s where they also had a fussy trying-to-go-to-sleep baby, we could not let him cry it out, soÂ  we took him down the hall to the mini-arcade – at least I could read my magazine and my husband could play some Madden while the baby crawled around.Â  Ha.Â  All he wanted to do was crawl up and (fall) down the stairs, so no fun for us.Â  I thought about taking him downstairs so we could at least sit with my dad and uncle and enjoy the evening air, but one of us had to stay with the sleeping girls.Â  Since our goal was to be able to spend some time together, this was not an option.Â  We ended up sitting outside of our room for awhile, letting the baby crawl, but soon he got crabby and we realized we were just assaulting my sister’s family from the other side of the room with our noise.Â  Finally we put him back in his crib and hid out in the bathroom so we were out of sight, and this did the trick – 4 down!Â  Except that now it was too late to do anything together, so we just watched a few of those weird youtube-like videos and went to bed.Â  Apparently the baby woke up again in the middle of the night and also early the next morning, and my awesome husband took care of him, even though he was dead tired by the time we got home the next day.Â  I didn’t sleep well either, especially with Disney in our bed who kept kicking me.

So the next morning, we were up for breakfast, and I couldn’t eat anything because I was so tired.Â  No problem; I’d get lunch later when I was hungry and at the very least, we had big plans to pick up some gourmet cheese from the awesome cheese shop before we left town.Â  We split up for the day since my husband didn’t mind taking the older kids to the water park again, and the rest of us had had enough water park, so we went to the flea market instead – what a madhouse!Â  I don’t know why it’s only open 2 days a week because for those 2 days, the area is MOBBED with tons of traffic!Â  But anyway, the flea market is huge and has a wide variety of things for everyone.Â  Before I left, hubby said to make sure I bought myself something, so I did – isn’t he awesome?Â  He takes most of the kids for the day AND tells me to buy myself something, awww…Â  (and this is why I obliged to let him try out for a play – he is a giver; he deserves to doÂ  something HE wants to do.Â  Of course, being in a show takes months of rehearsal and prep time –Â  oh, man, what did I agree to???)Â  But anyway, I got a black and white vintage photo of Wrigley Field in 1946 – how cool is that?Â  I bought a Bears Superbowl frame and some hot sauce for hubby, and we left the flea market before seeing all of it – is that possible to do in just one day?Â  Then it was time to go home, and our oldest was really upset to see Grandma go – she has a Grandma addiction, so the more time she spends with Grandma, the more sad she gets when it’s time to leave.Â  But she got over it, and we achieved the coveted quadruple-kid-pass-out on the way home.Â  Overall, an awesome time, and I think we should definitely do something again next year.Â  As fun as the water park was, I might suggest a different location next time – maybe a campground or another place where we would have more sit-down time to really get together, catch up, and maybe even play some games.Â  My sole complaint is that I arrived home cheese-less Â  There was an awesome cheese shop, and we were going to stop on the way home, but the kids were just too crazy and the traffic too thick in Shipshewana for us to stop – dangit.Â  I had been looking forward to that cheese for two days!Â  Bermuda onion cheese, yummmm…  
*(drooling….)*

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**I would imagine that when you are 62 you might also mispronounce some words - too bad I won't be around to kid you - HA HA. Dad and I also had an awesome time. Our house was TOO quiet when we got home. We miss the girls terribly. We are open to suggestions for next year because we also want to do this get-together again.  
**derek**I'll have to check it out.  
**taylhis**cheesehaven.com (drooling...)  
**derek**Nothing like a two-day vacation including a waterpark. Wait, no. There's nothing like a two-day vacation including a waterpark FOR FREE! Sounds like a great time. :) Can you order fine cheese over the internet..?  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like a GREAT water park. We were discussing the pros and cons between Shipshi's and Kalahari... the $300.00 per night at the Kalahari was enough to turn us off of that FAST! I can't imagine any of my nieces and nephews being away from grandma for an extended period of time but that's prolly because they all live in the same town.

# VIPs For A Day (part one of more parts)

On Thursday, my husband’s brilliant ability to find awesome entertainment deals on the internet paid off once again.Â  He booked us a VIP tour at [King’s Island (click for a view of the rides and attractions!)](http://www.visitkingsisland.com/) near Cincinnati Ohio, and we spent the entire day at this awesome amusement park!Â  The VIP tour included our own personal guide; a park employee who followed us around all day leading us up the exits of every ride so that we got to bypass the line and ride without waiting – *in the seat of our own choosing.* We also got to wear lanyards with VIP passes on them (think of the movie Wayne’s World when Wayne and Garth get backstage passes to see Alice Cooper.Â  They wear them around their necks and proudly display their lanyards, flashing them into the faces of nearly everyone they encounter, hilarious!) – and tempting to reenact, but there were some people in line who were upset that we got to board without waiting in line; I wouldn’t want to rub it in.Â  But I would recommend the VIP tour to anyone who wants to go to King’s IslandÂ  – it includes a guide (you can even make him do things, like hold your stuff and go on rides, haha!), no lines (sometimes a minimal 5 minute wait at the gate while the ride operators find a place to stick you in, not really an issue at all – there is plenty to watch for those 5 minutes), an all-you-can-eat buffet for lunch, unlimited fountain drinks throughout the day, ice cream, a backstage tour of The Beast (the longest wooden roller coaster in the world!), and 2 ride pictures.Â  A great deal, especially if you want to sit through my following narrative to see if it’s a place you’d want to visit:

The lady on the phone told us to get to the park at 8:30 am, so we were actually early and had to wait in a car line to get in.Â  When we got to the park, we got shuffled around and had to wait a bit more – it seems that this part of the tour could be tweaked a little bit.Â  We didn’t get our guide and get on rides until about 9:45.Â  Still early (park opens to the general public at 10), but we had about an extra hour of doing nothing at the park (could have slept an hour longer!), so perhaps they should tweak this part of the tour to make it run more smoothly for the guest – everything else about the tour is really great though!Â  So anyway, our guide comes to meet us, and we gave him our list of rides and follow him around the park.Â  Actually, since it was before 10, only the park’s brand new showcase ride and The Beast were open.Â  So we began with the Diamondback – which I had named as the ride that scared me the most on the way over.Â  But I loved it!Â  It was so smooth and all those fast drops were so fun in the cool open air.Â  The Beast was another story.Â  I liked it, but it was very rattly and jerky.Â  Going back on The Beast later in the day and sitting in the front row changed the experience for me, however, and we ended up riding it a lot!Â  Once we discovered the front car of The Beast and I switched sides of the train with hubby, I enjoyed the ride immensely.Â  It’s a **4 minute, 50 second** ride through the forest on a wooden roller coaster at speeds of over 60 mph.Â  The subtle sound of chirping birds accompanied by the naturalistic scents of the surrounding forest and the wooden tunnels where the coaster whizzes is indescribable.Â  A comment on themeparkinsider.com says about The Beast, “*Running through the thick forest at 65 mph on an intense wooden coaster…about as close to riding a real beast as you can get. Classic ride that always delivers.”* – I have to agree.Â  They built another wooden coaster at King’s Island called Son of the Beast, but it closed in June when people complained it was too rough.Â  From the printed King’s Island info, I learned that Son of the Beast was a *looping* wooden coaster – interesting.Â  Oh well, maybe it’ll open some day for me to try.Â  But back to the backstage tour of The Beast – very cool.Â  We watched some trains descend the first large drop which actually leads directly underground into a tunnel.Â  We walked further into the forest (noticed some long-gone riders’ possessions along the way: broken sunglasses, coins, hats, etc.Â  Didn’t see any cell phones, but then again, we saw the lost cell phone display they have in the Diamondback area – a big clear box FULL of cell phones, ipods, Blackberries, PDAs, etc. ), and we learned some interesting facts while watching riders fly past us – and boy, were they surprised to see us walking around back there in the forest!! As for the facts – the entire coaster was built from scratch on site; unlike many of today’s coasters which are shipped into the parks in segments.Â  The Beast was built around and including the existing rolling terrain of the Miami River valley in lower Ohio, and as I mentioned, it goes underground.Â  It has speed monitors built into parts of the track, so if a train is going to fast, it will automatically break to slow itself down.Â  I gratefully noticed this while riding, and it helped calm my concerns of flying off the track.Â  This coaster goes so fast into those tunnels – WOW!Â  For all these reasons and more, it’s a coaster like NO other!Â  Here’s a pic – looks like something I’ll have to try in the fall; the forest looks beautiful during peak season for color-changing leaves:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-beast.jpg)

Ironically, the exact opposite thing happened with the Diamondback –Â  I loved it the first time, and then I tried the front row which was absolutely terrifying!Â  IÂ  won’t be riding the front of the Diamondback again.Â  Careening down thatÂ  first 74Â° drop (!) practically face-down at over 80 mph with only a red thing between my legs to keep me from plummeting to the earth made me feel like I was going to die for sure.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/07/delete-diamondback.jpg)

And not in a good way, which is ironically enough sometimes the reason why lots of crazy people like to ride coasters.Â  Being in the front seat on Diamondback makes it look like the the track disappears beneath you, then before you know it, you’re flying in the air getting lift out of your seat and you have nothing on either side nor in front of you – yikes!Â  I’ve grown too old to feel invincible, so I put a cap on my thrill-seeking.Â  I enjoy a good coaster, but I also have my limits.Â  If you are a thrill-seeker roller coaster enthusiast who just can’t get enough, try the front car on Diamondback!Â  And a side note, the guy who gave us the behind the scenes tour of The Beast is the guy who thought of the name for Diamondback; it was an interesting experience to have something like that come up during a conversation.

I think I’ll stop there for now…Â  it was a big day, and I’d like to write up more and get more pictures up – and yes, IÂ  do have those free ride pictures we got of Chris and I on The Beast and Diamondback.Â  Am I willing to post them on the internet?Â  Maybe you’ll have to read my other King’s Island posts to find out!

### Comments

**VIPs For A Day (part two of even more parts) | My Food Chain Gang**[...] where did I leave off when I blogged about our kid-less day trip to King’s Island amusement park?Â  I don’t remember; I got kind of side-tracked and have made a few unrelated [...]  
**derek**Just read the last two comments. Count me in if I can get off work!  
**derek**Now \*that\* sounds like something to do with all of you some time. Those VIP passes must have cost a pretty penny though considering what you got! 8O  
**Chris**Yes JustJ you MUST come for our Halloween tip there -- 13 haunted houses and all the awesome coasters!!!! You MUST (MUST!!!) come! ALL TANGENTS BLOGGERS SHOULD GO. WE CAN MAKE IT A TANGENTS EVENT!  
**taylhis**We are planning to go back for the Halloween season - we will have to set up a day way ahead of time so people can make it!  
**justj**Now I am really sorry I missed that trip. I'll have to go later this year, if I can find another coaster enthusiast. They don't exist in my house now.  
**jamiahsh**One thrill seeking, roller coaster enthusiast who can't get enough? HERE! The Beast is my favorite wooden coaster. Cedar Point has one called the Mean Streak that is just ok.

# Zoo Ratings

admission price, add-ins (rides that may or may not have separate admission), notes, cleanliness, layout, restaurant, animals, exhibits

### Comments

# I'm Still Alive!

Don’t count me out!Â  I know I haven’t been blogging as much as I used to; it’s because I’ve been all over the place this summer!Â  I am just swamped, but in a great way!Â  The girls were with their Grandma for the past week, so I used the opportunity to finish up some old blog drafts and post them.Â  I haven’t really had the chance to sit down and write up my many recent adventures, so hopefully time will allow for that in the next few weeks – it’s been totally awesome, and I can’t wait to share everything with you!Â  But until I have time for more blogging, please bear with me and check back often for updates!Â  I hope everyone had an awesome 4th of July weekend – happy birthday America!Â  THANKS FOR READING!

### Comments

**derek**(\* the above comment is not to be considered an endorsement of a favorite view, "the ends justifies the means.")  
**derek**True, but it's the results that count. ;)  
**taylhis**Nice observation, and thanks for looking at my stats. But remember, I am the one who pointed out the schedule-a-post feature... so I haven't necessarily posted five of the previous 6 days.  
**derek**Kind of an ironic post, considering you had posts five of the six previous days. ;) But I understand- for you it's a veritable drought. :D  
**Chris**I am soooo glad you are still alive! :-) Of course it is all the fun we had that made you 'dead' anyway! I LOOOOOOVE YOU - THANKS FOR A GREAT WEEK!!! You are the BEST!

# Secrets Of Traveling With Kids

I’m smack dab in the middle (of the beginning) of raising 4 kids of all different (under 10) ages, and also their friends are around a lot, so we are constantly surrounded by young-ins!Â  Of my many observations and trials and errors in trying to keep them all simultaneously calm and content, I have discovered a few secrets, *golden* secrets – so considered because of their miraculous success rates, at least in the under 10 set.Â  Give me a few years (especially when the kids reach their teens), and I may have enough golden kid-contenting secrets to write a book, let’s hope I learn some more anyway…

1.Â  If you trace the roots of every kid tantrum and meltdown, you will find that most are derived from feelings of hunger, followed closely by fatigue and thirst; the latter two can be interchanged, it depends upon the kid.Â  But the #1 reason is usually hunger.Â  Keeping small, energy-boosting (and likable!) snacks on hand at all times can do wonders for the mood of the group.

2.Â  Never underestimate the power of blankie.Â  I keep those really thin blankies in my car –Â  the ones they give youÂ  at the hospital when you’re having a baby.Â  They fold up so small, it’s really not a big deal for me to keep a bag with 4 of them (1 per kid is important!)Â  folded up and stashed under the front passenger seat.Â  When we are returning home on a long drive or even when we’re in the middle of a long day out, a sleepy (and full-stomached, see hint #1) kid can often be comforted and most often put to sleep by a blankie.Â  Even the thin ones work like a miracle; I’ve seen it work for multiple ages, genders, and personalities.Â  It’s difficult for me to get used to, but I keep offering my son little stuffed animals to play with.Â  I had 3 girl babies before him, and they all loved stuffed animals.Â  My son could care less, unless the stuffed animal still has its tag for him to rip off.Â  But the blankie secret is effective even with him – he’ll pull it up against his cheek and instantly get sleepy!Â  If you don’t have enough of the hospital blankies for each kidÂ  (and it’s important they eachÂ  have their own), I highly suggest you purchase other thin blankies for the car since they’re inexpensive, especially when you consider how helpful they are.Â  They come in packs of 4 or 5 for under $10, I think…Â  A key to helping this secret be effective is to make sure **you** retain control of the blankies – don’t let the kids keep them in the back of the van or like anything else, the novelty will wear off, rendering the blankie ineffective.Â  My kids know that the car blankies are just for “blankie emergencies”, and that policy helps to make sure I can keep them somewhat clean and stashed and ready for use.

So just remember, snacks and blankies can usually get you out of most kid-pinches, sometimes even calming kids who pinch, ha.Â  At the very least, if you find yourself in charge of some crazy kids, plan ahead and do some light packing – these hints will buy you some time to think of a better plan!

### Comments

**taylhis**My kids also travel very well. The beauty of the blankie secret is that they are already in the car - no packing required. And by energy boosting, I meant snacks that contain protein and B vitamins - NOT sugar or caffeine or energy drinks - those ARE better left for the adults. I heard the same thing about turkey - but then I heard that one person would have to eat more than an entire turkey to get the drowsiness effect. That's where the blankies come in - helps kids relax and get much needed rest.  
**justj**Strange, I never had to do much of that. We just packed them all up in the van/car and took off. For trips longer than an hour or two, we did pack snacks, lunch and books. I do remember the travel bucket with coloring books and reading books. My kids just traveled well. As for the snacks. Energy Boosting??? For the kids in the car? I would think low energy snacks for kids. Energy Boosting would be for the parents. ;) Try turkey, I hear that makes you drowsy.

# Jubilant Jubilee Time

Once a year, like many around the nation, our small town has a festival complete with carnival rides, games, and fried foods galore.Â  Upon seeing how quickly our money disappears year after year, we vow to never return to our town’s festival, called the Jubilee.Â  But somehow, we find ourselves back there year after year, and the kids always do have a great time, despite the fact that a family could go broke because of this thing.

This year’s Jubilee was great.Â  My girls were looking forward toÂ  it for an entire week.Â  Once they began to pull up the trailers and set up the rides come Sunday, the kids’ excitement was unstoppable.Â  And because we formulated a careful budget plan regarding the Jubilee this year, Mom and Dad were happy to see the little ones so excited.Â  But there was one problem we did not foresee nor did we warn the kids about – the possibility of rain.Â  And you know what I’m talking about – these traveling amusement companies are not going to refund your money just because it rained a little and they had to shut down some rides.Â  it was quite a gamble – dash the hopes of the little ones or take our chances with the rain (and judging by the radar, we could tell it was probably going to rain all night).Â  We decided to take our chances with the rain, especially since we were assured that they would keep the rides open unless there was lightening.Â  Luckily for us, the gamble paid off, and we were all able to enjoy many (wet) hours riding the rides, sampling the food (including my favorite Jubilee treat, Root Beer Float flavored Dippin’ Dots), and mingling with friends we bumped into along the way.

The kids had a great time, and so did my husband and I, even though we rode ourselves sick.Â  A ride called the Hurricane (boats that fly in a circle) was the one that did in my hubby, while the Orbiter made me feel like I suddenly aged a decade or two.Â  Immediately following the Orbiter, with my head spinning, I made the unwise decision to get on a ride called Rock O Plane which is essentially a Ferris Wheel with circular cages instead of benches – and as the large wheel turns, the small cages with the passengers in them spin around independently, going upside down and sometimes trapping the riders facing head-first for what seems like forever…Â  fun, but the combination of all those rides made my head spin for the rest of the night!

We returned to the Jubilee with my parents when they came to visit on Saturday when there were live bands to listen to, and it was just a nice atmosphere.Â  The kids each got to ride a few more rides, and they were satisfied until next year…

### Comments

**derek**So far I have been able to avoid the first three days of our festival. This is possible because 1) I am not within reasonable walking distance of the festival, and 2) I have no kids to take (or anyone to go with for that matter). I'm glad you (mostly) enjoyed yours, however. :)  
**Phyllis Beyer**Grandma, Papa and Uncle Bud had as much fun as the kids. We'll have to try and make the jubilee again next year.  
**jamiahsh**No one would go on the Hurricane nor the Rock O Plane with me... so we rode tamer rides like the Orbiter. Funny, we got a free ride on the Orbiter since there was no one in line when our first ride was done. I miss the days when they had bumper cars. One of my favorite midway rides.

# Furry Babies Sucks!!!

We began our trip to Chicago last Saturday, and the 3-state, 4-kid, mini-van trip went pretty smoothly.Â  At some point, we achieved the quadruple-kid-pass-out which is never anything short of a great thing!

We arrived at our hotel in Naperville, Illinois on Saturday afternoon, and we decided to take the girls swimming in the outdoor pool which was really refreshing on an 80Â°+ day.Â  It’s been a long time since I’ve been swimming outdoors, and it was nice of my mom to meet us there for a swim instead of us driving the girls to her house for their week of fun with Grandma.Â  After the girls left with her, we wanted to meet with a friend, but we were staying in the west ‘burbs rather than the north ‘burbs this time.Â  Both parties had just endured long car rides, so we settled on a halfway point – a mall in the west ‘burbs.Â  Not really knowing what to plan on doing, we ended up finding such a great parking space at the mall that we just ended up going in to bumble.Â  And it was fun!Â  Partly because I haven’t been in a real mall for years, so it was really interesting to see the different techniques that have evolved to try and entice shoppers to buy and visit…Â  But I also enjoyed my mall visit because of the company we were keeping; it was nice to chat and catch up.Â  And as you might have read in [derek’s blog](http://sublife.tangents.org/2009/06/27/testing/), we happened upon a glow-in-the-dark indoor mini-golf course that was less than a week old!Â  It had 56 holes, but I don’t think I could ever play that much mini-golf at once, so we stuck with the traditional 18 holes.Â  I guess I should add in that I won the round and also had a lucky day with two holes-in-1 ðŸ˜‰Â  And I must comment on how good the baby was – he just sat in the shopping cart and watched the glow-in-the-dark golf balls throughout ALL 18 holes!Â  There were these small contraptions sprinkled throughout the golfing space – you put your ball in, and it rolls around and comes out glowing brighter – those were fun!Â  And it was fun to see the mall again.Â  It wasn’t the same mall I hung out in all the time as a teenager, but I had still been to this one a lot growing up, and it was neat to see how much (or how little, compared to most things in the area) it had changed over the past decade and a half.Â  That reminds me, speaking of change…Â  when we arrived in Chicago, err Naperville on Saturday, we took the Naperville Road exit off of I-88 which is an area with which I ~~am~~ used to be very familiar.Â  Back in the day (did I really just say that?), I would commute through that same intersection to work and back every single day, yuck…Â  but apparently they’ve completely re-done the entire area in the past few years because the intersection was unrecognizable.Â  I mean, they added new roads and everything – it was the most bizarre feeling, it felt like I had gotten dropped into the middle of the twilight zone.Â  We exited I-88, and all of a sudden, we were on Freedom Drive.Â  Where now?Â  Freedom Drive?Â  I had literally never heard of Freedom Drive, they created the street from scratch and plopped it down into this area where I worked and played so many years ago.Â  As much as I thought I knew where we were going, Jill the GPS was actually quite helpful during this twilight zone adventure, and she got us to our hotel, even though I knew where it was –Â  WAS being the key word here.Â  But back to the mall…Â  we bumbled around some more after getting some pretzel dogs (yummier in Chicagoland, of course, what isn’t?) at the food court.Â  I heard some lady talking on a cell phone about the “puppy store”, and sure enough, we happened across it.Â  I’m an animal lover, so I love to see and visit with animals, but I think a side effect of my tenderness toward animals is my loathing of pet stores.Â  And the pet store in the Stratford Mall in Bloomingdale Illinois is just about the worst I’ve ever seen.Â  It’s no secret that many of the major chains of pet stores get their “wares” from puppy mills; ie dog breeding facilities with cramped quarters, little food, and animal abuse.Â  The huge chain famous for bad press, Petland, just closed a bunch of stores, which I believe is a good thing for dogs and dog lovers everywhere.Â  I strongly believe that people should adopt animals, namely dogs and cats, from humane societies and other animal shelters.Â  There are soÂ  many homeless pets, so how can it be justified to buy a puppy who is bred for selling when there are so many others bred accidentally who are also looking for love?Â  I strongly support spay/neuter programs as well, fyi…  
So anyway, the new pet store at the mall is called “Furry Babies”.Â  Their website calls it an “upscale puppy boutique, not just a pet store”, but I call it disgusting.Â  The puppies were in cribs, for goodness sakes, and along the walls they had a large variety of dog clothes for sale, no doubt at prices that I wouldn’t pay to clothe my human kids.Â  We inquired about one particular puppy, who was cute but looked to be slightly cross-eyed.Â  We found out that she was a “designer dog” –Â  they pretend like they meant to mix two breeds together (in this case a golden retriever and a poodle, thus giving us a “Goldendoodle”), but where I come from (the reality land of logic), we would call it a “mutt”.Â  And mutts tend to be better with kids, live longer, and are cheaper than purebreds – at least they were untilÂ  a few years ago.Â  Now mutts are these “designer dogs” and they cost **a lot** of money – in the case of the furry baby Goldendoodle – a cool $1600.Â  I cannot denounce this place loud enough!Â  IÂ  also don’t want to spend a ton of time going off about animal welfare nor lose readers by getting political.Â  This just happens to be an issue I feel strongly about, and I plead that if you are in the market for a family pet, you consider adopting your animal companion from a shelter and also realize that you are entering intoÂ  a life-long committment!Â  That being said, Furry Babies sucks, but the good news is that I can’t see them lasting that long.Â  Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that the employees wear mock scrubs, in order to imitate delivery room nurses, I guess, whichÂ  to me is even more sickening.Â  But there IÂ  go again…Â  get me going and I will never stop…Â  so if you want to read more, [here is a link](http://network.bestfriends.org/MessageBoards/TopicPopup.aspx?g=E79CE3CF85664250A4CABD781F1DA8C6&t=30973) to the forums about Furry Babies on the bestfriends.org website, which is an awesome organization – the country’s largest animal sanctuary for homeless pets of all kinds!Â  I hope to visit them someday in Utah, but until I get over my fear of flying I will just persue their website and IÂ  suggest you do the same…

Now that I’m actually leaving the homeless pet tangent behind…Â  we left the mall at a decent hour since we wanted a good night’s sleep to rest up for the Cubs / Sox game the following day – the entire reasonÂ  we were in town to begin with.Â  Poor us – that did not happen!Â  We got back to the hotel (which was pretty crappy for a Naperville Hampton Inn – see my[Small Separate Side Post](http://taylhis.tangents.org/wp-admin/post.php?action=edit&post=1977)), and the baby decided he was going to go nuts and stay up until midnight.Â  Then the little booger awoke at 6 the next morning, and he crawled around and caused mischief like dipping my drying bathing suit into the toilet, thanks for THAT.Â  My husband was nice enough to take him in the bath for awhile and do other various quiet activities with him in the small room so that I could get a little more sleep, and then we all went downÂ  to breakfast – my poor husband was a zombie.Â  I decided for us (he could not make decisions at that point) that he would go back up to the room while I drove our son over to my mom’s for the day while we went to the Cubs game.Â  We did that, and it took me about an hour to get all the way out to Aurora (not much traffic on a Sunday morning, but SOOO many stoplights!) and back.Â  I thought we had plenty of time, but if you read my “A Patch of Blue In AÂ  Sea Of Black And White” post, you’ll see why IÂ  shouldÂ  have stepped on the gas a little…

### Comments

**Betty**I recently came across your blog and have been reading along. I thought I would leave my first comment. I don't know what to say except that I have enjoyed reading. Nice blog. I will keep visiting this blog very often. Betty http://smallpet.info  
**jamiahsh**I can see it! Beesley in a dress HAHAHAHA! Never tried to dress our pooch.  
**Taylhis**I used to dress up the dog I had growing up - she was a huge Doberman mutt who let my sister and I do anything to her. But we never went to the doggie boutique for her clothes; we just used our clothes, much like my girls do to Beesley. My childhood dog Boots had to endure wearing a Girl Scout uniform and a New Kids on the Block shirt, among other things! Mutts are the best!  
**Susan**I agree with your logic on adoting pets from a local shelter. Mutts make the best family pets. And I am especially fond of mutts over pure bread dogs. However, I did not know that mutts are now considered "designer". If this is really the case then the local pound would be considered the original designer pet store. :) And I personally could not begin to imagine paying $1600 for a mutt or any other dog. This logic reminds me of the saying "more money than brains". I hope I always have more of the latter.  
**jamiahsh**A Hampton Inn that shows Hilton family bio vids minus Paris? Upscale designer puppies. Doggie clothing... have you ever clothed your pets? I for one, enjoy your tirades... informative AND entertaining at once.

# Small Separate Side Post

I didn’t really see a place for bitching and moaning in the few posts I wrote about our wonderful trip to Chicago – hence the small separate side post.

First, when we arrived at our hotel, we requested a crib for the baby.Â  Evening turned to night, and we were still without a crib.Â  We called down to the front desk, and she kept saying strange things about the missing maintenance guy, but finally he was located.Â  He delivered the crib and took a look at our ant (!) problem and declared it was no big deal.Â  Maybe not to him, but I saw the Dateline episodes about the people who got severely bit by the hotel bed bugs!Â  On top of this, we had a door that would stick so that I’d have to knock every time I came back from getting pop or ice or something from the car, etc.Â  And then there were the drunken celebrity phone calls…

Not something we did, rather, something we came across when perusing the hotel’s tv offerings.Â  On the hotel’s video menu, where they usually have movies you can buy, games you can play, and stuff about the hotel, we learned that the Hampton Inn offered some offbeat choices.Â  First, there was the Hilton Family Channel – 24/7 documentaries about the Hilton family, how they began their hotel empire, and where it is today.Â  After 10 minutes, I had had enough.Â  And after those 10 minutes, not a word of Paris, interesting…

Another strange tv offering was under the ‘short takes’ menu.Â  These seemed to be youtube.com videos – I know I had even seen a few on youtube.Â  You know, Charlie Bit Me (the British siblings posing for a picture when the baby bites his big brother, a youtube / talkshow sensation), Office Pranks; I’m sure you’ve come across some of those popular videos somewhere in pop culture, yet here they were being offered for (free) viewing in the hotel room!

Still another strange tv offering was “hot for words”.Â  And before you get the wrong idea (or is it?Â  I’m confused by this whole concept), this was not the ‘adult’ menu.Â  Each ‘hot for words’ video however, looked to be something naughty but was actually proven to be individual dictionary lessons – to increase one’s vocab, perhaps?Â Â  But it still seemed to be a strange selection for a hotel tv – I’ve never seen anything like that before…

And lastly, perhaps what is the weirdest selection on the hotel tv: drunken celebrity phone calls.Â  It was a young adult (I guess?) making prank phone calls to celebrities (supposedly).Â  But the caller was the only person on camera, and there was no proof that celebrities were even involved – maybe it would have been funny if we had seen the celebrities reactions to being called by some random (drunk?) guy, but there was no proof that he was even able to get ahold of the celebrities phone numbers, and even then, a stretch.Â  It was a really strange thing to have this kid on our tv, watching him make these really stupid, probably fake phone calls.Â  What a strange tv offering…Â  yet it was free, and we bit, I guess…

The final bad thing about this hotel is the ringer on the phone – it sounded like a woodland creature, no joke!Â  I really wanted to get a video of the thing ringing, but when the baby didn’t sleep that well, everything of least importance was put aside.Â  Too bad, it was the strangest ringtone I’ve ever heard…Â  at least it rang for the first time in the evening.Â  If it had rung in the morning without us knowing it was the phone, I would have been convinced it was some sort of wild rodent loose in our room!

### Comments

**justj**Sounds like an interesting hotel. I stopped at one and didn't even turn on the TV. Of course we got in late and went to sleep right away.  
**derek**Sound like they are trying to different with their TV selections? I'm glad you came out though, even if the Cubbies got stomped.  
**jamiahsh**WOW! What a hole! Hilton family documentaries and no Paris? Aren't Hilton's supposed to be "nice" places to stay? Sounds like a roach (or should it be ant) motel to me.

# A Patch Of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White

We took a fun little excursion to Chicago this past weekend and had a few adventures!Â  More about those later (if I get to them – my time to blog has dwindled A LOT lately!).Â  What I want to write about now is the Chicago Cubs game.Â  Let me begin by escorting the elephant from the room – the Cubs got creamed by the White Sox yesterday.Â  There, I said it.Â  And I’m just stating fact, unfortunately.Â  We were lucky enough to have tickets (happy birthday to me from Hubby – THANK YOU!!!!!) for Sunday’s game – the final game of a 3 game series between the cross-town MLB rivals the Cubs and the White Sox.Â  This game was to be the “rubber match” – with both teams tied at 1 win apiece for this series, Sunday’s outcome would decide the series winner.Â  But the Cubs lost.Â  Miserably.Â  It was almost like they didn’t show up to play baseball – which is something I and probably at least a few other Cubs fans lovingly yelled from the stands.Â  We got to watch Carlos Zambrano, the Cubs famously hot-headed starting pitcher, take the mound – and consequently lose his control and get booed off the field.Â  And let me say it wasn’t just Sox fans who were booing Zambrano.Â  But I think it was awesome that he was the starting pitcher the day we got to go watch the game live, and he was really fun to watch.Â  It was frustrating to see the empty bullpen across right field though – it seemed empty forever.Â  My husband and I really thought Lou Pinnella should have made the callÂ  to the bullpen a little bit sooner and atÂ  least get someone throwing balls down there – Zambrano does not recover his game often once he loses it. Â  We were both watching for Lou’s call, and finally Zambrano made his trademark nasty move – the guy gets so angry that he beans someone.Â  He throws a 90ish mph baseball AT the batter!Â  So then he stalks off the field, gives the fans a one-finger salute (I don’t think it was THAT finger), and goes into the locker room to pout by himself.Â  He didn’t throw down any water coolers onÂ  the way this time as he’s also been known to do, but I can’t say that I wouldn’t have liked to see that.Â  As lucky as we were to get to see Big Z pitch, he didn’t do very well and we were happy to see him go.

But alas, Zambrano was not the only problem yesterday since the Cubs’ bats haven’t produced much of anything for weeks, and our game day was no exception.Â  Thus we witnessed a shut-out on the Cubs.

But that’s enough of that.Â  It ‘s amazing how much fun we had despite the worst possible scenario for the game!Â  I LOVE live baseball, and MLB almost doesn’t compare to the smaller AAA and AAÂ  leagues.Â  Those are fun too, but comparing those atmospheres is really like comparing apples and oranges.Â  It was kind of toasty in the sun, and my knees got burnt to a crisp; I’m dealing with that today.Â  For those of you who want to know the outrageous robbery they’re getting away with in MLB stadiums across the country, at U.S. Cellular Field in Chicago, it costs $23 to park, $6.75 for a 20 oz. beer, $4 for a bottle of pop or water (let me guess – they took out all the public drinking fountains, I sure didn’t see any), and $4.75 for a hot dog.Â  If you can keep yourself hydratedÂ  during the game, you can save yourself $6 on 2 bottles of water by buying one before and one after the game from the street vendors – theyÂ  sell them for $1, which isn’t bad at all in that heat!Â  Originally I had planned to eat all day at the stadium, but I just wasn’t hungry in the heat.Â  There’s nothing like sitting there at a baseball game and cracking peanuts, but I actually passed on those too.Â  I certainly didn’t want to leave my seat much, and by the time the peanut vendor arrived, we no longer felt like sitting there calmly cracking peanuts while the Cubs played like you-know-what and gave the game away.Â  That reminds me – we had GREAT seats, upper-level, 3rd base side, right about even with the pitcher.Â  We had a bird’s-eye view of Zambrano’s animal-like pacing and stomping rituals on the mound.Â  I guess that’s enough about the game – interesting how we were ALMOST late…

Sox park (its real name is a tongue and finger-typing twister) is situated on I-90, one of Chicago’s expressways.Â  I was anxious to try Jill the GPS’s skills in a city environment since she had so failed us in Pittsburgh, but more so in the outskirts,Â  we weren’t really in downtown Pittsburgh.Â  Jill did fine in the big city of Chicago, but when we got off the expressway, it was chaos – and it wasn’t like Jill was programmed to guide us through the Sox’s bizarre parking system; red coupons, green coupons, etc.Â  We THOUGHT we had left in plenty of time for the game and might even see some batting practice, but we hit some traffic on the way down (did I mention this was also a weekend for the Taste of Chicago?!?Â  Oops – bad planning on our part; we couldn’t believe it.Â  The Taste draws *millions*!).Â  Anyway, when we arrived on the south side, we were confused about where to go for cash ($23!) parking.Â  There were people directing traffic (don’t know if they were cops or city workers or Sox park workers, but I might find out so I can file a complaint!), so we asked one of the ladies how to get to cash parking.Â  She said, “I’m going to let you make a U-Turn (we were heading east, toward the stadium), and you make the u-turn and go to 33rd street.Â  So we made the U-turn and headed west when we began to get a not-so-comfortable feeling.Â  Remember, we had seen the stadium, and we were now heading away from it, out of the city.Â  And usually numbered streets in cities are parallel toÂ  each other.Â  So if we were looking for 33rd, most likely we should see 31st, 32nd, or 34th streets first – but we weren’t.Â  So we turned around, and an hour later, when we finally figured out where toÂ  be, we had passed the “helpful” traffic person again and confirmed our suspicions:Â  she had tried to take us out of the city **on purpose**.Â  In fact, when we passed Ms. Directions again, there was a Sox parking pay lot *one block* in front of her.Â  I like to think theÂ  best of people, but here it’s obvious that earlier, she had us make the U-turn rather than turn around so we wouldn’t be able to see that she was taking us the wrong way.Â  Rude isn’t even the word for that.Â  As most locals know, Sox park is not known for being nestled in safe neighborhoods – Wrigley Field, home of the Cubs, is known as the “Friendly Confines” – NOT Sox Park.Â  We were fine, the area didn’t get too bad, my husband just got really upset that we might be late for the game.Â  Indeed, when we did finally find our lot, there was a big line and we sat in it for a long time.Â Â  I can’t help but wonder if maybe Ms. Helpful had noticed the color of our shirts – Cubbie blue- which isn’t exactly welcome on the south side of Chicago.Â  And those Cubbie blue shirts we wore (which ironically said “Cubs win!”, sheesh) were probably responsible for other rude behaviors directed our way.Â  For instance, my husband got bumped a little harder than regular crowd jostling, and some of his popcorn spilled.Â  Sox fans nearby jeered, and there were also the people who would walk by us up the stairs on the way to their seats (we were seated on an aisle) and feelÂ  inclined to say “Cubs suck”.Â  Yesterday they may have had a point.

The people directlyÂ  around us were friendly enough, a mix of Chicago fans, both north and south, Cubs and Sox.Â  Some people wore a Sox hat and a Cubs shirt, while there were families of people dressed for both teams, an interesting mix.Â  As I looked around the stadium, I saw mostly white shirts (the black shirts were hard to see) in the sea of people, although the sea was dotted with many patches of Cubbie blue, much like the blue patch the two of us created.Â  As rude as a select few Sox fans were though, I suppose they can’t be all bad…Â  on the wayÂ  in to the stadium, it was extremely windy and we both got our Cubs hats blown right off our heads – maybe it was a sign of things toÂ  come…Â  But anyway, it was Sox fans who helped up retrieve the runaway hats.

Overall, a great day for some baseball; definitely something I hope to doÂ  again.Â  Except next time, I think we’ll park far away and take the train to the stadium and forget trying to park in the city.Â  We hit traffic on the way out too, and an hour after the game had ended, I turned around and I could still see Sox park which was STILL within walking distance!Â  TOO MUCH TRAFFIC!

### Comments

**NASCAR » Blog Archive » Heart Rate Monitor Kansas City Royals San Diego Padres**[...] A Patch Of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**NASCAR » Blog Archive » Rowing Machine New York Yankees Chicago White Sox**[...] A Patch Of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**jamiahsh**Not sure, d... but if you are anywhere near Ann Arbor or Columbus the third week of November (depending upon where THE GAME is at)... or if you are a MI transplant student at OSU  
**derek**Is the OH/MI rivalry more friendly, out of curiosity?  
**justj**You wore Cubs gear on the South Side? That's braver than me wearing Tiger gear in Cleveland. ;)  
**jamiahsh**OM, MY GOODNESSS... wrong site... I wondered when that would happen.  
**jamiahsh**don't have to worry about a saw... just had to grab a big knife and go to town... (insert demonic laugh). Is there a musical about a Demon Butcher?  
**jamiahsh**SHEESH... the blue shirts, coupled with the out of state plates must have aided Ms. Helpful in her assistance giving. And the Yanks had their subway series this past weekend. Sounds like you had great seats to see Big Z... guess he was not was not making pizzas, eh?  
**mary911**You are brave souls. That's all I have to say! Oh, and another thing...(ha ha) WHEN is your birthday? Being new to the group I should be told about such things prior to the occurance so I don't look like a dweeb!!! Oh, and one more thing....I'm glad you had a good time!!!! ;)  
**NASCAR » Blog Archive » Patio Heaters Kansas City Royals**[...] A Patch Of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# SAVE OHIO LIBRARIES!

It’s a catch-22.Â  In this horrible economy, people are using the free resources provided by their local libraries **more than ever**.Â  However, in this horrible economy, governments are having trouble funding the free resources provided by local libraries.Â  Here in Ohio, Governor Strickland is contemplating a new state budget cut that would reduce our libraries’ funding by an additional 52%, and that’s on top of the 20% cut they’ve already seen in 2009.Â  With this kind of reduction in funding, obviously the libraries would not be able to function on the same level on which they are currently functioning, nor with the same hours.Â  If you live in Ohio, you can help the governor and congressmen know how harmful library funding cuts would be to each and every community in the state.Â  Here is some contact info to help you doÂ  your part in saving the libraries:

[Click here toÂ  Contact the Governor’s Office](http://www.governor.ohio.gov/Assistance/ContacttheGovernor/tabid/150/Default.aspx)  
Contact the Governor’s Office by phone @ (614)466-3555  
Fax the Governor @ (614)466-9354

State Senator Steve Buehrer  
Phone: (614) 466-8150  
Fax: (614) 466-4250 ATTENTION STEVE BUEHRER  
Email: SD01@senate.state.oh.us  
For more information, click here:  
[www.saveohiolibraries.com](http://saveohiolibraries.com/)

Thank you for your help!Â  Closing library branches is harmful to communities in many ways and would affect everyone, even those who don’t use the libraries themselves.

### Comments

**derek**Our state can't even pass a budget... :|  
**justj**Just a few other cuts in the works are education (K-12 and College), State Patrol, State Parks, Roads, Mental Health and Nursing Homes. I think the Nursing Homes are losing about the same as Libraries, but then again they have other funding. Of course there is some talk about eliminating other State Government Jobs. Over all it is not a good situation, and I don't see any easy solution.  
**Taylhis**Different things are important to different people - the library is important to me. I'm not an expert on state budget, far from it, so I don't know where to get the money - I'm sure there are other funding options to be explored beyond the state level. I just think congressmen would be more likely to listen if Joe Public addresses one issue at a time rather than writing a general criticism of their work. A few years ago the libraries were in danger of closing, so I wrote to our state senator and got a nice personal reply in the mail. I'm not saying my letter helped, but the libraries stayed open and the congresswoman (or an intern) at least took the time to acknowledge my letter.  
**justj**I was just saying that one needs to check into this before going all out for 1 specific budget item. I guess I'm coming from a situation where what I do for a living depends on State government funding. Funding for all state government functions seems to be getting cut. Some, like the libraries, are cut at a more drastic rate. With less money coming in, less can be spent. What are you willing to cut if the libraries get the money? Remember there is only a limited amount. Who gets what slice of the pie? Myself, I would like to see the state tackle some of the hard issues. What services are really not needed? Should there be a wage freeze on all state employees? Should there be a straight percentage cut on all government agencies and funding? Yes, the libraries look to be taking a big hit, I can't argue against that. But there are other places getting hit just as hard. It would be best to send a bigger message to our state reps, that we want responsible spending, not that we just want to save the libraries.  
**jamiahsh**Indeed, a small group can do little but if enough people voice their concerns to the right people someone will AT LEAST listen.  
**Mary**I already sent the governor my email.  
**Taylhis**Of course there are worse things than libraries closing - this is obvious. But helping to save the libraries is something anyone can do for free and the negative impacts of such closures would be bad for our kids, our neighborhoods, property value, etc. I just think it's very simple for Ohioans to write or call their congresspeople to let them know we need our libraries. Will it help? Who knows, but we definitely won't know unless we at least try!  
**jamiahsh**Same here... politics, blah! I think we can all agree on the sad state this state and country are in.  
**justj**Serious problems here. The State of Ohio has a problem with a negative balance on the books. There need to be cuts made somewhere. Most likely everywhere. The library situation is just one part of the picture. We will be seeing other cuts soon. To Education, Law Enforcements, Roads and the list goes on. Without an upswing in the economy, this will just get worse. My question is what other cuts will be made if the libraries get some of the funding back? I haven't seen an answer to that yet. Yes, the impact on libraries is severe, but is there something else that would be worse? I'm glad I'm not in politics.

# 500th Post

WOW!

I’ve made 500 blog posts here on My Food Chain Gang!Â  That is A LOT of rambling and a ton of tangents!Â  Thank you for reading; especially those of you who have read all 500 posts, if there is anyone who could stand me for that long!

I think after that many posts, I’m entitled to a generic one, noting nothing other than my 500th blog post, don’t you?

### Comments

**derek**Never- as a punishment you will now delete 200 posts, and still be ahead of me!  
**justj**A most insightful introspection on your 500th post. I think you really went off on a tangent this time. ;)  
**jamiahsh**yes... I think the 500th post is reason to post a generic one... even if I do tend to do the same every hundred.

# AWWW!!!

We were playing in the back yard yesterday when we saw something furry laying on the ground.Â  Thinking the dog had gotten an animal, I put the dog inside and made myself scarce while my husband investigated – I’m sensitive about animals, and if the dog had killed a furry little creature in the back yard, I wanted to pretend like it didn’t happen.Â  So I come back outside a few minutes later, and my husband is still kneeling over the fur, saying he hasn’t figured out what it is yet.Â  What?Â  Clearly the fur was not moving; why couldn’t he figure out what it was?Â  I fetched him a stick, and when he poked it, he found that it was just fur.Â  And underneath the fur was a hole containing teeny tiny baby bunnies – live ones!Â  They are incredibly cute, and they even hop!Â  After some investigation on the internet, we found that the best thing to do is to leave them alone and that their mother didn’t abandon them.Â  Baby bunnies only get nursed for 5 minutes per day, and if the mother were to stay near the nest, she would alert predators to the babies.Â  I couldn’t resist pushing aside the fur to take a picture.Â  It’s very inconspicuous yet also in the middle of the open yard.Â  I sure hope nothing happens to those babies.Â  The first one is of the nest, then you move the fur, and the second picture is of a little head, note the white blaze on the top of the head.Â  The third picture is a baby bunny face with eyes closed, see if you can find it in the middle of the fur:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/bunny-nest-in-the-yard-001.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/bunny-nest-in-the-yard-003.jpg)

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/bunny-nest-in-the-yard-002.jpg)

I’m too afraid of hurting them to examine them closely enough to count them or take better pictures, but aren’t they cute!Â  From what I read, they will venture out of the nest at around 3 weeks old, and they will leave it altogether at 6-8 weeks.Â  Judging by the size of our babies and the fact that we didn’t see the nest before yesterday, I’d say ours are probably only days old; perhaps they were even only hours old when we found them yesterday!Â  I am so glad we have a fenced yard now to keep the neighborhood cats out – we have a few, and I’ve been feeding one of them.Â  I feed her at the front of the house though, so I wonder if continuing to feed the cat will encourage her to come over here or if it will distract her and keep her in the front of the house, away from the baby bunnies?

I’m excited to watch them grow – they already look bigger than they did yesterday!Â  Maybe I’ll post their progress on my blog – stay tuned!

### Comments

**Susan**can't wait to see them this thursday.  
**jamiahsh**Adorable... have the kiddies been informed of your guests?  
**Phyllis Beyer**I wish I had seen them when I was sitting in your backyard Sat. I bet they are very cute.

# Before And After - Chapter 3 - Beesly

Our dog Beesly (named for the character Pam Beesly on the awesome NBC show The Office, which you should really watch (end of shamelss plug)) can grow to be very fluffy.Â  From people who have seen her, we’ve had commentsÂ  ranging from “That dog is more round than she is tall!” to “there is more fur than dog there” and then there are the people who would just laugh after they saw her.Â  She ~~is~~ was a very fluffy dog.Â  Since it’s summertime where Beesly lives, we figured it was time to shear her like a sheep, which ended up being a surprise doggie makeover because she had SO much fur.Â  Check this out:

BEFORE:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/beesley-before-haircut-6-16-09-0021.jpg)AFTER:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/beesley-after-haircut-6-16-09.jpg)

After we sheared Beesly, we looked forward to showing her to our 9-year-old daughter, Taylor, who is Beesly’s main caregiver.Â  We told the kids we had a surprise for them, and we let Beesly in from the back yard and my daughter’s friend cried out that the surprise was that we got a new dog.Â  Well, thanks for giving the kids expectations about the surprise (hehe), but she **was** half-right.Â  The surprise was a “new” dog.Â  The kids can now pet Beesly since before the haircut you would only be petting a thick mat of fur.Â  Beesly herself appreciates this makeover a lot too!Â  She is much more cool when she lays outside, she is less thirsty, and she even has lots more energy!Â  She IS like a new dog!Â  And by the way, the kids all liked the surprise.Â  Taylor saw Beesly and laughed and laughed; it was adorable.Â  And as a finale to this blog post, THIS is how much fur we got off of Beesly – the pen is sitting on top of the bag to reference the volume of the fur contained inside:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/beeslys-bag-of-hair.jpg)

I know they make clothes out of alpaca fur and sheep’s wool; does anyone know about the harvesting of dog fur?Â  And I’m not talking about Burlington Coat Factory, YUCK!

### Comments

**The Washington Monthly**[...] Before And After - Chapter 3 - Beesly [...]  
**mary911**Wow....that's a lot of fur. I bet she is so loving her new do....what girl doesn't????  
**derek**Beesly- open wide and say baa! :D Speaking of hair- (in Beesly's case \*fur\*) cuts, I need to get rid of some of this mop on top myself before next week.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I think she looks adorable. I bet she sheds less too.  
**jamiahsh**A New Dog... YEAH! And yes... everyone should watch The Office! What else is on at 9PM Thursday nights, anyway.

# Teaching Is Probably Not My Forte

Another tangents.org [blogger, who is also a veryÂ  good friend of mine](http://sublife.tangents.org/), blogs about his (mis)adventures concerning substitute teaching.Â  He has posted a poll or two about what subjects and ages his readers would like to teach if they could choose.Â  I never really took the questions seriously since I could never picture myself in the situation to teach.Â  After all, you need a degree to teach most anything these days, and I stopped college short of a degree to get married, which is one of the best decisions IÂ  ever made, no regrets.Â  So I would answer those polls, and I would say I’d like to teach zoology or animal behavior or something like that because I love animals.Â  And I guessed that I would like to teach kids younger than high school, because I was a kid once, and I remember how older kids treat their substitute teachers…Â  But again, until a few weeks ago, I never thought I’d find myself in a position to actually teach a class…

At our family’s church, childcare is provided.Â  Over the summer,Â  understandably thereÂ  are many childcare volunteers who need a break, so they ask parents to volunteer.Â  My husband and I quickly signed up – after all, we have 4 kids in childcare there everyÂ  week, so it was time to give back.Â  We didn’t state an age nor gender preference of our students; we just noted that we didn’t want to be in the 4-year-old nor 2-year-old classes since that’s where our two daughters are who would have a chance of being clingy with Mom and Dad volunteering in their class.Â  Basically, it was the luckÂ  of the draw – and our “luck” dictated that we were to be in the 3rd-5th grade boys class.Â  Ok, no problem.Â  I’ve seen the tail-end of those Brownies meetings while waiting to pick up my daughter – 9 or 10 tween girls running around; screaming, giggling, gossiping, sometimes somehow doing all 3 of those things at once…Â  So um, no thanks, boys will be just fine for Sunday school.Â  So I thought…

We got our “lesson plans”, and there were not fewer than 10 pages of instructions to follow for our 1 hour and 5 minute class.Â  Well, add-in the arrival games and we were in charge for about an hour and 15 minutes.Â  But I haven’t seenÂ  time crawl by that slowly since before I had kids; it was the longest hour I’ve had in a long time!Â  Not that I wasn’t having fun, because I was –Â  A LOT of fun, actually.Â  So anyway, all week, my husband and I have been poring over these lesson plans; I was committed to go in there today knowing exactly what I was doing and determined to keepÂ  control over those boys.

SoÂ  we arrive, and the helpful leader tells us toÂ  grab snacks for the kids ahead of their arrival, but we don’t know how many we’ll be expecting, so in her words, “10 should be plenty”.Â  We get to the classroom, she explains a few things, and kids begin to arrive.Â  From the beginning, it was clear we were going to have toÂ  keep one eye on a rambunctious and mischievous (though intelligent) little boy named Avery.Â  In fact, the very minute after I made a mental note to watch Avery very closely, I looked up and he was *gone*.Â  I had no choice but to leave my poor defenseless husband in the clutches of the growing number of 8-10 year-old-boys while I literally **ran** after the wayward Avery.Â  The Kid’s Kingdom building of our church is still somewhat of a maze to me, so it was pure luck that I got out into the hallway just in time to see the back of Avery disappearing through a set of double doors.Â  “I’ve got you now, sucker”Â  IÂ  thought as I ran through the gym after him.Â  I chased him right up to the kids’ check-in desk, where I, the newbie, had to explain to the staff person why I was chasing a kid who had escaped from my classroom.Â  Luckily for me, she seemed to know Avery and to be familiar with his escapades, and she was grateful that I had chased him down.Â  Turns out, he had decided to get himself a name tag (which he is supposed to do *before* class but evidently did not), so he decided to leave the classroom to do so without telling anyone, which of course is a big no-no.

So I collar Avery, and we return to the classroom, and there are now kids everywhere who all had apparently arrived during the chase scene!Â  There was one teeny-tiny little girl who stuck out like a sore thumb in a room full of all boys years older than her, so I went over to her and offered to walk her to the girls’ class –Â  and that’s how I found out that she was a guest of one of the kids in the class, who turned out to be one of the pastor’s sons.Â  Actually, he was the son of the pastor who was our friend before we chose this church, so seeing him was a bit of a relief – for that moment anyway.Â  I thought for sure he would be a nice, helpful boy…Â  but more on that later.Â  We did a head count, and we discovered in our classroom, we had 14 boys + 1 little girl + 2 freshman teachers withÂ Ã˜ experience = fun times ahead!

We played the activity that was slated for play while the kids were arriving, and it was a worksheet where the kids matched words with the fears they represent, like arachnophobia=the fear of spiders, felinaphobia=the fear of cats, etc.Â  It went pretty well, despite disappearing pens (one guess – yes, Avery.Â  Though I countered his pen trick well.Â  When he said that he **ate** the pens, I said, well, you won’t be needing snack then, and the pens were automatically recovered).Â  Finally it was time to line up to go to large group.

Once in the large group room, also known as The Wherehouse, our responsibilities diminished as the leader took over and we relished a break of sorts.Â  We got to see a few of the kids act things out, which was neat, and we alsoÂ  got to see our oldest daughter who had come over from her class.Â  Let me tell you, she was a pro at their songs and dances!Â  She just performed them without evenÂ  giving a glance over to Mom and Dad, which is so the way we wanted it andÂ  exactly what we were afraid of when declining to volunteer in any of our kids’ classrooms.Â  But her section of the room was also eerily quiet, and I kind of regretted the decision to stay away from teaching our kids’ classrooms as I envied their parent volunteer with her *four* quiet girls versus our *fourteen* borderline obnoxious boys (and one little girl).Â  Large group was uneventful, crisis-wise anyway.Â  I tried some of the dances and my husband made fun of me…Â  but the kids don’t want to see some grumpy-lookingÂ  adult standing there,Â  not having fun, right?Â  My job was toÂ  encourage them to participate, and I figured step one would be to participate myself!

So at 11:30, after Large Group, it was time to go back to the classrooms until 12:05.Â  And that’s when time began to creep in a way it hasn’t for us since our engagement.Â  We began class with one of the suggested games; a relay race involving cups of water.Â  The instructions said it was “great for boys”, so without really giving it thought, we learned the rules of that game and one other.Â  The relay involved carrying a cup of water on the back of one’s hand down a “balance beam” (tape line on the floor) and back again.Â  This was fun, but as you can imagine, there were more than a few spills.Â  And a note: Avery chose to get himself kicked out of this oneÂ  – kudos to my husband for putting his foot down!Â  Of course, by then all the boys were getting really rowdy (the pastor’s son was one of the tricksters; here I thought he’d be a big help), so we shut the door and passed out the snack.Â  But if you remember, earlier I said that we had onlyÂ  brought 10 snacks to the classroom, which “should be plenty” but alas, were not nearly enough for 15 hungry kids.Â  Luckily, there were other snacks leftover from the previous session, and we didn’t bother letting them chose which of the two snacks they would get, so snack time was very peaceful thanks to my husband’s brilliant “you-get-what-you-get” snack tactic.Â  I maintain from my many observations of kids that the #1 cause of **all** kid meltdowns is lack of food.Â  That is free advice 

So then we sat at the table in the classroom, and it was time for a coin tossing game.Â  Everyone got a partner (including me – a well-behaved boy named Brandon, thank goodness), chose a side and each team flipped the coin –Â  the person whose side was flipped answered the first question (something relating to the verse lesson and what was shown in the play during large group).Â  The game continued withÂ  asking questions of eachÂ  partner, and the kids began to have some fun with it and come up with silly answers.Â Â Â  It was a fun game, but we finished and there were still at least 10 minutes until dismissal!Â  Again, my husband saved the day, and rather than trying to look over the instructions for another game and potentially losing control of the classroom whilel we did that, he made up an activity, so we went around the table discussing our fears.Â  And I’ve complimented him enough so far because he did an awesome job with the kids, but here’s where it gets ugly – my husband chose this moment to share my fear of frogs with 14 little boys.Â  If I were a regular teacher, I would be terrified and would probably move from my house and my hometown.Â  But as a one-time substitute Sunday school teacher, I think I’m safe from any horrid pranks involving amphibians.Â  So back to the game, according to their creativity, one boy’s fear was of “cinderblocks”, while a few of the students answered honestly that they were afraid of the dark.Â  Quickly looking for our lesson plans to determine the next activity, we found them to be missing…Â  “Avery” we said simultaneously, and like magic, there were the lesson plans, right in front of Avery’s chair.Â  But it was finally almost time to line up at the door for dismissal, and again, Hubby saved the day with another game – this one killed two birds with one stone by producing quiet AND spending time.Â  The boys had to be quiet while my husband counted to 20 or else he would start over.Â  We only had to reset twice, believe it or not!Â  Once for (who else) Avery, and once for two otherÂ  boys wrestling each other to the floor.Â  And then it was over.

And then we got our beautiful oldest daughter back, and she is so good and obedient.Â  And our other three, they were happy to see us as well, and us them, and things were going great until we pulled out of the parking lot and our 5-year-old noticed her older sister’s new ring she had earned at church…Â  and so began the fighting.Â  And the making up.Â  And the familial bonding which involves a beautiful process that also makes me want to tear my hair out at times.

I am looking forward to volunteering in Kid’s Kingdom again.Â  But maybe next time, changing diapers for an hour would be easier!

### Comments

**Taylhis**Our Care Pastor went to Moody.  
**derek**Oh, consider each of the younger grades to have about 20 kids each, half the combined 4th and 5th grade group. Also, 4th and 5th grade go with their parents to big service the last weekend of the month. This prepares them somewhat for junior high when they go with their parents all the time, meeting instead at a time outside of the main service (it has been Sunday afternoons/nights, but I think they may be changing it. You know, I mentioned on my blog that this group of kids weren't even born yet when I started serving in children's ministry- yikes! Additionally, last year there was one person set up to be a point person adding some of his ideas to the ministry. He has since graduated from Moody Bible Institute, but we now have someone taking his place- one of the kids I had in 4th grade (and 5th) when they started the combined 4th/5th grade ministry- double yikes! 8O  
**derek**A little preview of Beeber in eight years or so... So, in comparison to my church- here we have the one large group of 4th and 5th graders (boys and girls). Typically a service has 35-40 kids. There are games in the room to play until 5-10 minutes after service starts, at which time (on a normal schedule) we go to the gym for a large-group game, though this is occasionally replaced with a craft instead. After 15-20 minutes in the gym they come back, taking a bathroom and drink break, and do three songs for worship led by at least on high schooler (or older) on guitar and vocals. Some services have a second guitar and bongo as well. After three songs they pray and do a lesson (I teach the lesson from time to time- they rotate the teachers week to week). The lesson is usually around 20 minutes. The kids are given a worksheet to fill in during the lesson, which also contains a memory verse and daily devotions to do during the week. Once teaching time is over we pray again and only then do the kids break off into gender-specific groups led by an appropriate-gender teacher. Ideally, there would be eight groups (two each for each grade/gender), but usually it's more like six. In these small groups we talk about application of the lesson to their lives using some given questions and whatever else may come to mind. This lasts until the end of the service (which is 90 minutes by the way). There is no snack time, though from time to time we give random rewards for bringing bibles, doing devotions, and/or memorizing the memory verse. They also get bigger rewards three times a year. For K-3rd grade the program is different. They don't have a gym time- instead they do coloring or other activity sheets for about 15 minutes until it's time to get together with the other classes for a combined drama, worship, and teaching time. Then they go back to their classrooms and break into small groups, though not gender-specific like 4th and 5th grade. During the summer and several weeks during the school year there is no drama, so I'm not sure what they do instead- longer teaching time? Though it can't be too long considering the attention spans of the younger ones. As I've mentioned before there is no 3rd grade during the summer as 3rd grade and up move up a grade in June to get the younger ones into camp as soon as possible, but 2nd and under don't move up until the end of the summer.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I agree...one of the best posts ever. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about your experience as a "teacher". I've been telling you how different boys are.  
**jamiahsh**rambunctious, mischievous, AND intelligent.... a wonderful combination for a ten year old boy ;) sounds like you had a wonderful time... I just knew that 10 treats would not be enough when i first read it. fear of cinderblocks... is their a term for that? I think this ranks as one of the best posts ever!  
**derek**Quite a difference from my church! I will comment more tomorrow on it- I'm tired and have to get up to go to Grayslake in the morning...

# Windows And More (Or So He Says)

As we speak, we are awaiting the end of a lengthy though entertaining home improvement saga.Â  It began during the first winter we spent in our current house, which is almost a hundred years old and our first non-rental, owned-by-us house.Â  We moved into our house in October, and at the end of December that year, we got a huge shock when we opened our gas bill – over $300 for one month!Â  After enduring obscenely high gas bills (almost $500!) for a few winters, we decided to take measures to reduce theÂ  bills; among them, get some windows replaced in the old house.Â  We were talking to friends who did the same thing, and they highly recommended the guy who did their windows.Â  He does have a business; he’s not just a private contractor or friend of a friend who does windows.Â  We actually did do some research; we sat through hours-long presentations by 2 other window companies.Â  But the hometown, 1-guy, recommended local small business was the least expensive option, so we chose him.Â  I’m not going to say it was a mistake, at least, not yet – remember, I’m still waiting for the guy to leave, but let me back up…

SoÂ  we decide to go with this guy’s windows, and we give him a deposit.Â  He orders the windows (presumably)

thinks out loud – lots of hmmm, huhs, etc.

gave him a check for deposit, he said 2 weeks, 5 weeks later, we were hunting him down.

what is that smell – celebratory cigar, thank goodness.Â  like Keith Day

### Comments

# Battle Of The Bulge

If you think this is a weight-lossÂ  blog post, click again!

Recently, I’veÂ  noticed a huge bulge appearing in the floor of our downstairs bathroom:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/bulge-in-btrm-floor-6-11-09-001.jpg)

Ok, so it’s difficult to see in the picture – it’s a few inches above that rectangular green carpet, but believe me when I say it’s getting bigger, seemingly by the day – it’s now big enough to trip over!Â  My husband thinks we’ll be able to see what’s happening by going into our basement and looking at it from below the bathroom floor.Â  The only problem is that our bathroom is over the crawl space, not the basement.Â  In the 2Â½ years that we’ve lived in this house, we’ve never set foot (nor knee) in the crawl space – it’s always scary to think what one may find in a crawl space that hasn’t been disturbed in years, at least for me.Â  I guess I’ve seen too many horror movies…Â  or maybe it’s the fact that I grew up only miles away from the most macabrely (not a real word, but fits perfectly here if you ask me – maybe I will coin the term) famous crawl space – that of John Wayne Gacy, where 29 bodies were unearthed in the late ’70’s.

So anyway, someone needs to go into that crawl space to find out what this bulge it expands and takes over the entire house!

And we recently were told that our electric wiring in the house is out of date; here we’ve been spending money to fix up certain things on the house, and other things just keep breaking.Â  Sometimes I’m not so sure about the joys of home ownership, sigh!

### Comments

**One Of Those Days… | My Food Chain Gang**[...] ok, so it wasn’t a complete shock.Â  We had scheduled the plumbers to come today to fix our bathroom floor bulge, but I wasn’t expecting the bathroom to be missing!Â  And obviously the plumbers’ [...]  
**derek**Hopefully it turns out to be something cheap, considering the electrical work can cost some $$.  
**jamiahsh**"When it rains it pours" so says Morton salt or a fictitious doctor of note. But I recall another crawl space that was a bit higher than the one in your basement that someone entered a few years ago.

# Cuteness To Get You Through The Weekend

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/cute-kids-6-11-09-002.jpg)

Above is a picture of our second oldest, 5-year-old Sammie and her almost 1-year-old brother Christopher.Â  He is the only boy in our family, and also the only sibling with which Sammie doesn’t fight.Â  It seems like the natives (kids) have been restless lately.Â  Our oldest, Taylor, it back to her snotty tween “I’m-better-than-everyone-else-so-why-do-they-get-more-than-me” attitude, so she is constantly yelling at and fighting with her sisters.Â  Disney is 2 and hasÂ  been really sensitive, demanding, and impatient lately.Â  Needless to say, our house has been very loud as of late.Â  But in betweenÂ  the arguments, the kids still find time to be cute.Â  Here is a picture of Disney actually sharing the activity table with her baby brother (whose looks seemingly aged months after he got his new haircut):

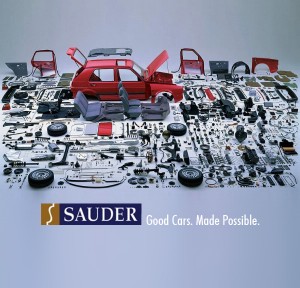
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/cute-kids-6-11-09-004.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**I will be around- we get back Friday night. Can't guarantee my attentiveness though after almost six days in charge of 6-8 nine- and ten-year-olds! ;)  
**Taylhis**Derek - That'd be great if we could do something - though we are coming to town, dropping off the kids with my parents, then going to the Cubs game! I will let you know if we decide to come up a day early, if so, it'd be on the 27th if you're around then. Have a great time at camp!  
**derek**Referring to your mom's post, if you're coming here to drop them off, let me know so we can do something again. :) Unless, of course, I am away at camp if it's next week...  
**Susan**I remember my children at this age. Time really goes fast and before you know it, the children are all grown up. Keep up the fantastic parenting job you and chris are doing.  
**jamiahsh**And something seems different about Dis' hair, too?  
**jamiahsh**Ah, HA! A haircut... I knew something was different about the Beeb.  
**Phyllis Beyer**They are all so cute! Soon you will get a break when the girls come to Illinois for a week. I can't wait. I have lots of fun things planned.

# A Regional Forward

With amusement and much scrutiny, I peruse most of the many email forwards I receive…Â  Occasionally, one will catch my eye.Â  Such is the case for the forward containing the following picture entitled: “Sauder Woodworking Company Takes Over GM”

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/sauder-forward1.jpg)

I found it extremely amusing, but I began to think of the entertainment value of the aforementioned email forward.Â  Is this also amusing toÂ  people who aren’t affected by the close proximity of the Sauder factories?Â  Do people who live farÂ  outside of Archbold, Ohio get the joke?

Well, anyway, if you live where you get it, then HaHa –Â  we share aÂ  joke.Â  It IS funny – Sauder is a huge employer in the area andÂ  many locals have jobs assembling Sauder’s ‘assemble yourself’ kits of furnitiure.Â  The fact that someone crafted an email to tie it into the horrible economy and the down-sizing of GM is priceless…Â Â  but there I go again, overexplaining the joke.Â  If you get it, then you get it…Â  (and are probably located within 60 miles of Lake Erie), but if you have no idea what I’m talking about –Â  power to you to recognize regionally sensitive email forwards…Â  What are some of the regional forwards that have been haunting YOU?

### Comments

**derek**I got it- they sell Sauder stuff over here. I probably have some in my house, cheap as I am. I am not refined enough for my furniture to have to be real oak, cherry, or whatever. Particleboard is just fine. :)  
**justj**I think this may be more of a economic joke. Sauder furniture is sold all over the place. A certain economic niche buys it and gets the fun of assembling it. We just see more of it, since the outlet store is so close.  
**jamiahsh**I have no idea what you are talking about... HAHAHAHAHA! Regionally indicative emails? Not so much regional but I keep getting emails that I KEEP getting ad nauseum.

# Parental Pickle

Have you heard about the controversy of Lenore Skenazy?Â  She is the New York mom who is under fire for letting her 10-year-old son ride the subway alone.Â  I would not put my kids on a subway alone, but us here *(taking on a suddenÂ  hickish accent…*) are country folk, after all, and even **I** didn’t ride the subway when I was in New York three months ago.Â  But I trust that Ms. Skenazy made the right decision for her child…Â  why?Â  Because I think that parents these days NEED to be trusted to make the right decisions for their children!Â  I believe that we are in the midst of an age where we are much too over-protective of our young-uns.Â  And those parents who aren’t utterly over-protective are left to a cruel and unusual punishment of media scrutiny…Â  If you follow and/or agree with what I’m saying, you will enjoy the writing of Lenore Skenazy:

*The last word: Advice from â€˜Americaâ€™s worst momâ€™*

*A year ago, journalist Lenore Skenazy caused a media sensation when she let her 9-year-old ride New York Cityâ€™s subway by himself. In a new book, she explains why she has no regrets.*

*About a year ago, I let my 9-year-old ride the New York subway alone for the first time. I didnâ€™t do it because I was brave or reckless or seeking a book contract. I did it because I know my son the way you know your kids. I knew he was ready, so I let him go. Then I wrote a column about it for The New York Sun. Big deal, right?*

*Well, the night the column ran, someone from the Today show called me at home to ask, Did I really let my son take the subway by himself?*

*Yes.*

*Just abandoned him in the middle of the city and told him to find his way home?*

*Well, abandoned is kind of a strong word, but â€¦ yes, I did leave him at Bloomingdaleâ€™s.*

*In this day and age?*

*No, in Ladiesâ€™ Handbags.*

*Oh, she loved that. Would I be willing to come on the air and talk about it?*

*Sure, why not?*

*I had no idea what was about to hit me.*

*A day later, there across from me was Ann Curry looking outrageously pretty and slightly alarmed, because her next guest (the one right before George Clooney) just might be criminally insane. By way of introduction, she turned to the camera and asked, â€œIs she an enlightened mom or a really bad one?â€*

*The shot widened to reveal â€¦ me. And my son Izzy. And some â€œparenting expertâ€ perched on that famous couch right next to us, who, I soon learned, was there to Teach Us a Lesson.*

*I quickly told the story about how Izzy, the 9-year-old, had been begging me to let him try to find his way home on his own from someplace, anyplace, by subway.*

*I know that may sound a little scary, but itâ€™s not. Here in New York, families are on the subway all the time. Itâ€™s extremely, even statistically, safe. Whatever subterranean terror you see Will Smith battling in the movies goes home when the filming stopsâ€”probably to New Jersey. Our cityâ€™s murder rate is back to where it was in 1963. And, by the way, itâ€™s probably down wherever you live, too.*

*Thatâ€™s why letting Izzy find his way home alone seemed like a fine idea. Not dangerous. Not crazy. Not even very hard. My husband and I talked about it and agreed that our boy was ready. So on that sunny Sunday when I took him to that big, bright store, I said those words we donâ€™t say much anymore.*

*â€œBye-bye! Have fun!â€*

*I didnâ€™t leave him defenseless, of course. I gave him a subway map, a transit card, $20 in case of emergencies, and some quarters to make a call. But, no, I did not give him a cell phone. Because although I very much trusted him to get himself home, I was a lot less sure heâ€™d get the phone there.*

*And remember: He had quarters.*

*Anyway, it all turned out fine. One subway ride, one bus ride, and one hour or so later, my son was back home, proud as a peacock (who happens to take public transportation). I only wrote about his little adventure because when I told the other fourth-grade moms at the schoolyard about it, they all said the same thing.*

*You let him WHAT?*

*The more polite said things like, â€œWell thatâ€™s fine, and Iâ€™ll let my son do that, too … when heâ€™s in college.â€*

*Soâ€”back to the Today show. After Izzy tells Ann how easy the whole thing was, she turns to the Parenting Expertâ€”a breed that seems to exist only to tell us parents what weâ€™re doing wrong and why this will warp our kids forever.*

*This one is appalled at what Iâ€™ve done. She looks like I just asked her to smell my socks. She says that I could have given my son the exact same experience of independence, but in a much â€œsaferâ€ wayâ€”if only I had followed him or insisted he ride with a group of friends.*

*â€œWell, how is that the â€˜exact same experienceâ€™ if itâ€™s different?â€ I demanded. â€œBesides, he was safe! Thatâ€™s why I let him go, you fear-mongering hypocrite, preaching independence while warning against it!â€*

*Well, I didnâ€™t get all of that out, exactly, but I did get out a very cogent, â€œGee, um â€¦ â€ Anyway, it didnâ€™t even matter, because as soon as we left the set, my phone rang. It was MSNBC. Could I be there in an hour?*

*Then Fox News called. Could I be there with Izzy that afternoon? MSNBC called back: If I did the show today, would I still promise to come back with Izzy to do it again over the weekend, same place, same story?*

*And suddenly, weirdly, I found myself in that place you always hear about: the center of a media storm. It was kind of fun, but also kind of terrifyingâ€”because everyone was weighing in on my parenting skills. Reporters queried from China, Israel, Australia, Malta. The English wanted to know, â€œAre we wrapping our children in cotton wool?â€ To which I boldly replied, â€œWhat the heck is cotton wool?â€ (Turns out to be the kind of cotton in cotton balls.)*

*The media dubbed me â€œAmericaâ€™s Worst Mom.â€ (Go aheadâ€”Google it.) But thatâ€™s not what I am.*

*I really think Iâ€™m a parent who is afraid of some things (bears, cars) and less afraid of others (subways, strangers). But mostly Iâ€™m afraid that I, too, have been swept up in the impossible obsession of our era: total safety for our children every second of every day. The idea that we should provide it and actually could provide it. Itâ€™s as if we donâ€™t believe in fate anymore, or good luck or bad luck. No, itâ€™s all up to us.*

*Childhood really has changed since todayâ€™s parents were kids, and not just in the United States. Australian children get stared at when they ride the bus alone. Canadian kids stay inside playing videoÂ­games. After I started a blog called Free Range Kids, I heard from a dad in Ireland who lets his 11-year-old play in the local park, unsupervised, and now a mom down the street wonâ€™t let her son go to their house. She thinks the dad is reckless.*

*What has changed in the English-speaking world that has made childhood independence taboo? The ground has not gradually gotten harder under the jungle gym. The bus stops have not crept farther from home. Crime is actually lower than it was when most of us were growing up. So there is no reality-based reason that children today should be treated as more helpless and vulnerable than we were when we were young.*

*If parents all around us are clutching their children close, itâ€™s easy to understand why: Itâ€™s what pop culture is telling us to do. Stories of kidnappings swamp the news. Go online, and you can find a map of local sex offenders as easily as the local Victoriaâ€™s Secret (possibly in the same place). Meantime, if you do summon the courage to put your kids on a bus or a bench or a bike, other parents keep butting in: An unwatched child is a tragedy waiting to happen.*

*Hereâ€™s a typical letter addressed to me at Free Range Kids:*

*â€œI understand that you probably donâ€™t want your children to grow up afraid and not able to survive as independent adults,â€ she wrote. â€œOn the other hand, I think youâ€™re also teaching them that there is nothing to fear, and that isnâ€™t correct. Itâ€™s survival of the fittest, and if they donâ€™t know who/what the enemy is, how will they avoid it? There are many, many dangers to protect them from, and it does take workâ€”thatâ€™s what parenting is. If you want them to run wild and stay out of your hair, you shouldnâ€™t have had them.â€*

*I agree that it makes sense to teach your kids about danger and how best to avoid it. Just like you want to teach them to stop, drop, and roll if theyâ€™re ever in a fire. But then? Then you have to let them out again, because the writer is wrong when she says, â€œThere are many, many dangers to protect them from.â€*

*There are not. Mostly, the world is safe. Mostly, people are good. To emphasize the opposite is to live in the world of tabloid TV. A world filled with worst-case scenarios, not the world we actually live in, which is factually, statistically, and, luckily for us, one of the safest periods for children in the history of the world.*

*Like the housewives of the 1950s, todayâ€™s children need to be liberated. Unlike the housewives of the â€™50s, the children canâ€™t do it themselves. Though Iâ€™d love to see hordes of kids gathering for meetings, staging protests, and burning their baby kneepadsâ€”and maybe they willâ€”it is really up to us parents to start re-normalizing childhood. That begins with us realizing how scared weâ€™ve gotten, even of ridiculously remote dangers.*

*We have to be less afraid of nature and more willing to embrace the idea that some rashes and bites are a fair price to pay in exchange for appreciating the wonder of a cool-looking rock or an unforgettable fern.*

*When we watch TV, we have to remind ourselves that its job is to terrify and disgust us so that weâ€™ll keep watching in horror. It is doing an excellent job on both fronts.*

*We have to learn to remind the other parents who think weâ€™re being careless when we loosen our grip that we are actually trying to teach our children how to get along in the world, and that we believe this is our job. A child who can fend for himself is a lot safer than one forever coddled, because the coddled child will not have Mom or Dad around all the time. Adults once knew what we have forgotten today. Kids are competent. Kids are capable. Kids deserve freedom, responsibility, and a chance to be part of the world.*

*I have to be honest, though: I write all this in a kind of shaky mood because I just got a call from the police. This morning, I put Izzy, now 10, on a half-hour train ride out to his friendâ€™s house. It sounds like Iâ€™m a recidivist, but really: His friendâ€™s family was waiting at the other end to pick him up, and heâ€™s done this a dozen times already. It is a straight shot on a commuter railroad. This particular time, however, the conductor found it outrageous that a 10-year-old should be traveling alone, and summoned the police, who arrived as my son disembarked.*

*When the officer phoned me at home, I told him the truth (while my heart stood still): We had actually inquired of the railroad what age a child can travel alone and were told there was no specific regulation about this.*

*Later I looked up the official rules: A child only has to be 8 to ride alone on the railroad or subway. Good rule.*

*(From the book Free Range Kids by Lenore Skenazy. Â© 2009 by Lenore Skenazy. Reprinted with permission of the publisher, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)*

### Comments

**10 Sure Fire Ways To Get Rid Of An Acne Blemish | Best Anti Aging Cream**[...] Parental Pickle | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**justj**Hmm, need to think on this. I believe we allowed a 10 year old to fly in a plane half way across the country by herself. She survived the round trip. And of course the dangerous thing around here, is letting them ride bikes on back roads where the drivers are hitting 55+ and not looking for bikes. There is an inherent danger in life, our children have to deal with it eventually. How we let them handle it, says more than when we let them do it.  
**Susan**I hate jounalist. I really, really hate journalist!! It seems to me that they are only interested in reporting bad news and telling only half the story. Now personally, I would never let my 10 year old ride the subway alone. No way. But this is a personal decison based on the fact that I was almost abducted. To this day the incident still overrides my parental instinct. I can also say that when my children were young, my parenting ability was continually criticized. And my children are great or at least that is what everyone is constantly telling me. Hmmm........maybe my children are great actors. :) Anyways it sounds as though instead of everyone telling "America's worst mother" what she is doing wrong; maybe everyone should be asking her (and her husband) what did they do right.  
**jamiahsh**Has it not been proven that kids mature differently? To me a 10 year old New Yorker who has proven that he can be trusted enough to take the subway from Bloomingdales to a bus to his home is no different that a 10 year old being trusted to walk to the grocery and back in Smalltown USA. In fact, I think I was 6 when I was running errands. Obviously, Izzy was bright enough to be able to follow the subway map, transfer to a bus, and get home safely.

# Please Help My Family

Something interesting happened weeks ago, and I haven’t had the time to blog about it until now…

My husband and I were driving down a main drag in our small town, kid-less because it was date night, when we came across a guy standing on the corner across from Walgreens with a sign saying “Please help my family”.Â  Our movie didn’t start for awhile, so we pulled over to talk to the guy who looked to be about our age.Â  We asked him about his circumstances, and what brought him to our town.Â  We learned that he was the father of two who had just been laid off from a factory job and couldn’t provide for his two children or for his wife who had also lost her job.Â  He had come to our town in hopes of finding work or resources to help his family.Â  We learned that he had a daughter, just a little bit older than our oldest daughter,Â  and a younger son, so we went home to gather things he said his family needed – clothes and food.Â  We told him we would be just a few minutes, and we went home and gathered up what we thought would be a treasure trove for someone in need who has kids: coats (brand-new, donated from my husband’s wholesale business), food, clothes for his daughter, even some clothes we could scrounge up for his son.Â  We returned in less than 10 minutes with the items, but the man was gone!

I still can’t figure out what went wrong!Â  Perhaps he was lying about the needs of his family, and he really wanted cash instead for something else, possibly drugs (this is why I always try to avoid giving cash to those in need but rather try to find necessary resources for them instead).Â  I hate to be skeptical, but I have read a bunch of stories in the news about panhandlers who try to swindle and deceive, mostly for the purpose of supporting drug or alcohol habits and not seeking for their own well-being or that of their families.

This happened probably over a month ago now, and we haven’t seen the guy since…Â  If I did, I would probably pull over again, but this time it would be to ask him what it is he REALLY wants!

### Comments

**mary911**And you wonder WHY someone would send you an anonymous gift card..... ;)  
**Taylhis**We spoke with him a little bit about the police and and the laws - he said he called the city police and they said there are no laws against it. If that's true, it explains why we see people like him from time to time. I think at first he thought we were questioning his presence and going to tell him to go home. Who knows, maybe he still thought we were going to get him in trouble and he left.  
**jamiahsh**One of our churches offers a meal every Wednesday night. The youth at my own church has a meal one Sunday a month.  
**derek**I would pray that he is in a better situation (and his family assuming he was telling the truth of course). You did the best you could, and the right thing.  
**justj**It could be that the police stopped by and visited with the man. I'm not sure what laws are on the books regarding panhandling, but most rural communities have stricter laws than larger cities. And there is less for the local officers to do, so they can move panhandlers to different locations. In our county, we have a number of organizations to help those in need. I've seen signs on a few local churches that have free meals. Unfortunately, for those in need, it is hard to find out where the help is. Of the people I've seen wanting money, food or help, it is amazing how many actually turn down anything but the money. I remember when I just moved back to the area, I offered to buy a weeks worth of groceries for a man's family. He turned me down flat, he just wanted the cash. All I could say was Hmmmm.  
**jamiahsh**One of my favorite things... aside from raindrops on roses and all the rest... helping those in need even if by offering a smile, a kind word, encouragement no matter how insignificant it may seem at the time, a hug goes a long way.  
**jamiahsh**Definitely strange. In today's world, one can never really tell if the guy on the corner is genuine or noto. However, a good thing to go the necessity route rather than the $  
**Susan**I have also seen the similar people on the street corner holding signs and my thought was why aren't they holding up a sign that reads "work wanted". I am the first one to admit that times are tough, but asking for handouts are not the answer. I do commend you for going the extra mile to help someone in need. I have no extra money, but I do like to help people. My favorite thing to do is "random acts of kindness". some of the things I have done are holding a door open for someone, helping a stranger unload their cart at the grocery store, or just smiling at someone and telling them to have a nice day. I remember about a month ago I was driving down State Street in Fort Wayne. A little old lady in the lane next to me had a flat tire. I pulled my car up next to her. It took a few blows to the horn before she would roll her window down. She looked shocked when I told her about her tire. I often wonder just how many blocks she would have driven before anyone else would have told her she had a flat.

# Befores and Afters

As you might have read in my blog before the impromptu camping trip, we’ve been putting a lot of effort into a bunch of home improvement projects lately.Â  Here are a few of the latest pictures:

Backyard, before and after the new fence:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/dsci0140.jpg)[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/our-new-fence-5-19-09-001.jpg)

Not from the same angle, but hopefully you get the idea.Â  We now have a fenced-in play area for the kids, and the dogs have their own little area for their gross natural business.

Even the rats have moved on up into posh digs.Â  Here is their new cage, where all 4 of them live together – harmoniously, I might add!

BEFORE:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/our-4-rats-004.jpg)

AFTER:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/rats-new-cages-5-727-09-001.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Looks nice, both projects.  
**jamiahsh**AWESOME cage!

# Camping Pictorial

If you’ve been reading my blog lately, then you know that I was away last week camping with my family –Â  my husband, 4 kids (ages 9, 5, 2, and almost 1), and 2 dogs.Â  Camping for the entire week with 4 little kids has its ups and downs; mostly ups.Â  But one of the major downs is the amount of house-mom work that awaits my return:Â  6 persons worth of laundry for a week and a half, which I refer to as “Mount Washmore”, grows to be the size of a small county’s dump.Â  And my Week O’ Heap O’ Paperwork I must sort through is picture-worthy:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/basket-of-paperwork.jpg)

But when all is said and done (a week or more from now), I will say it was well worth it.Â  It was worth it to be (mostly) away from the internet and other electronic distractions for a week, especially tv.Â  During that week, it wasn’t my job to dwell on horrid and depressing headlines from around the world.Â  And it was worth it to spend a distraction-less 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with my family, just the 6 of us in the wilderness (of Indiana) with only the bare necessities (a furnished cabin with refrigerator and a store within walking distance) with which to survive…

A great time was had by all, and camping is definitelyÂ  something that we will do again in the future.

This is our cabin.Â  It has two beds downstairs where Daddy, Mommy, Disney, and Charity and Beasley (the dogs) slept.Â Â  Along with the two beds are a table and chairs, a bench, shelves, a half-bathroom, a mini-fridge, and a microwave.Â  There is also a ladder which leads to the loft that spaciously houses two twin mattresses where our two oldest girls slept.Â  As you can see, there is also a picnic table out front and a grill and fire pit.Â  Our cabin’s porch also came with a great view of the fishing creek and the sunset.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-001.jpg)

We did lots of fun activities while we were camping; including boating.Â  We took out a rowboat (thanks for rowing, Dad!), and the little ones caught a nap before we set sail:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-009.jpg)

We also took out a large pontoon boat and made ourselves quite comfortable watching for wildlife for hours at a time:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-062.jpg)

I think I could get used to being a boat captain; I just loved driving the boat (and my husband says I’m good at it, whatever that means).Â  But I really did love being the captain, deciding when to pull close to shore, idling the boat or even keeping pace with the wildlife as we did when we followed a young hunting raccoon.Â  We were able to see SO much wildlife; all in its natural glory; it was great!Â  Among the highlights: butterflies, dragonflies, water snakes attacking fish, fish attacking fish, herons, swanÂ  families, frogs, crayfish, geese families, raccoons, does and their fawns, turtles, and even lots of campground dogs and puppies.Â  Here is an example of the beautiful scenery with a doe getting a drink at sunset – I missed photographing her fawn, oops:  
[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-071.jpg)

And the next picture combines two of the kids’ favorite things about camping –Â  frogs and marshmallows – I guess “Big Buddy” does not eat marshmallows…Â  not raw ones anyway.Â  For those of you who are wondering about my frog phobia, youÂ  should know that there was a mandatory 5-foot-diameter ‘frog buffer zone’ around the cabin for me.Â  But I did come to terms with the phobia in some ways during the trip, maybe it will lessen with time, who knows.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-013.jpg)

Next is a pic of our baby boy – he was so excited toÂ  finally get at that basketball that we had to take a picture.Â  Never mind that he’s going to play baseball for the Chicago Cubs some day – or the Chicago Bears if my husband gets *his* way…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-014.jpg)

Here are all 4 of my kids on the beach – they all loved playing on the beach!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-023.jpg)

And, some more examples of the beautiful scenery – the rising moon over the lake at sunset:[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-088.jpg)

A hot air balloon over the lake:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/06/angola-camping-trip-spring-09-072.jpg)

And that reminds me – we also spotted some parachuters in the sky (and lots of cool airplanes – the airport was across the highway at the front of camp) who landed in a field nearby.Â  Our daredevil 5-year-old Sammie said, “I want to do that!”.Â  It’s really funny that she said that if you know Sammie.Â  And ironically, when she was in the womb, IÂ  even said that she would be the one to parachute and do crazy things like that to scare her parents!Â  I could just tell by the strength of her kicking and the fact that she was *constantly* moving…Â  Well, anyway, another great trip, and let me close by recommending camping as an inexpensive family vacation that pays dividends in quality time and togetherness!

### Comments

**justj**I still wonder why anyone would jump out of a perfectly good airplane. Nope, can't see me doing that. No pictures of that "monster" bass?  
**jamiahsh**provided of course you had a parachute. I forgot about you and airplanes.  
**taylhis**Hmmm.... I suppose if you got me on the airplane in the first place, then I would be more than willing to jump off of it!!!  
**jamiahsh**AH.... There's the balloon! I would go for the airplane jump myself. My oldest brother has been skydiving and has the video to prove it!  
**derek**You know that you'll have fun jumping out of that airplane with Sammie when that time comes... :P Two more pictures saved to my computer (of the kids of course, not that I see your two (you and C) mugs on any of the pictures anyway- just one of your feet!)...

# My Favorite Camping Memory

If you’ve been reading my blog as of late, you know about my family’s impromptu camping trip – my husband and I, in a fit of outlandish spontaneity (read: **his** idea), decided to take our 4 children – ages 9, 5, 2, and almost 1 year – on a surprise, last-minute, week-long camping trip.Â  Despite our family being very inexperienced and mostly camping-inept, it’s been going pretty well!Â  My husband was shipped off to camp for entire summers when he was a kid, and it’s fun to see this side of him – the skills that he learned in the campgrounds of his youth since we’ve never been camping together…Â  well, not like this anyway, with 4 kids and 2 dogs to look after.Â  As for me, the camping experiences of my youth consist of a few over-nighters for Girl Scouts, and one week-long venture at Girl Scout camp that I did not like one bit – it was cold, we had to get up early, I had to be away from my beloved family dog, which made me incredibly homesick.Â  To top off my week of misery, the counselors at the camp wanted us to do a *mandatory* (believe me, I did ask about the mandatory part!) art project that involved catching frogs, dipping them in paint, and letting them hop across a piece of paper.Â  Call it art, if you will, but there was no way I was going to be anywhere near that art project due to my intense fear of frogs and toads which I am still conquering as we speak (guess what my 5-year-old’s favorite camping activity has been this week?).Â  Luckily for the kid-version of me, it rained at Girl Scout camp, meaning I did not have to participate in the frog-filled art project.Â  But it took 3 days for that project to get canceled, and I was panicked about it the entire time.Â  Plus, when we got up in the morning, it was very cold outside, and first things first – we had our swimming lessons first thing in the morning.Â  Anyone who was too cold to participate in the morning lessons lost their privilege to partake in free swim after lunch when the sun was scorching.Â  But as miserable as I thought I was at camp, I did have a favorite camping thing that we did – something that just isn’t the same without a campfire: we made pie-iron pizzas.

A pie-iron is a camping cooking utensil that consists of two small, shallow metal square pans with long handles.Â  You can build sandwiches and desserts and all kind of culinary creations between the squares, then you latch them together and hold them over the campfire to cook the filling.Â  My long-term memory continues to serve me well – even as an adult, pie-iron pizzas are delicious!Â  After a trying day yesterday with my girls being tired and throwing tantrums all day, making pie-iron pizzas was a great way to close the day – they honestly cheered everyone up, including me!Â  Not only are they yummy, but to make them is actually a fun project that is easy for kids and can easily burn a good 30 minutes of off kid boredom time!Â  The kids might need help cooking their pie-iron pizzas over the campfire for safety reasons, but any age kid can enjoy preparing her pizza for cooking.Â  There is something about kids helping to prepare their own food that makes them eat better than ever, too – works every time for my kids.

So yeah – the $10.99 pie-iron turned out to be a great investment.Â  Not only was it a fun family experience (I built the sandwiches with the girls while Dad helped cook them over the fire) which also accomplished the task of feeding the family, but the activity accomplished the near-impossible task of cheering up a tired family!Â  I am excited about the [many experiments](http://www.chuckwagondiner.com/pieiron.html) I plan on conducting with the pie-iron – you can make mini-casseroles, desserts, pita pockets, stir fry…Â  so many possibilities!

As I cheesily began to sing the other night, “Pizza…Â  Roasting on an open fire…”

### Comments

**derek**Speaking of camping, my turn is coming up again soon. No pie-irons though.  
**jamiahsh**YES.... i remember pie-iron pizzas, roasting marshmallows til they fall off the stick (burned, gooey, and oh, so yummmmmmmy) jiffy pop popcorn. The ineptitude sure did not show while I was there. THANKS!  
**mary911**I have some of those that I bought at a garage sale one year, thinking I was going to use them. Haven't done it yet. If you ever need to borrow them, let me know!!! I also have a tripod to put over the fire with a cooking top, and a tent, and a big cast iron pot with a handle and a lid. Yeah, I'm all set. Um, sure. Friends of mine and I went up to Chain O Lakes last summer and stayed in one of the cabins up there for a few days. LOVED IT!!!! The worst part was no campfires were allowed. Kind of a downer, but the atmosphere and quietness were great!!!!

# The Scariest Night Of Our Lives...

…Â  happened just the other night.Â  It’s really frightening and a huge reality check to know that you could be sitting somewhere (camping and enjoying the beautiful outdoors in my case), totally relaxed, and the very next minute, there is a life or death emergency – literally.

Before you fret, let me disclaim that everyone is fine but this was almost not the case.Â  As you may have read in my previous blog post, we decided to take our 4 kids camping and have been in the great wilderness of northeast Indiana during the past week.Â  A few nights ago, my husband and I had gotten the kids to bed, and we were enjoying a horror movie on the porch of our cabin when we heard a strange noise – kind of like a kid laughing or coughing.Â  Then, through the window, we see our oldest daughter Taylor practically jumping down the ladder that leads to the loft area in our cabin where our two oldest kids have been spending the nights.Â  From her body language, it was obvious that someone was very hurt.Â  My husband and I ran inside the cabin, just as Taylor said something about her sister choking on a gumball, and that’s when we see our 5-year-old daughter Sammie in the loft, CHOKING.Â  My husband grew wings, flew up to the loft and gave her the Heimlich until the gumball shot out of her throat and across the room.Â  Sammie was catching her breath, but she was still drooling and not talking – the scariest moment of our lives!Â  I was already on the cell phone with 911, and the dispatcher was asking me if I could bring her up to the front of the campground, so they didn’t have to waste precious time by trying to find our cabin.Â  Miraculously, Sammie started to talk and act like nothing even happened – that’s kids for you!Â  Poor Taylor was scared and shaking, so we told her what an AWESOME job she did *saving her sister’s life*.Â  We are going to write to our local newspaper about what a hero she is – without her quick thinking and correct response to the situation (she was actually dozing when it happened), I shudder to think that we could have lost Sammie…Â  I just can’t bear to think of it.Â  Thank God everyone is ok!Â  The very cool (thank you Steuben County emergency dispatch!), calm and collected dispatcher asked if I wanted to cancel the ambulance that was already in route, and I agreed and thanked her before I hung up – so that makes FOUR times I’ve had to dial 911 on my cell for this or that, not fun!

But we have outlawed gumballs in our family – just not worth that kind of agony!Â  Maybe on their wedding days or on the days they move out of our house and gain their independence, maybe then we will be the family that celebrates with gumballs after outlawing them for decades!

### Comments

**derek**I hope the newspaper picks up the story. Indeed Taylor, you have done your sister a tremendous service- excellent work.  
**mary911**I'm SO glad all is well. I agree, GOOD JOB, TAYLOR! It's so hard to keep your cool in those kind of situations, but it sounds like you did AWESOME!  
**justj**I'm glad all is OK. Outlawing gumballs sounds like a good plan.  
**jamiahsh**As you know, We had a similar scare a few months ago. GREAT JOB, TAYLOR! REALLY PROUD OF YOU! Thank God, Sammie is ok! Grapes, Gumballs, and Safety Pins (another story), OH MY!  
**derek**Praise God! I will try to remember what never to bring as a gift now. That horror movie had nothing on reality I'm sure!  
**Phyllis Beyer**WOW! How scary. I had a similar experience when one of my daughters swallowed a small metal ball from a game. Fortunately it passed thru her system and we didn't have to do the Heimlich. What a wonderful job Taylor did.

# Blogging In The Great Outdoors

Now that school is out, we decided to take a last minute camping trip with the kids and dogs, and it’s been wonderful.Â  More on that later – I am in a cabin, “roughing it” in the great outdoors (so to speak – we do have beds, running water, a bathroom, a/c, even a little fridge and microwave), but it doesn’t even seem appropriate to be using a computer – just kind of takes away from the outdoorsy ambiance a little bit.Â  But it rained yesterday, with more storms forecast for today and tomorrow, so I figured I would use some of my free time to let my faithful readers know that I haven’t skipped town.Â  Well, I kind of have skipped town, but in a good way, and someday soon, I’ll be back to blogging like a maniac whenever I have the chance…

Until then…

### Comments

**derek**Happy summer! Though school isn't out here quite yet. Supersize is out after their 2-hour Friday, but the rest don't finish until at least next Wednesday. However, for me summer has pretty much begun as of today as I don't see myself finding many more jobs. I was lucky so far this week to have three though, so anything's possible I suppose.  
**mary911**Sounds like my kind of campking trip, actually. As long as there is air conditioning or at least power for a fan, and a real toilet that flushes I'm happy. Hope you're having/had a good time!  
**jamiahsh**And no forgetting everything anyone has the right to know about Miley Cyrus ;) Thanks, Goose

# Utter Chaos - The Good Kind

The school year is winding down…Â  my third-grader’s last day of third grade is today!Â  When I was a kid, we always went to school into the month of June –Â  never ended in May.Â  Well, except senior year when we graduated on May 31 – but the seniors always finished early.Â  I don’t understand Ohio and their strange school schedules (what with fog days and stuff, which are unheard of in Chicagoland where I went to school), but I do like them.Â  My third-grader is a HUGE help around the house, and I’m excited to have another pair of hands and someone to talk to during the day.

So anyway, yesterday was my ~~4~~ 5-year-old’s end of the year picnic for her school, rain or shine.Â  And rain it did.Â  EvenÂ  though we arrived right on time, all of the sheltered picnic tables were taken.Â  So, we had to slosh the double-stroller through the puddles and the mud to sit in the rain with 3 little kids and eat our lunch.Â  Luckily it was only drizzling, but the picnic table and bench were all wet – note to self to start keeping a towel in the car.Â  After lunch, they started to set up the large bouncy castles and my husband wisely took our 5 and 2-year-olds (Sammie and Disney) over to get in line.Â  Judging by the huge turnout for this event, we didn’t want to wait in line all day, especially if the drizzle turned into a downpour.Â  My kids were first in line, but Disney chickened out, so Sammie bounced without her sister on the regular bouncy castle.Â  Then it was time to check out the MEGA-bouncy!Â  It began with a crawl-thru maze, followedÂ  by a ladder up a vertical wall and finished with a steep slide, and it was totalÂ  chaos!Â  There were kids everywhere!Â  The adults were scrambling to regulate how many kids went inside, but somehow kids were getting stuck…Â  next thing you know, there were kids crying and yelling and adults couldn’t get to them because they were in the crazy maze of this gigantic bouncy!Â  My daughter Sammie emerged from the maze, and she climbed the steep ladder like a pro.Â  Matter of fact, Sammie was thru the entire boucy obstacle course 3 times before most kids got through once – she is a very good climber and couldn’t care less about the pile of kids at the beginning which is where most of them freaked out for their parents.Â  Disney kept saying she wanted to try it, and noramlly we like our kids to try new things, but the huge bouncy was littered with kids of all types and sizes: crying kids, climbing kids, big kids, screaming kids – I was sure my sweet little 2-year-old would get eaten alive in there.Â  So she watched for awhile and decided she still wanted to go in it, and we found a side entrance that bypassed the crazy maze of kid-doom.Â  To our surprise, Disney climbed the ladder (with helpÂ  from big sis Sammie) and went down the slide – and she had fun!Â  And Sammie loved seeing all her friends and her teachers and having fun with them.Â  Chaotic as it was, it was all worth it because it was for Sammie – and she loved it!Â  This is Sammie helping Disney up that huge ladder:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/sammies-end-of-year-picnic-09-002.jpg)

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**That was nice of Sammie to help Disney. We have an indoor "Bounce Town" here that is filled with stuff like that. Austin loves it. Maybe I can take the girls there this summer. Can't believe they are thru with school. We have 1 week to go. I have to work 3 more weeks.  
**derek**Those air-filled things are great fun. I remember when my church had rented a few for special activity nights. I made a not though that some are \*not\* for out-of-condition adults! Finding a side entrance sounds not unlike the fast-pass at some theme parks... I guess that one should have had a lower age limit- must be capable of navigating a maze without bursting into tears of frustration.  
**jamiahsh**Awww... good job Sammie and Dis. Looks like a blast

# How To Murder A Ferrari

Have you ever seen the 80’s movie responsible for Matthew Broderick’s big break called [Ferris Bueller’s Day Off](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091042/)?Â  I’m sure it was popular everywhere, but growing up in the ‘burbs of Chicago, we watched this movie over and over recognizing new locales each time since it was filmed in our backyards.Â  If you’ve seen the movie, then you are most likely familiar with the scene where Ferris’ friend, Cameron Fry, has a major meltdown and pushes his dad’s Ferrari out of the glass wall of his garage.Â  This scene was filmed at an actual house in the upscale Chicago suburb of Highland Park, and the [house is now for sale](http://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-detail/370-Beech-Street_Highland-Park_IL_60035_1109385563?%20mp=1" \l "Request).Â  For a cool $2,300,000, you can buy the house and reenact the famous “Ferrari Murder” scene from Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.Â  Even if you don’t have that kind of money or don’t want to live in Highland Park (your neighbors would be Michael Jordan, Gary Sinise, and Harold Ramis), it’s still kind of cool to check out the real estate listing which has details and other pictures of the house besides this:

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

### Comments

**derek**I read about this somewhere else. I guess some would call me "stupid" or "an idiot" for not knowing this, but I had no idea this building was so local.  
**jamiahsh**nope I would have laughed at the radio and said "HA! I knew that before." But all I did was say... I wonder how long it will take taylhis to bring it up ;)  
**taylhis**Funny... you wouldn't have had that thought if this post had auto-posted a few days ago like I had scheduled it. I wonder if the problem was me or the feature?  
**jamiahsh**I heard the news on the radio this morning and just KNEW it would be a post. fun movie,

# Memorial Day Weekend

In honor ofÂ  fallen US soldiers on

MEMORIAL DAY 2009

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/us-flag.jpg)The dead soldier’s silence sings our national anthem. **-Rev. Aaron Kilbourn**

**————————————————————————————————————————————–**

Despite the seriousness of Memorial Day and what it signifies, it is a day that is alsoÂ  known for kicking off the summer season in much of the United States – the season of swimming pools, backyard BBQ’s, and days of school-less freedom for kids accompanied by the school-less dread cast upon many parents.

We had an action-packed but great Memorial Day weekend, beginning with a fun game night Friday night, and we stayed up too late.Â  Saturday I slept late (though I still only got about 4 hours of sleep!), and while I was sleeping, the kids set up a garage sale and got quite a few customers – I wrote about this in a previous blog post.Â  Saturday night we decided we would take the kids to experience the drive-in movie theaterÂ  – best before the mosquitoes got too bad for the year (yeah right) and before it gets too hot out.Â  We arrived at the drive-in early (I wrote about [this place](http://www.fieldofdreamsdrivein.com/) in another post as well; it’s a drive-in movie theater that was built onÂ  a family’s farm in the middle of the country), and we gave LadderballÂ  (amazing what a dangerous weapon two balls on a string can be when in the hands of children) and Cornhole a try, but the kids had way more fun rolling on the huge area of open grass.Â  They delighted in petting the roaming farm dogs, and likewise – the dogs loved it too.Â  Before the movie started, we spilled 2 of the 3 cans of pop we had brought for the kids, and then disaster really struck – the mosquitoes came out in full force.Â  My oldest daughter, who has a propensity for attracting mosquitoes anyway, starting getting eaten alive and screaming about it.Â  Now the movie was starting – Oh, and it was Night at the Museum 2, something we really wanted to see.Â  So we had to pack up our little “camp” and quickly pile into the van to escape the carnivorous mosquitoes.Â  Once inside, it was hot and cramped.Â  Luckily my son was asleep, but the rest of us were all in the back of the van with the seats down trying to stake a claim on a piece of steamless window so we could see the movie.Â  More pop was spilled, and some blankiesÂ  became unusable for the night, which of course caused more tantrums.Â  There was about 20 minutes left in the movie whenÂ  everyone settled down, and our 2-year0ld fell asleep – 2 down, 2 to go!Â  During the interemission between the movies, we found out that many of the mosquitos went away, and my husband and I moved outside while the girls laid in the back of the van.Â  They did not see very much of Wolverine – our oldest didn’t make it past the opening credits.Â  While we weren’t really interested in seeing Wolverine a second time, we did so anyway since we had already paid for it and we were now kid-free.Â  It was such a nice night to sit underÂ  the stars and watch a movie, and it became perfect when a silent farm dog came over for some more petting, honestly, what could be better?Â  From what I saw of it, Night at the Museum 2 is really funny.Â  I definitely have to see it again, but from what I was able to hear, Hank Azaria is just hilarious!Â  And I guess I need to back up so I can tell everyone about my husband’s extremely embarrassing moment.Â  We had pulled into our spot at the drive-in facing the screen, and then we noticed everyone else was backing in and lifting their hatches so they could sit in the back of their vehicles.Â  Thinking this would be a good idea, my husband went to turn the car around while I stood in our parking spot.Â  I looked over to see when he was coming, and that’s when I saw our van backing over one of those posts they have at the drive-in – OH NO.Â  Worse yet, I heard the sound of laughter as people laughed at my husband – I felt so badly for him!Â  The good news is, he was embarrassed, but mostly he was relieved because at first he thought he had hit a person!Â  So no harm done, even the pole was ok.Â  But this explains why turning the car around again was NOT an option when we got chased into the vehicle by mosquitoes!

Sunday we went to church of course, and we continued the Fearless series by hearing the story of Joshua, all of which was fitting for Memorial Day weekend.Â  After church, we decided to do something fun and met friends at the new great restaurant and shared Saganaki, which gained some new fans, I think.Â  Then we ventured up to Michigan, where they have a little fun park place with go-karts and bumper boats.Â  We had a blast!Â  Then the kids fell apart a little bit and presented a perfect example of my husband’s patented “trickle-down crab-onomics” theory.Â  Even so, we had lots of fun, depite the invasion of frogs at the fun park – you heard me, FROGS!

I am afraid of frogs, and I don’t know why.Â  It’s not really something I fear in my head rationally, but rather a “physical” fear.Â  When I see frogs, my body reacts inÂ  any one or more of the following ways: shaking, screaming, crying, “heebie-jeebies” where I’ll just get this creeped out feeling like something is behind me or going to crawl up my back or something.Â  So anyway, on the way over to the bumper cars, there was a grate over a deep manhole that had a BIG green frog in it.Â  That guy was creepy, but I actually felt bad for him – I hope they can get him out.Â  They said next time it rains, the well should fill up and he’ll swim out, but I don’t know…Â  I wanted to throw some bugs down there for him.Â  And then while we were bumper boating, there was actually a FROG IN the bumper boat pool!Â  Luckily for me, this one wasn’t too big, but it really freaked me out – looked like a shark or an alligator floating like that with its head above the water.Â  Once I got over the initial frog freak-out, I was worried it would get smashed by a bumper boat.Â  But it didn’t, and the workers said they get frogs all the time.Â  On the way home, we decided to stop by a large lake where we looked for more frogs, snakes, turtles, and birds, of which, we saw lots.Â  But, we got home late AGAIN and didn’t even stay awake through our rented movie, oh well.

Monday we decided to take it easy and stay home, especially since we had lots of stuff to put away from the busy weekend.Â  And we also had to get all of our garbage out since we get one garbage day per month where we can put out anything we want, no matter how large it is.Â  We had tons of garbage from when we cleaned out and re-did the spare room, but when I woke up, all the garbage was already out there and the house was picked up!Â  What a nice surprise; hubby is the BEST!Â  We decided to go out and get a grill to add to our backyard Eden since we got our fence and our patio set the other day.Â  We went to Walmart and got the grill and some food, and had a cookout, which went pretty well – it was easier and cheaper than taking the kids to a restaurant, and they were better behaved outside then they usually are inside.Â  Overall, another GREAT weekend – I am thankful for the beautiful weather we had all weekend too!Â  Tomorrow it’s supposed to rain, but hey, maybe the frog will be freed.Â  A good thing, as long as he doesn’t hop down to Ohio!

Here’s hoping that your Memorial Day weekend was safe and fun, and hopefully you paused to reflect upon the entire reason we celebrate this time of year – to remember, honor, and be thankful to those American citizens who lost their lives fighting for our country.

### Comments

**mary911**Afraid of frogs? Hm....that is surprising. My brother and I used to go back to the pond with a pillowcase and catch as many as we could, then dad would clean them. Do I dare say that frog legs are DELICIOUS!?!  
**derek**Frogs and mosquitoes... If you equate mosquitoes with flies or gnats then you have two of the Egyptian plagues. :o The kids this past weekend at my church had their Jericho lesson this week as well, though I think the focus was Rahab rather than the battle itself (the only survivor from Jericho due to her faithfulness to God in hiding the Israelite spies). In main church we have been talking about missions. A pastor from Romania had a very passionate message on the topic just a week ago.  
**jamiahsh**Joshua fit the battle of Jericho and the walls come a-tumblin down. Boy could be blow that trumpet. Great story. Fun Sunday... thanks for inviting me. I saw one of your green friends today at our BBQ and thought of the poor thing trapped in the pit.

# WHERE IS THE RAT?!?

My daughters are having a garage sale today.Â  They’ve been working it all by themselves (along with their older friend), and it’s fun to peek out the window and watch them.Â  They’ve gotten a lot of customers, and people are buying our old junk and popsicles and some have even donated money just because the kids are so cute.Â  It kept them busy all morning, and things were going great until they went upstairs to get their bathing suits on because they were hot.Â  That’s when they noticed that one of our four pet rats was not in his cage!Â  Where do you even begin to look for a missing rat in a house?!?

Not only that, but one of our dogs is a terrier mix and has been yearning to taste a pet rat.Â  We needed to find that rat before the dog did!Â  My oldest daughter is a worrier, so of course she started panicking about her rat – near hyperventilation and everything.Â  I started to look for the rat, but then worse-case scenarios started running through my head – what if it got outside and we never found it?Â  What if it was dead somewhere?Â  What if the kids found it dead?Â  What if no one found it dead and it stank up the house for weeks?Â  What if we couldn’t find it and it starved?Â  I went to look under my bed (funny that I thought I saw something running across the floor this morning.Â  I chalked it up to a hallucination caused by lack of sleep which happens to me a lot – I sometimes see my cat running across the floor, and she died over a year ago!), but then I realized that I wouldn’t really WANT to find the rat under there.Â  I’m not scared of rats in the slightest, but today I was not in the mood to look under my bed and have a rodent come running at me.Â  As I was debating what to do next, my daughter found the missing rat (Bobby Jack) in her sock drawer.Â  Apparently the sock drawer was a “safe place” for Bobby since the girls have been putting him in there (!), and he likes it.Â  Nevermind their poor, unsuspecting laundry maid who has rats running all over her work, sigh.

But the good news is the rat is safe and sound.Â  Now we have to figure out how that happened in the first place.Â  My two-year-old admitted to letting the rat out, but my husband thinks she is giving a false confession because she is usually scared to pick up the rats.Â  Hopefully someone let him out and forgot about him and he didn’t get out on his own.Â  IÂ  am just thankful we locateed the MIA rat before the dog did!

### Comments

**What supplies do I need for a new pet rat? | Homemade Pet Food**[...] WHERE IS THE RAT?!? | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**Mary**Yes, indeed. Thank God you found the rat! I think I might have been a little leary about visiting again till the little guy was safe and sound! Cute as they are, I'm just not ready to feel one crawling over my foot......

# Facing Fear

In church as of late, we are in the midst of a pastoral series called Fearless.Â  IÂ  am enjoying this series because so far we have been able to study the BiblicalÂ  story of David and Goliath and also the story of Moses and the Parting of the Red Sea – two stories I’ve certainly heard about, but hadn’t heard the details or about how they relate to modern-day Christianity until now.Â  Last Sunday at church, our pastor told of an amusing story during his Fearless series, and I thought I’d share it.Â  Also in this service, the band accompanied an amazing Bossa Nova / Spanish-style vocalÂ  duet unlike anything I’ve seen in church so far – it was awesome!Â  I can’t reproduce the song unfortunately, but here is a summary of the pastor’s fun story:

*A beautiful village nestled on the bottom of a valley erupted in flames.Â  All of the surrounding villages’ fire engines came to fight the fire, but they all stopped at the top of the hill on the road leading to the burning village in the valley, for they figured the village would not be savable and would only pose a danger to their own firefighters.Â  A rickety old fire truck soon showed up from a distant town, and it didn’t hesitate as it crested the hill and rode straight into the valley to fight the fire.Â  The fire was extinguished, the village saved, and there was a grand ceremony of celebration.Â  When the fearless fire department who put out the fire rose to accept their rewards and thanks, the fire chief took the stage.Â  The mayor of the saved village asked him, “What are you going to do with your rewards and with your thank-you money?”Â  The fire chief of that heroic fire department whoÂ  fearlessly rode downÂ  the hill to save the neighboring town said, “The first thing we are going to do is to fix the brakes on that fire truck!”*

The moral of the story?Â  Here’s my take:Â  The “fearless” fire-fighters didn’t even mean to go into the fire to fight it…Â  But they did just that, and once they got down in the valley accidentally (because of the failed brakes on the fire truck), they faced their fears and conquered that fire, even though they didn’t originally intend to and also despite their fears.

The story tied in nicely with our church’s Fearless series.Â  And our pastor told us that story, I think, to get our attention and to get us thinking…Â  And that it did.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yes, indeed... very cool ;)  
**derek**Cool! 8)  
**Taylhis**Actually, in the same sermon as the fire truck story we also heard the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And a few weeks ago, the pastor talked about David and Goliath. And hubby pointed out the irony of the subject of the series, given recent events where we had to draw upon "fearlessness" to stand up to a group when their opinion differed from ours. Church has definitely been a positive thing for us!  
**derek**Good story :) The Bible is filled with many examples of fearlessness. Generally, it relates to how much faith one has in God. Daniel and his friends we know as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; the Apostles; and of course Jesus Himself. For boldness in yourself for sharing your faith when worldly consequences are certain, we are to call upon God for boldness which He will give. So, have faith, get boldness/fearlessness. I am really happy that you have not only found this church, but that God is really growing you through it. Just posting about your faith as you're doing is being bold for it- bold for Christ. I pray you'll continue.  
**jamiahsh**I can think of several (seemingly) fearless individuals who have dared to face adversity head on... successful or not.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, indeed a modern David slew the Goliath.

# CUBS Vs Sox

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/cubs1.jpg)

I haven’t had a chance to blog much, but a few posts ago in my “To Hellinois…Â  … And Back Again” blog series, I mentioned that I might be partaking in a “very exciting, awesomely fun event” to which I promised, “more on that later”.

Now that the event is definite, I am bursting with excitement, so I will share –Â  hubby got us tickets to see the Chicago Cubs play the White Sox LIVE!Â  I’ve been wanting to go to a Cubs game for awhile (since our last visit to Wrigley in 2004), but last summer was out because I had a baby and unscheduled surgery from which I had to recover.Â  So, June 28 at ~~Comisky Park~~ US Cellular Field, we will venture into Chicagoland once again to cheer on the Chicago Cubs while on the turf of the Chicago White Sox – AWESOME!Â  My mom was nice enough to agree to watch all 4 kids for the day (and the eldest 3 for the rest of the week, BOOLYAH!), and the tickets for the BIG GAME arrived in the mail the other day.

They accidentally got thrown away in the garbage with the junk mail, but LUCKILY hubby was heads up and asked about the whereabouts of the tickets.Â  That’s when I realized that I probably had thrown them away – by accident of course!Â  Good thing he asked when he did – the tickets were found not too near the bottom of the garbage and salvaged, thank goodness!

But anyway, I am looking forward to this event like you wouldn’t believe.Â  Not only is it **LIVE** baseball, but it’s MLB, not AAA or AA.Â  And it’s the Cubs I get to go watch, and they’re playing the SOX – their arch-rival (especially as far as I’m concerned – I HATE those White Sox!!!).Â  So I would say yeah, even though it’s not even 2 months after our last Chicago visit, this visit will be well worth it!Â  So watchÂ  for us – we’ll be decked out in Cubs gear to be sure to properly invade the South Side Sox turf.Â  The game is at 12:05pm local time on June 28 – the last of a 3-game series between the two teams, so it promises to be that much more exciting!Â  It’s scheduled to be shown on WGN, so if you get that channel, check it out, you just might see Taylhis and Co.!

GO CUBS!!!!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/05/cubs.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I bet you did.  
**taylhis**ME TOO!!!!! I almost cried with relief!  
**jamiahsh**HOW AWESOME! Glad you noticed they were missing before the tickets were really thrown out.

# Misc Kid Updates

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

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

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

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

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SAMMIE!!!!!

### Comments

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

# Tri-State Weekend

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And two of my 4 happy kids at the zoo:

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Northwest Ohio Is Cracking Up!

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

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

### Comments

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

# One Of The Best Email Forwards Ever

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

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

### Comments

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

# He Just Got Too Tired...

… to even eat his lunch!

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

### Comments

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

# When Squatters Go Bad...

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Dr. Sanderson's Game Library

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Blogging Break

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Happy Mother's Day!

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# EUREKA!

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Rehabbing

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Stress Relief

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

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

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

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

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

4. No one knows your secret place.

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# ...And Back Again

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# To Hellinois...

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Thrice Upon A Potty

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Simultaneous Sports

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

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

### Comments

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

# Bowling Obsessed

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

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# This Economy Stinks!

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Fly On The Wall

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

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

### Comments

# Nightmare On Alumni Street

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# This Swine Flu Business

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

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

### Comments

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

# A College Student Could Have Done Better

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

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

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

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

From Wikipedia.com:

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Foogle

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Flat Stanley To The Rescue!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Thanks!*

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

*Dear Ben,*

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

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

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

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

*Love, Grandma*

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

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

### Comments

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

# I Smell A Rat...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# The Clinic - A Preview

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

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

### Comments

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

# ALS Is An Awful Disease

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# I'm Grounded

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

### Comments

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

# Busiest Weekend EVER! Part Two

*(continued from a previous blog post)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Busiest Weekend EVER!

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Not For The Faint Of Heart

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# The Story Of Edgar Sawtelle

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Sammie Hasn't Done This... Yet

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# This Boyle Madness

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Sundance, Here We Come!

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

### Comments

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

# Time Flies When You're Having Fun

I was musing today about something…

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

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

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

Sunrise, sunset, quickly flow theÂ  years…

### Comments

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

# No More Goat Heads, Please

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

**GO CUBS!**

### Comments

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

# I Quite Understandably Mistook The Photographer As A Zombie

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Incredible Baseball!

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Cutest Cubs Fan Ever!

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

Enough said.

### Comments

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

# Happy Easter!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Happy Easter everyone!

### Comments

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

# Audrey's Adventure

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Small Town Networking

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Chasing The Frog

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Why Your Dog REALLY Goes Outside

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

Why your dog REALLY goes outside:

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

### Comments

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

# Celebrating A Decade Of Love

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

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

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



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

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

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

### Comments

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

# The Kirby Nightmare

### Comments

# My Bad Day

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Country's Biggest Night!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Wagon O' Cuties

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

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

### Comments

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

# My Dog Is Not A Cat

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# April Fool's!

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

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# The Haunting In Connecticut

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

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

### Comments

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

# Monsters VS Aliens

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

*(continued from previous posts)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Some Things I Should Clear Up...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Knowing I Love You Man

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# New York Trip Diary Volume 5

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

*(continued from previous posts)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# New York Trip Diary Volume 4

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

*(continued from previous posts)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# New York Trip Diary Volume 3

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

*(continued from previous posts)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# New York Trip Diary Volume 2

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

*(continued from a previous post)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

and measure their wing spans:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# New York Trip Diary Volume 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Elephants Are Not Toys

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

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

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

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

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

*The circus continued as scheduled.*

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

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

**

### Comments

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

# A Time Capsule - Literally

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

# Buried Treasure

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Dream Sequence...

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

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

### Comments

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

# Parker - The Eternal Optimist

### Comments

# Manners, Kid-Style

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

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

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

**SAMMIE**

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

### Comments

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

# The Bus Driver Did WHAT?!?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# The Mayor And The Macarena - Part Deux

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# The Lion In Winter

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# The Prehistoric Honeymooners

### Comments

# Black Sheep

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# What Sets Him Off?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here’s a picture of the jerk:

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

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

### Comments

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

# Push

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Snagglepuss

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

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

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



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



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



HAPPY 8 MONTH BIRTHDAY CHRISTOPHER!!!

### Comments

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

# What The Truck?

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

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











### Comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Potty Humor

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

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

### Comments

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

# Meet Me In St. Louis

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

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

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

Random Meet Me in St. Louis Trivia

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# And Speaking Of This Horrible Economy...

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

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

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

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

### Comments

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

# Springing Ahead

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

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

“After losing your job, your 401K, and your house, losing an hour of sleep seems like nothing!”

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Same here, j  
**derek**Yes, unlike fall forgetting to change the clock for this morning can cause one to actually miss something. I do remember forgetting once in the fall. I showed up at work an hour early and was wondering where everyone was. Oops.  
**justj**I really hate time changes on the weekends I'm in a show. :(  
**jamiahsh**OR being late for a theatre performance :D Thanks, taylhis such a pal.

# Have No Fear, Polyp Man Is Here!

You ~~heard~~ read me right – I did say Polyp Man.Â  Found this amusing picture in the newspaper the other day and I couldn’t resist posting it:



It’s a little goofy, but hey, whatever works to raise awareness to help people detect and combat colon cancer.Â  If Polyp Man saves lives, more power to him.Â  I do have a little sympathy for the guy in the Polyp Man suit though; he looks like he feels ridiculous.Â  Is being Polyp Man a resumÃ© builder I wonder?

### Comments

**derek**Yes. Says the one who has not seen a doctor in the last decade. :P  
**taylhis**Well, Blood Cell Man, Bone Marrow Man, Prostate Man, or Breast Man (which means something else entirely - let's just not go there. Besides, the costume would not be appropriate for public events) just don't have the same amusing ring to them that Polyp Man has. And a general Cancer Man would just be depressing. But you do have a good point. Like I said, any way to get more people diagnosed more quickly to save lives is a good thing.  
**derek**Perhaps he wishes he had more than sunglasses to cover his face in case someone recognizes him? And why the focus on just one type of cancer? More people than we would think get it? I guess now that we're aware of leukemia, breast cancer, and prostate cancer it's time to raise awareness of another type. Hmm.  
**jamiahsh**looking and feeling ridiculous is sometimes a good thing... maybe looking to some people. But, yes he is providing a great service.

# Multi-Tasking

Because being a Stay-at-home-mom (SAHM to laypeople) is my current profession, I am required to multi-task on a daily basis in a way some people have never experienced. Â  My “pay” (bringing up healthy happy children who turn into independent, admirable adults) is by no means immediate, and it also depends upon my ability to multi-task.Â  Consider the following 2 scenarios most SAHM’s must endure on a daily basis (and these are just 2 of MANY!):Â  Can I fold and put away a load of laundry while planning and preparing a nutritious lunch for 4 kids while simultaneously managing “surprise” but necessary tasks that appear; like changing diapers, washing hands, and refereeing any arguments that break out?Â  Can I accomplish buying everything I need at Walmart while staying within our family’s budget AND concurrently fulfilling the needs of my two youngest children in a timely enough fashion to be able to pick up their older sisters at school at the time I’m expected?

Man, when I put that all on paper it sounds difficult.Â  And sometimes it is, but most of the time, I do it without thinking because I love and treasure my family.Â  But if you know a SAHM and she seems like an airhead or like she’s not-so-bright or even a little bit loopy, just remember everything that must go through her mind on a daily basis, then multiply that by how many kids she has…Â  It just might provide enough explanation for her scatter-brained behavior!

Gee, being a SAHM-of-four sure makes my working-mom-of-one days look easy.Â  Back then my multitasking consisted of paying bills and doing paperwork while I sat inÂ  traffic…Â  And although my current lifestyle is much more hard work than I’ve ever had before, it’s that much more rewarding also, and I wouldn’t trade it for the world!

### Comments

**taylhis**Aw, shucks... Thank you :)  
**jamiahsh**I second that.... you ARE a wonderful mother.  
**Phyllis Beyer**As I have told you before, Lisa....you will never regret being a stay-at-home mom. I loved my years at home with you and Kim. Now, of course, I enjoy my job and being with adults all day. You are a wonderful Mom, but I really don't know how you manage 4 kids. I barely made it with 2.  
**jamiahsh**And you do a MAH-VELOUS job of it :D

# Ahh... A Relaxing Baseball Game And A.... LOSS?!?

I had a really stressful day yesterday.Â  The kids went completely crazy at night – was it a full moon?Â  I didn’t check.Â  Even if that was the case, other little things kept going wrong also.Â  Little things – things that reallyÂ  shouldn’t matter.Â  Except that when those little things are added up, they equal *one bad day*.Â  So I thought I could beat my stress by looking forward to watching some BASEBALL on TV.Â  Yes, that’s right, I said BASEBALL on TV!Â  And it’s only early March –Â  we haven’t even changed the clocks yet!

I just happened to look on tvguide.com yesterday to see if I could look forward to a new episode of Lost, and I noticed that my favorite baseball team, the Chicago Cubs, were set to play their cross-town rivals, the Chicago White Sox and it was going to actually be on tv in our little corner of NW Ohio!Â  Even though it’s only spring training, that brightened my mood considerably since it’s been MONTHS since I’ve gotten to watch baseball.Â  With the way my day was going, I was sure something would go wrong – the tvguide had made a mistake and we didn’t get it, Vegas (where the game was played) would disappear into a sinkhole, something like that.Â  But 10:00 finally rolled around, and the game was on!Â  AND, the teams were putting in their starters rather than their scrub players, which meant real, actual baseball to watch!Â  So I felt better; I relaxed and sat down to watch the game, and of course, that’s when myÂ  two middle children (the trouble-makers of the brood these days) decided to start fighting.Â  So it wasn’t peaceful, but I did get to watch the game.Â  And it was a good game – the Cubs were down, but then they tied it up, but of course the Sox came back to win.Â  A disappointing outcome for such an otherwise great game.Â  But the good news is, it was only spring training so who caresÂ  who won!

After the game I left WGN on the tv, and I was treated to an episode of the old tv show Alf.Â  Remember Alf?Â  It was a sitcom from the 80’s about a family who discovers an Alien Life Form (ALF), and takes him in to live with them.Â  Alf is a furry wise-cracking puppet with an affinity for cats (to eat!), and the family must keep him secret so he doesn’t get taken away.Â  Alf was a huge fad inÂ  the 80’s; there were toys, lunchboxes, a cartoon spinoff, you name it.Â  After the Alf episode, on came the Steve Wilkos show (he’s the former bodyguard from the Jerry Springer show who now has his own trashy talk show – I wrote about this in a previous post, probably because of my disbelief that they would actually give this guy air time).Â  And that was my cue to hit the sack for my lovely 4Â½ hours sleep.Â  So far, today has been a little better, although our trouble-making 4-year-old is at school.Â  Tonight I’m looking forward to a brand spankin’ new Office episode – YIPPEE!Â  But first I have to get through a few boring meetings.Â  Sure hope I don’t doze; I am awfully tired!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**WGN has retro on Sunday nights (or it used to) including ALF. Can't wait to see the new Office sometime.

# Doubt

We saw the Oscar nominated film [Doubt](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0918927/) the other night.Â  Normally, I like to see as many of the major Academy Award contenders before the awards show airs as it did a few weeks ago, but it’s usually not possible to see every single one in time.Â  Even though it didn’t win any of the 5 Oscars for which it was nominated, the buzz that surrounded Doubt was so intriguing that we decided to check it out.

For a movie being based primarily on dialogue, it is very fast-paced.Â  I was never bored, which is something I can’t say about a Good Will Hunting, an Oscar winning movie we watched last week.Â  Good Will Hunting a long movie, so it took us two nights to watch it, and I fell asleep both nights during the movie.Â  Not that it was a horrible movie; I don’t know much about it – IÂ  was sleeping!

Ok, back from the Oscar tangent, back to Doubt.Â  This movie is based on a stage play, and the author of the play also wrote the screenplay and directed the film version; which I think is very important so nothing was lost in the translation between stage and screen.Â  The story is compelling; it’s about a Catholic school in 1964 where the principal, a nun brilliantly portrayed by Meryl Streep, suspects the priest is having an inappropriate relationship with the school’s only African-American student.Â  Amy Adams portrays Sister James, a naive freshman nun who is caught in the middle of the conflict.Â  Amy Adams is one of the actors from this movie who was nominated for an Oscar, and it’s understandable when you see what a far cry Sister James is from Adams’ purse-selling ex-cheerleader Katy on The Office or the character Leslie Miller from her first film, the teen beauty pageant spoof Drop Dead Gorgeous from 1999.Â  Phillip Seymour Hoffman was excellent in Doubt also; hardly recognizable from the 1990’s roles where I saw him previously in the movies Twister and Leap of Faith.Â  It’s easy to see how Viola Davis received her Oscar nomination for Doubt as well – she had lines in just one scene in the entire movie, but her performance was excellent, however short on screen time.Â  You win some and you lose some, which explains how those 3 actors walked away without their Academy Awards.Â  Inexplicable, however, is how Meryl Streep did not win an Oscar for Doubt.Â  True, I haven’t seen The Reader with Kate Winslet, the actress who won the Leading Actress Oscar instead of Meryl Streep.Â  I did see Changeling with Angelina Jolie who was also nominated, and judging by the phenomenal performances of Streep and Jolie and the fact that Winslet was the winner, I might just have to see The Reader.Â  I loved Angelina Jolie in Changeling, and I’m not usually a fan of hers, so that says something.Â  IÂ  loved Meryl Streep in The Devil Wears Prada, but honestly, I used to think Hollywood had a strange habit of sucking up to Meryl Streep.Â  How can she be THAT good, I would wonder…Â  until I saw Doubt.Â  She IS “that good”.

I can see where this movie would make an excellent stage play.Â  But after seeing 4 of the most talented actors out there portraying the lead roles on the big screen, who would even want to be compared to that byÂ  staging a live theatrical production of Doubt?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I have always felt that if a movie is going to be made from previous source be it a book or a play, the author or playwright should have at least some input. Bravo to Mr. Shanley for helming the cinematic production. I will catch it on DVD.

# Twins - Years Apart

Everyone says it.Â  Our family, friends and acquaintances are in agreement – our two middle children look just like each other.Â  They could pass for twins, except for the fact that Sammie is almost 5 and Disney is 2Â½ – so twins years apart, you might say.Â  Don’t believe me?Â  Nothing like photographic evidence…



### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yes, I agree Grandma B. They are both absolutely adorable. WOW, taylhis I am amazed I can't imagine you being a little Sammie :D  
**Phyllis Beyer**They are both absolutely adorable. And.....they look just like you did at that age. I do have to say though, you were just a little like them, temperment wise. What is the saying....what goes around, comes around.  
**taylhis**Interesting theory... But I forgot to mention that their personalities are like night and day. Well, WERE like night and day until Dis turned two. Now she reminds me more and more of Sammie the handful, sigh... Then again, people DO say that twins have opposite personalities a lot... I plead the 5th!  
**derek**You froze Sammie's twin's egg for 2Â½ years, didn't you? **DIDN'T YOU??** :P  
**jamiahsh**Swimmin in the bathtub.. la de da de dum. My siblings and I could never deny each other in terms of looks but Dis and Sammie are REALLY close.

# For Those Born Between 1930-1979

The following words of wisdom came to me in an email forward.Â  However, I have to disagree with some of it since I was born near the end of the window and I did have some of the things growing up that the email says I would not have had.Â  So, I put my personal comments about this email forward in *italics*.

THOSE BORN 1930-1979

READ TO THE BOTTOM FOR QUOTE OF THE MONTH BY JAY LENO . IF YOU DON’T READ ANYTHING ELSE—VERY WELL STATED

TO ALL THE KIDS WHO SURVIVED the 1930’s, 40’s, 50’s, 60’s and 70’s!!Â  *(I can barely get credit for surviving the 70’s.Â  After all, I only experienced the 70’s for a year and a half!)*

First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they were pregnant.Â  *(Well, ok, maybe everyone reading this survived some of that, but that doesn’t make it right, of course!)*

They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a can, and didn’t get tested for diabetes .

Then after that trauma, we were put to sleep on our tummies in baby cribs covered with bright colored lead-based paints.

We had no child- proof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and whenÂ  we rode our bikes, we had no helmets.Â  Not to mention the risks we tookÂ  hitchhiking.Â  *(that is definitely before my time.Â  I’ve never hitchhiked.Â  And the only people I know who have are either deceased or over the age of 50!)*

As infants & children, we would ride in cars with no car seats, booster seats , seat belts or air bags.Â  *(Ok, I remember this – every kid I knew whose parents had a station wagon would ride in the back of it for long trips, no seatbelts.Â  I think kids should be buckled up, but I think the whole booster / car seat until they’re 8 years old is just plain ridiculous!Â  Ah, the effects those lobbyists have on Congress is purely amazing, isn’t it?)*

Riding in the back of a pick up on a warm day was always a special treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and NOT from a bottle.

We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle and NO ONE actually died from this.

We ate cupcakes, white bread and real butter and drank Kool-aid made with sugar, but we weren’t overweight because WE WERE ALWAYS OUTSIDE PLAYING!Â  *(Well, a few people I went to school with DO have heart problems, but…)*

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on.

No one was able to reach us all day. And we were OK.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem.

We did not have Playstations, Nintendo ‘s, X-boxes, no video games at all *(umm, I beg to differ.Â  My generation had Atari, Intellivision, the Commodore, the Tandy, the original Nintendo, and even some hand-held electronic games),* no 150 channels on cable, no video movies *(again, not true.Â  I remember the day my family got our VCR.Â  I was worried my big sister would be mad because she was at a sleepover when we got it and the whole event was so exciting.Â  We rushed right out to the video store to rent a video.Â  But all the good ones seemed to be in BETA, not VHS…)* or DVD’s, no surround-sound or CD’s *(but we had records, casette tapes, and walkmans!*), no cell phones, no personal computers, no Internet or chatrooms…….

WE HAD FRIENDS and we went outside and found them!

We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents.

We ate worms and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever.Â  *(Nor did the gum we swallowed stay in our tummies for seven years – hehe)*

We were given BB guns for our 10th birthdays, made up games with sticks and tennis balls, and although we were told it would happen, we did not poke out very many eyes.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend’s house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just walked in and talked to them!

Little League had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn’t had to learn to deal with disappointment.Â  Imagine that!!Â  *(Nowadays, we’d be lucky to get enough kids to have to turn them away, not that we would, but the point is, many kids are busy playing video games or causing trouble…Â  or their parents are just too busy to let them commit to anything extracurricular)*

The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law!Â  *(Nowadays kids are charged as adults, so parents aren’t often given the option to decide what’s best for their own child!)*

These generations have produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever!

The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned HOW TO DEAL WITH IT ALL!

If YOU are one of them CONGRATULATIONS!

You might want to share this with others who have had the luck to grow up as kids, before the lawyers and the government regulated so much of our lives for our own good.

While you are at it, forward it to your kids so they will know how brave (and lucky) their parents were.

Kind of makes you want to run through the house with scissors, doesn’t it?!

The quote of the month is by Jay Leno:

‘With hurricanes, tornadoes, fires out of control, mud slides, flooding,severe thunderstorms tearing up the country from one end to another,and with the threat of bird flu and terrorist attacks, are we sure this is a good time to take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?’

For those that prefer to think that God is not watching over us…go ahead and delete this.

For the rest of us…pass this ON!

*Ok, I’m not a big fan of passing on email forwards…Â  But this one entertained me, so do with it what you will, and remember that my contributions are the ones in italics, so thanks for reading my commentary!*

### Comments

**justj**Pay for sports?? We played in the backyard, playground or any empty ball field.  
**derek**About sports, these days there aren't a lot signed up because the parents can no longer afford it. I definitely agree with most of this. I really would be out of the house for hours, walking down the creek or just playing in the park- out of the sight of my mother. I was about six, and I was probably often with my brother though (three years older). I had an Atari and later Colecovision, and a friend of mine had the Odyssey2 (like jamiahsh). Lawsuits, I'm afraid, are one aspect of losing personal responsibility in the rise of liberalism and growing rejection of God, or faith in any form for that matter. (I know I offended some with the attack on their ideology, but I truly believe that it is very dangerous, and at its roots very evil).  
**jamiahsh**Yeah, the cell phone thing. Cell phones at school get me. Ten years ago (or less) this phenomenon was totally unheard of. And we did not suffer from it. And now, kids sit in class texting back and forth. I remember sitting in class when notes were passed, confiscated, and read aloud by the teacher. Summers were active with me, too. Sunup to sundown and sometimes beyond sundown. Get back up and brush yourself off.  
**justj**Miss a TV show, well we hoped we would catch the repeat. But some shows never had repeats (sports). The VCR was a big hit. Somehow as a child I got along without the VCR, cordless phones, cell phones, color TV (we never had one growing up, it wasn't important), bike helmets or even baseball helmets in the backyard. We grew up playing wiffleball, baseball, softball, football, basketball, and other sports. We played in the snow, we road bikes everywhere. I can't remember a summer where we spent a lot of time indoors. And through all of this, I haven't had a bone set by a Doctor, or a tooth knocked out that wasn't supposed to come out. I think I survived.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I enjoyed reading your comments. I didn't realize getting a VCR was such a big deal to you.  
**jamiahsh**I remember a "back of the pick up" tale in my brother's truck that I think I have posted on. I remember riding in the back end of the station wagon on our Vacation to California (this was pre Griswold's... we could have well been the inspiration for it... Thank Goodness Wally World wasn't closed when we got there). My dad hitched a ride on the turnpike in his youth... and he is over 50, too. AH... the VCR, we must have been one of the last to get one, b/c I believe BETAMAX had gone the way of pet rocks. And we had an Atari knockoff called the Odyssey with games like Pick-Ax Pete (Donkey Kong) and K.C. Munchkin (an obvious Pac-Man wannabe). But yes, culture has changed since our youts.

# MISSING

I like to read the news stories on dailyherald.comÂ  – probably because they have much more interesting news than my local newspaper.Â  But hey, that’s not a complaint since more interesting news = more crime to write about.Â  But I grew up in the Chicago area, so when there are interesting stories on dailyherald.com, I know where the town is they’re talking about, which is another reason why I frequent the site.Â  Today’s edition had an interesting (but sad) story:

*Naperville police are desperately searching for a missing 12-year-old child who allegedly took the keys to his family car and left the home.*

*Cmdr. Dave Hoffman of the Naperville Police Department said the child is 5-feet, 8-inches tall, about 140 pounds, has wavy brown hair and brown eyes. He is believed to be wearing gray cargo pants and a white T-shirt and a green winter Army jacket.*

*Hoffman said the boy allegedly took the keys sometime after 2 a.m., left his house, backed the vehicle out of the garage.*

*Hoffman added the boy also has a history of sleep walking, but has no history of taking the family vehicle for rides when sleep walking.*

*The vehicle missing is described as a light blue, 2008 Hyundai Santa Fe with an Illinois registration number of A744198.*

*Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the Naperville Police Department through 9-1-1 of or contact your local law enforcement agency.*

Hopefully this kid is going to be alright.Â  Does a 12-year-old know how to drive, especially in his sleep?Â  At that age, it’s quite possible that he decided to run away also, but he does have a history of sleepwalking.Â  The article fails to mention how they KNOW he took the keys and left – was there a witness?Â  I know where Naperville is; in fact, I used to live there.Â  It’s a nice town, but it’s a dangerous world.Â  I am hoping they find this kid safe and sound.Â  It’s a sad story, but let’s hope there’s a happy ending.Â  I know some of you loyal readers know people who sleepwalk and have interesting tales – let’s hear them!

*\*UPDATE\* – The kid was found safe and sound at O’Hare airport.Â  Apparently he was not sleepwalking but was trying to run away.Â  How a 12-year-old was able to navigate the expressways to get to O’Hare I don’t know – but thank goodness he is safe.*

### Comments

**justj**Running away, and driving to the airport at 12! I couldn't see them doing that in Toledo, much less Chicago.. Wow!! I glad the child is safe from the drive. I am hoping the problems at home really didn't necessitate the child leaving.  
**jamiahsh**Yes.. thank goodness for the young man's safe return. Hopefully, the family will have an intervention of its own and alleviate whatever problems exist there.  
**derek**I hope the home circumstances that led him to feel like running away have changed. I'm glad to hear he's back safe and sound.  
**jamiahsh**Not sure if this qualifies, but I used to find myself thinking it was time to get up in the morning. I would even get showered and dressed and then saw what time it was: 2AM one time. Hope the article has a happy ending.

# So THAT Explains My Crazy 9-Year-Old!

Our oldest child was always “the good one”.Â  She was responsible, logical, creative, and very helpful with her 3 younger siblings.Â  A few months ago, things changed.Â  Not a day went by when she didn’t have a tantrum or when she was the worst behaved kid of the day.Â  What has happened to our sweet little girl, we wondered?Â  Are these teenage hormone changes kicking in, and will we not see any relief until she’s grown up?Â  With a high-maintenance spitfire 4-year-old,Â  a toddler deep within the throes of the “terrible twos” and a baby in the house, how would we ever make it, especially without the help of our “model” kid?

I was so frustrated with her behavior that I did a simple google search for ‘moody 9 year old’.Â  What I found wasÂ  a HUGE relief in the form of a very informative article that helped to define the behavior of a child going through this particular transition period.Â  Most people aren’t aware of any traditional behavior problems in the average 9-year-old child, but this article described my daughter to a “T” (and her name is Taylor, haha)Â  But seriously, the article was a huge load off!Â  Not only did it totally describe the alarming behavior changes, but it also gave survival tips for the rest of the family.Â  Coincidentally, ever since I read the article, her behavior has improved and she’s pretty much back to normal.Â  But if we should have a relapse or if someone else does a search for ‘moody 9 year old” and they’re led to my blog, here is a copy of the helpful article:

*From http://www.informedfamilylife.org/2005/01/parenting\_the\_nine\_year\_old.html  
This article by Rahima Baldwin Dancy on “Parenting the Nine Year Old” describes the developmental changes of the nine-year-old child and how parents and Waldorf education meet this psychological stage. It first appeared in Mothering, Summer, 1989.*

Parents of nine year olds often wonder, “What is happening to my child?” Children at this age can become very critical and argumentative, or very moody and withdrawn. Nightmares, irrational fears, headaches and stomachaches often arise. Some children feel as if no one at school likes them, or others become suddenly self-conscious about being rich, poor, or otherwise “different.” Parents may be accused of being unfair or of not understanding, as the child rushes off and slams his or her door.

Searching for an explanation for the changes in behavior, parents sometimes blame a new teacher, a recent move, changes in the family such as separation or the birth of a sibling, or simply “growing pains”. An understanding of what is actually taking place can help us avoid needless worry and provide the support and guidance that children need during this time.

What is Happening?  
The special needs of the nine year old are the result of an important change in consciousness that marks the end of early childhood and the transition to a new developmental phase. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, states, “In the ninth year the child really experiences a complete transformation of its being, which indicates an important transformation of its soul-life and its bodily-physical experiences.”

Earlier, before the age of five or so, the child has a dreamlike state of consciousness in which the outer world and inner experience end to flow together. Outer events are not “observed,” but are deeply taken in through unconscious imitation. Whereas babies learn nearly everything through imitation, kindergarten-age children continue to imitate many aspects of their world, such as the movements of the teacher or parent.

While the power of imitation is so strong, the child feels united with the world and experiences no sense of aloneness. But with the loss of this power around the age of nine, the child feels separated from the world. Something that was hidden and slumbering begins to awaken. Nine year olds suddenly have a strong experience of themselves as separate beings, with a new feeling of distance from the world and other people. This sense of self, first experienced around age two-and-a-half, recurs now in a much deeper way, as the inner emotional life of the child begins to develop.

Although children react differently to leaving the sweet, dreamlike world of early childhood, one response is nearly universal: children become more conscious of their surroundings. You will probably find that what was once passed by unnoticed is suddenly focused on and questioned. This awakening to the world may be met with quiet astonishment or sharp criticism, depending on the child’s temperament.

A critical child may notice whether the statements people make are grounded in the real world or are a veneer. He or she may begin to question parents and teachers, wondering, “How do they know everything?” and, indeed, “Do they really know everything?” Something in the child is seeking reassurance that the authority of the adult will stand the test of quality, and that it carries an inner certainty.

In contrast, another child may become more withdrawn and start to look under the bed at night, or may have frequent stomachaches in response to this new sense of being alone. Parents whose children suddenly want to be alone often feel as if they are “losing” their children, as if the children no longer want to share their developing inner worlds. This is a time when intimations of mortality and death can enter a child’s consciousness. Religious questions and concerns about good and evil may also emerge with the child’s increased self-awareness and sense of choice and responsibility.

Usually, within six months after the ninth birthday (and sometimes earlier), the children are profoundly aware of this new sense of separateness between the self and the outer world. As the “I” penetrates into awareness, children begin to experience themselves as self-contained beings. The often feel as though they are in a threshold situation, poised, as it were, on the cusp of their own destiny. A 70-year-old woman wrote of this time in her life: “In this year I had a significant I-experience. I had just come from school in the city and had to change trams. In this moment of waiting, the complete certainty came to me that now all of life lay before me and that I was the one that must travel it.

Essentially, the nine year old is experiencing his or her own identity-to become a separate individuality, able to confront the outer world. Ideally, the child comes through this difficult time with a sense of connection with his or her higher self, a kind of “knowing” that will remain even after the heightened awareness is integrated.

My son spent many difficult months in the throes of “the nine-year change.” One night, as he popped out of bed for the third time, I had to muster great self-control to say, “What now?” “I’m glad I’m me!” he announced, radiating like the sun. He went on to explain, “It’s just like the song “The Age of Not Believing.” The words of the Disney song ran through my mind: “You must face the age of not believing, doubting everything you ever knew. Until at last you start believing, there’s something wonderful in you.” We all shared in his joy and thanked God that family life could once again return to normal.

Parenting Tips  
What can parents do to help their child through this important turning point at age nine?  
– Understanding what is happening will help both your child and yourself as a parent. When both parents, or parents together with the teacher, consider a child and his real needs, it can help give the child balance. Be patient– this, too, shall pass. Ten is a wonderfully harmonious time between the crisis at age nine and adolescence, when the next intensifying of self-consciousness occurs.  
– Be willing to let your child have her own inner emotional life. You can’t “fix it.” Honor her need for privacy or her sudden impatience with a younger sister. Be willing to let go and tolerate distance. Your relationship is changing and will improve again once alterations have been completed. Be nearby with understanding and reassurance that she is still loved.  
– Share your thoughts with your child about things that go beyond the every-day affairs of life. But don’t limit your child by providing “answers” or definitions that can’t grow within the child when asked about things like God or death.  
– Have faith in self-healing, in your child’s ability to come through this phase. Support individual artistic activity that attracts your child (writing poetry, keeping a diary, drawing or painting, music).  
– Support your child’s interest in the world by providing opportunities to build things, visit a farm, plant a garden, do work in the real world. Encourage a connection with the plant and animal kingdoms and with simple human creative activities now before the child explores the world of technology, which is more appropriate for adolescence.  
– Nourish your child with stories that illustrate the interconnectedness of life and the powers of fate and destiny. The story of Joseph and his coat of many colors has this element of the dream heralding his destiny and the patience he needed to see it manifest. In the curriculum of the Waldorf schools, the Old Testament stories are .told in third grade because they mirror 2- the inner state of the nine-year-old child. The creation story, for example, describes the child’s own experience of leaving the paradisiacal realm of early childhood, acquiring new self-awareness, and with it the added dimensions of choice and increasing responsibility for one’s actions. In fourth grade the heroic tales of the Norse myths represent the exploits of the new ego in larger- than-life fashion. The Waldorf curriculum also introduces the child to the world through projects in house-building, farming, and the study of the plant and animal kingdoms, not as abstract sciences, but in relation to the human being.  
– Recognize that the child needs to establish a new respect for adult authority that goes beyond the blind acceptance of the younger child. Parents can encourage this by honoring a child’s new relationship with a teacher or other adults in his life. Steiner states, “What matters is that at this moment in life, the child can find someone–whether this be one person or possibly several persons is of less importance–whose picture it can carry through life.”(3) Parents can also help themselves be this kind of authority by presenting a united front to the child and by both sitting down with the child when questions of discipline arise (single parents may want to bring in a teacher or other adult during this time).

The magnitude of the changes that a child of this age is going through can be better understood if you contemplate the differences between the child of seven and the child of twelve. The seven year old is light-hearted and always in movement. The limbs are active for learning (through touching, doing, walking the times tables, and so forth). In contrast, the head is relatively large and still dreamy. The seven year old is just beginning to get adult teeth. His or her emotions are easily influenced by impressions from the world, with tears changing to smiles relatively easily.

The twelve year old, on the other hand, has a head that is very awake for thinking and longer limbs which seem heavy, tired, and often awkward to control. There is a rich and sometimes over-powering inner emotional life; the older child brings a great deal more to each experience. Physically, the sexual organs are beginning to mature as the child enters puberty.

The nine-year-old is in the middle between the world of early childhood and the world of adolescence. The physical and emotional changes which you may observe in your nine-year-old child are the outer manifestations of the tremendous change in consciousness which is going on within the child’s expanding inner world. By understanding the nature of these changes, we can better provide support in parenting the nine year old.

Awakening to the world and a new sense of self brings with it a new need: to understand the real world of everyday life, while at the same time long for intimations of something beyond ordinary life. As parents and teachers, our task is to become loving authorities for the growing child, sharing both a true picture of the world and a sense of our own inner striving.

### Comments

**Phyllis Beyer**If you think age 9 is a trying time, wait until the teenage years.  
**jamiahsh**Show me that smile again. (Show me that smile) Don't waste another minute on your cryin. We're nowhere near the end (nowhere near) The best is ready to begin. Sounds like your typical, everyday Growing Pains... sorry for the bad pun ;)

# Disney's Intervention

It’s no secret that our formally sweet daughter Disney is in the throes of the ‘terrible twos’ right now.Â  One minute she’ll be snuggling…Â  But the next minute, she’ll be spitting, pinching, hitting, pulling hair, or one of the other horrible behaviors that define the ‘terrible twos’.Â  So the other night, we had some friends over for a game night – a bunch of adults sitting around the table snacking, talking and playing games, and the kids were kind of hyper.Â  Attempting to calm them down, I suggested putting a movie on the big tv and letting them watch it downstairs, and so our two oldest laid down to watch it peacefully.Â  Their baby brother went to bed without fuss, and all was well until Disney decided to wreak havoc upon her unsuspecting sisters.Â  As they were laying down trying to watch the movie, she began sitting on them – spitting on them, pinching them, and basically just trying to do her best to make their lives miserable for the moment.Â  We separated the kids, and Disney came over to the adult’s table to finish her special treat of root beer – and that’s when it hit me – she was on a sugar high!Â  Sure enough, after she chugged down her root beer, she began going for (and at a record pace) the gumballs from her Strawberry Shortcake gumball machine she had gotten for Valentine’s Day.Â  Some game night friends noticed this, and Cathy distracted her while John passed the gumball machine to Jamy, who passed it to me.Â  I hid it under my shirt and stealthly (or so I thought)Â  left the room with Dis at my heels…

I made it to the bathroom where I was able to stash the gumball machine without her noticing, and although she did ask about it, we were able to avoid fueling the two-year-old fire any further, and within an hour, she fell asleep.Â  It only took 4 adults to stage a sugar intervention for our two-year-old, and thank goodness they did because too much sugar+terrible two’s = horror for everyone!

So thanks everyone, for staging Disney’s intervention – we all know it was for her and OUR own good!

### Comments

**justj**Phyllis, I'll need all the tips you can supply. I'll finally have a grandchild close enough to spoil in Sept. A bit hard to spoil the ones in Florida...  
**Phyllis Beyer**Hey, wait just a minute. It's my job to feed them sugar and then send them home. Ha-ha!  
**taylhis**Ah, time for grandparent revenge!  
**justj**taylhis, show me a kid who never had a sugar high.... We used to call it Grandma Detox. They were always a bit rowdy after spending time with the Grandparents.  
**taylhis**Yes Jamiahsh - Beeber is very good at going to bed right at 9. Chris got him on a schedule - I am a lucky lady :) No problem about the book - you're well worth the $.05 ;) And justj, who are you kidding? Don't tell me Elizabeth or Jenny ever needed an intervention! Must be one of the others I don't know as well...  
**justj**Wow, I didn't know I was part of an intervention. It has been so long since I had to do those for my girls, I forgot they were needed.  
**jamiahsh**Tough love... wow, sounds like the basis for a new reality series. children intervention :). Beeber must have been out before I arrived. Thanks for the book.

# I Will Survive

Here’s a cute video that was a popular email forward in the infancy age of email forwards.Â  I saw this one years ago, and it popped into my head today for some reason, so here you go…Â  oh yeah, make sure you watch the whole thing!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**derek**I remember this one. I think it was an email forward from you! :D  
**jamiahsh**I remember very little from the disco era (it was during my time, but barely)... blessedly, it did not last long.  
**justj**I always heard that song driving from a third shift job, back to college for my 8:00am class. I didn't remember anything from that song other than the "I will survive". Kind of felt like that disco ball hit me after a few weeks.  
**jamiahsh**OOPS... Sorry :(  
**jamiahsh**Disco is dead. Mirror ball killed it. Funny.

# And Your Favorite Muppet Is?

Recently I came across an interesting article about everyone’s favorite comedians, the Muppets!Â  I grew up watching the Muppets; whether it was on the various incarnations of their tv shows (The Muppet Show, Muppets Tonight, etc.), their feature films,Â  Sesame Street, or even in their hilarious Muppets 3D attraction at Disney’s Hollywood (formerly MGM) Studios in Florida.Â  Here are some fun facts about 20 of the Muppets that you might not know:

1. Cookie Monster: Jim Henson drew some monsters eating various snacks for a General Foods commercial in 1966. The commercial was never used, but Henson recycled one of the monsters (the “Wheel-Stealer”) for an IBM training video in 1967 and again for a Fritos commercial in 1969. By that time, he had started working on Sesame Street and decided this monster would have a home there.

2. Elmo: The way it’s described by a Sesame Street writer, apparently this extra red puppet was just lying around. People would try to do something with him, but nothing really panned out. In 1984, puppeteer Kevin Clash picked up the red puppet and started doing the voice and the personality and it clicked — thus, Elmo was born.

3. Telly Monster was originally the Television Monster when he debuted in 1979. He was obsessed with TV and his eyes would whirl around as if hypnotized whenever he was in front of a set. After a while, producers started worrying about his influence on youngsters, so they changed him to make him the chronic worrier he is now.

4. Count von Count made his first appearance in 1972 and was made out of an Anything Muppet pattern — a blank Muppet head that could have features added to it to make various characters. He used to be more sinister — he was able to hypnotize and stun people and he laughed in typical scary-villain-type fashion after completing a count of something and thunder and lightning would occur.Â  He was quickly made more appealing to little kids, though. He is apparently quite the ladies’ man — he has been linked to Countess von Backward, who loves to count backward; Countess Dahling von Dahling and Lady Two.

5. Kermit was “born” in 1955 and first showed up on “Sam and Friends,” a five-minute puppet show by Jim Henson. The first Kermit was made out of Henson’s mom’s coat and some ping pong balls. At the time, he was more lizard-like than frog-like. By the time he showed up on Sesame Street in 1969, though, he had made the transition to frog. There are rumors that he got the name Kermit from a childhood friend of Henson’s or a puppeteer from the early days of the Muppets, but Henson always refuted both of those rumors. Mental Floss: 15 reasons Mr. Rogers was the best neighbor ever

6. Real Swedish Chef Lars “Kuprik” BÃ¤ckman claims he was the inspiration for the Swedish Chef. He was on “Good Morning America,” he says, and caught Jim Henson’s eye. Henson supposedly bought the rights to the show’s recording and created the Swedish Chef (who DOES have a real name, but it’s not understandable). One of the Muppet writers, Jerry Juhl, says that in all of the years of working with Jim Henson on the Swedish Chef, he never heard that the character was based on a real person.

7. Animal: The Who’s Keith Moon may have inspired everyone’s favorite member of Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem. This is speculation, but people who support the theory will point out that Jim Henson named one of the Fraggle Rock characters “Wembley,” which is the town where Moon was born.

8. Miss Piggy is apparently from Iowa. She started as a minor character on “The Muppet Show,” but anyone who knows Miss Piggy can see that she wouldn’t settle for anything “minor.” Her first TV appearance was actually on an Herb Alpert special. It wasn’t until 1976, when “The Muppet Show” premiered, that she became the glamorous blonde with a penchant for frog that we know and love today. Frank Oz once said that Miss Piggy grew up in Iowa; her dad died when she was young and her mother was mean. She had to enter beauty contests to make money.

9. Rowlf the Dog, surprise, surprise, was first made in 1962 for a series of Purina Dog Chow commercials. He went on to claim fame as Jimmy Dean’s sidekick on The Jimmy Dean Show and was on every single episode from 1963 to 1966. Jimmy Dean said Rowlf got about 2,000 letters from fans every week. He was considered for Sesame Street but ended up becoming a regular on “The Muppet Show” in 1976. Mental Floss: Commercials from a late-80s airing of ‘A Muppet Family Christmas’

10. Oscar the Grouch is performed by the same guy who does Big Bird, Carroll Spinney. Spinney said he based Oscar’s cranky voice on a particular New York cab driver he once had the pleasure of riding with. He was originally an alarming shade of orange. In Pakistan, his name is Akhtar and he lives in an oil barrel. In Turkey, he is Kirpik and lives in a basket. And in Israel, it’s not Oscar at all — it’s his cousin, Moishe Oofnik, who lives in an old car.

11. Gonzo: What exactly is Gonzo? Nobody knows. Even Jim Henson had no particular species in mind. Over the course of “The Muppet Show,” “Muppet Babies” and various Muppet movies, Gonzo has been referred to as a “Whatever”, a “Weirdo” and an alien. Whatever he is, he first appeared on the scene in 1970’s The Great Santa Claus Switch. His name was Snarl the Cigar Box Frackle. In 1974, he showed up on a TV special for Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass. He became Gonzo the Great by the first season of The Muppet Show and developed his thing for Camilla the Chicken almost accidentally: During one episode where chickens were auditioning for the show, puppeteer Dave Goelz ad-libbed, “Don’t call us, we’ll call you… nice legs, though!” It was decided then and there that Gonzo would have a bizarre romantic interest in chickens.

12. You have to love Statler and Waldorf. I couldn’t find much on their particular inspiration, but I can tell you that they’ve been around since the 1975 “Muppet Show” pilot. They are named after popular New York City hotels (the Statler Hotel was renamed the Hotel Pennsylvania in 1992.) Guess what Waldorf’s wife name is? Yep… Astoria (she looks startlingly like Statler.) FYI, Waldorf is the one with the mustache and white hair. Statler has the grey hair. Apparently Waldorf has had a pacemaker for more than 30 years.

13. Beaker: I always thought of Beaker and his buddy Bunsen Honeydew as characters that came along later in the Muppet timeline, but they have been around since the “The Muppet Show.” Although Beaker usually says things along the lines of, “Mee-mee-mee-mee!”, he has had a few actual lines: “Sadly temporary,” “Bye-Bye” and “Make-up ready!” Despite being word-challenged, he manages to do a pretty convincing Little Richard impression and, surprisingly, had mad beatbox skills. Beaker is one of the only Muppets that was never recycled from some other purpose — he was created solely for “The Muppet Show.”

14. Fozzie Bear. Poor Fozzie. He’s the perpetual target of Statler and Waldorf because of his horrible jokes and puns. It actually created a bit of a problem during the first season of The Muppet Show, because when Fozzie got heckled, he got very upset and sometimes cried. Viewers didn’t feel sympathy; they felt embarrassed. The problem was solved by making Fozzie an optimist so that even when he got heckled he was good-natured about it. It’s often thought that he was named after Frank Oz, who was his puppeteer, but Frank said it’s just a variant of “fuzzy bear.” Yet another story says he was named for his builder, Faz Fazakas. Wocka wocka!!

15. Bert and Ernie are the Muppet version of Felix and Oscar (“The Odd Couple,” for you young’uns). Lots of people think Bert and Ernie were named for some minor characters in It’s A Wonderful Life, but according to the Henson company, that’s just a rumor. Jim Henson always maintained that it was just a coincidence — the names just went well together and seemed to fit the characters. Jerry Juhl, one of the head writers, corroborated this and said that Jim Henson had no memory for details like that and would have never remembered the name of the cop and the taxi cab driver in the old Jimmy Stewart movie.Â  Other rumors to clear up: Bert and Ernie aren’t gay and neither one of them are dead. Now that we’ve got that straightened out, here are a few more tidbits: the original Ernie used to have a gravelly voice similar to Rowlf the Dog’s. Frank Oz was Bert’s puppeteer and hated him at the beginning. He thought Bert was ridiculously boring, but then realized that he could have a lot of fun with being boring. Jim Henson once said, “I remember trying Bert and Frank tried Ernie for a while. I can’t imagine doing Bert now, because Bert has become so much of a part of Frank.”

16. Grover: Everyone’s favorite “cute, furry little monster” made his TV debut on the “Ed Sullivan Show” in 1967. At the time, he was known as “Gleep” and was a monster in Santa’s Workshop. He then appeared on the first season of Sesame Street, but sported green fur and a reddish-orange nose. He didn’t have a name then, but by the second season he transformed into the Grover we know today, more or less — electric blue fur and a pink nose. The original green Grover was reincarnated as Grover’s Mommy for a few episodes. In Latin America and Puerto Rico Grover is known as Archibaldo, in Spain he is Coco, in Portugal he is Gualter and in Norway he is Gunnar.

17. Sweetums is one of a handful of full-body Muppets. He showed up in 1971 on the TV special “The Frog Prince.” This is where he got his name — when Sir Robin the Brave is about to defeat the ogre, a witch shows up and changes him into a frog (who later becomes Robin, Kermit’s nephew). Apparently smitten with the ogre, the witch tells her darling “Sweetums” that he can have the frog for breakfast.Â  Bigger fame awaited Sweetums, though — in 1975, he appeared on Cher’s variety show to do a duet with her to “That Old Black Magic”. He officially joined “The Muppet Show” cast in 1976.

18. Rizzo the Rat might sound familiar to you, especially if you’ve seen “Midnight Cowboy” — he is named for Dustin Hoffman’s character, Ratso Rizzo. He was created after puppeteer Steve Whitmire was inspired by rat puppets made from bottles. He first showed up on “The Muppet Show” as one of a group of rats following Christopher Reeve around — he’s easy to spot because he hams it up more than any of the other rats. He occasionally performs with Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem.

19. Pepe the King Prawn’s full name is Pepino Rodrigo Serrano Gonzales. I heart Pepe. He was a chef in Madrid before going Hollywood on “Muppets Tonight” in 1996. He was paired with Seymour the Elephant (Pepe was originally going to be a mouse) on the show, but Seymour never developed quite the same following and was only in two episodes. He rarely gets names right — some of his mispronunciations include “muffins” instead of Muppets, “Kermin” instead of Kermit and “Scooper” instead of Scooter. He’s quite full of himself — in addition to thinking that he’s quite the ladies’ man, he also fully expects to win several Oscars.

20. Herry Monster from Sesame Street was the Big Bad Wolf in his original incarnation, which you can kind of tell by looking at his fur. It’s pretty wolf-like (if wolves were blue, I mean). He became a Sesame monster in 1970 to replace the Beautiful Day Monster, who looked kind of like Sam the Eagle and existed to cause destruction wherever he went, thus ruining the beautiful day people had been having before he showed up. Herry used to have a furry nose but got upgraded to his non-furry, purple nose in 1971.

*The preceding article was written by Stacy Conradt and was published on cnn.com*

***Who is your favorite Muppet? If you just can't decide, you can pick more than one!***

* *Cookie Monster*
* *Elmo*
* *Kermit the Frog*
* *Miss Piggy*
* *Fozzie Bear*
* *Gonzo*
* *Beaker*
* *Animal*
* *The Count*
* *Swedish Chef*
* *Rolf*
* *Oscar the Grouch*
* *Statler and Waldorf (the balcony critics)*
* *Bert and Ernie*
* *Grover*
* *Janice (had to include her - there are actually a lot of people walking around that look like her, especially in this age of collagen injections)*
* *I don't like the Muppets*
* *you didn't have my favorite Muppet as an answer, so I'm writing it in the comments section*

*[View Results](#ViewPollResults)*

*Loading ... Loading ...*

And for your enjoyment (and so you can get this song stuck in your head for days on end), here is the Muppets catchy performance of Mahna Mahna – it’s a really fun video to watch!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**derek**I really can't vote. I don't dislike the muppets, but I haven't thought about them for so long I can't really remember more than a few.  
**justj**Animal is my favorite muppet. With chants of "Beat Drum, Beat Drum!!" and "Woman, Woman", what is not to like. Never one to be verbose, Animal let his skill and rough exterior carry him through the day. We all need a little "Animal" in us... ;)  
**jamiahsh**I could not pick just one. But I adore something about the one's I picked. Statler and Waldorf's heckling MADE each episode, but I felt sorry for Fozzie (even if his jokes were bad). Swedish Chef... couldn't make heads or tails of what he said but his cooking segments rock. How could you NOT love Beaker... MEEP, MEEP and his guinea pig segments with Dr. Bunson Honeydew. I really liked Veterinary's Hospital ("the continuing story of a quack who's gone to the dogs") Christopher Reeve was in a segment when he was the guest star. And the "Star Wars" episode.

# Ryan Started The Fire

In lieu of a new Office episode tonight (another rerun, GROAN!), I’ll supply the following youtube.com Office video, “Ryan Started the Fire” for you to watch.Â  I read about it in a suburban Chicago newspaper who featured the story because the video was made by some local high school students.Â  It’s well-written, nicely sung (good Billy Joel impression), and very well edited.Â  The video was featured on Jenna Fisher’s blog (the actress who plays Pam Beesley), and I can see why even a celebrity such as herself took notice – it’s a great tribute to my favorite show!Â  Before you enjoy it, however, I should warn you that it contains events that took place in the series in the current season, so SPOILER ALERT!Â  If you don’t want to know the current happenings in The Office, I guess you’ll have to wait to see this video!Â  Otherwise, ENJOY!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**derek**It was okay. I was able to sit through the entire video which is equivalent to one thumb up. And no need to worry about spoiling me, I am all caught up now. ;)  
**jamiahsh**OOPs forgot to check box for followups. There. Done  
**jamiahsh**HOORAY!!! Hilarious! And BOOO to continuing reruns of my two must see shows of the week. But at least, I don't have to schedule viewings around my busy-ness.

# Take Me To Your Leader

… As long as it’s not my daughter’s previous Girl Scout leader.Â  This lady gives a bad name to

*On my honor,  
I will try  
To serve God  
And my country  
To help people at all times  
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.*

Many of you former girl scouts or parents of girl scouts might recognize the preceding stanza as the Girl Scout Promise.Â  This is the oath girl scouts nationwide must memorize and be able to recite at their meetings, events, and ceremonies.

So you’d think the person teaching that to little kids would be

### Comments

# It's THAT Time Of Year!

Shortly after this blog post is published, the countdown timer on my site will change – but that’s a great thing.Â  It used to count down until the [Chicago Cubs](http://chicago.cubs.mlb.com/index.jsp?c_id=chc)‘ first game of 2009 Spring Training, but since that game is TODAY (!) that countdown timer will soon be edited to count down until the first real SEASON Cubs game of 2009 – YIPPEE!Â  So here’s to hoping the Cubs win today (and every day!), even though it’s just spring training!

Now I have to go see if I can find the first game of spring training on a tv channel in the rural expanse of Northwest Ohio!Â  GO CUBBIES!!!

### Comments

**taylhis**SO tempting to delete your comment Derek - watch it! ;)  
**derek**Go Sox!!! Just kidding! :D  
**jamiahsh**GO CUBBIES!  
**taylhis**[THIS IS CHRIS] Go Cubs! This is their year -- I really want them to win it for you honey! I AM EXCITED!  
**jamiahsh**Go Cubbies! Yanks win, too!!! Questionable off-season drama notwithstanding.  
**taylhis**CUBS WIN!!!  
**justj**Good luck to the Cubbies, the Tigers won their first game of spring training.

# Too Punny!

I received an email forward full of “Creative Puns for Educated Minds”.Â  Some of them are really cute, so I decided to publish them here on the blog.Â  While reading these, you **will** groan at least once, but if you don’t smile or even laugh out loud, you might be a little bit crabby and should probably take a nap instead of reading the rest of the 22 puns below.

1. The roundest knight at King Arthur’s round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.  
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.  
3. She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.  
4. A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.  
5. The butcher backed into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.  
6. No matter how much you push the envelope, it’ll still be stationery.  
7. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.  
8. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.  
9. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.  
10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.  
11. A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.  
12. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.  
13. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other, ‘You stay here; I’ll go on a head.’  
14. IÂ  wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.  
15. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: ‘Keep off the Grass.’  
16. A small boy swallowed some coins and was taken to a hospital.Â  When his grandmother telephoned to ask how he was, a nurse said, ‘No change yet.’  
17. A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.  
18. The short fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.  
19. The man who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.  
20. A backward poet writes inverse.  
21. In democracy it’s your vote that counts. In feudalism it’s your count that votes.  
22. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.

### Comments

**justj**Well I groaned a bit, but didn't laugh out loud. I guess I'm still a bit crabby ;)  
**jamiahsh**Hyuck, Hyuck. Some good stuff... word play.. some possible double entendre. Some groaners, yes, but mostly good stuff.

# Laundry, Origami-Style

I received an interesting email forward the other day; it’s a Japanese video that shows a woman folding a shirt perfectly in a *matter of seconds* using an origami technique.Â  I haven’t tried it out yet; I’ve been too busy blogging instead of folding my laundry 

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**Taylhis**Well, yeah it's in Japanese, but the idea is to SEE what she's doing...  
**jamiahsh**ok... English translation?

# Another Wonderful Zoo Visit

We went to the Toledo Zoo again last weekend (it was our second weekend to visit the zoo in a row; we visited on Feb 7 and 15).Â  Almost a week has passed since our last visit, but I had other blog posts lined up and ready to go, so that’s why I’m first writing about it now.

Having a zoo membership is awesome because you get to visit the zoo whenever you have free time, and you don’t have to worry about seeing EVERYTHING on EVERY visit since you know you’ll be back soon.Â  The last few times we’ve gone, we parked in the back parking lot and stay on that side of the zoo, which cuts the amount of walking considerably – a great option for winter months since this parking lot is free in the off-season and very close to the rear zoo entrance.Â  With 4 small children, this is the way that works best for us, even though it means skipping the other side of the zoo which includes the polar bears, seals, wolves, and giraffes.Â  No matter, we still see plenty, and now we have a whole half a zoo to see sometime if we go without the kids or are feeling extra ambitious.

Every zoo visit is different, which is one of the things I love about going.Â  The animals are always doing different things, and my favorite exhibits vary with each visit.Â  Here are the highlights from last Sunday’s visit:

Lions – The Toledo Zoo has white lions.Â  White lions are rare and the result of a recessive gene similar to the gene of white tigers.Â  The Toledo Zoo has 3 white lion brothers on loan from Siegfried and Roy, the famous Las Vegas magicians.Â  Normally during our zoo visits, the lions are sleeping and up on a ledge far from the viewing glass, but last Sunday they were walking around, and one of them even walked right up against the viewing glass!Â  I’ve seen lions up close before, but not for a long time and never the gorgeous white lion until last week.

Hippos – The hippos are in their indoor enclosure for the winter, and even though their room seems somewhat cramped, the animals don’t seem unhappy, and it’s very cool to see these HUGE animals up close.Â  It’s amazing to me that their small pool must get very deep very fast in order to allow the animal to be completely submerged.Â  As we watched, the hippo was bobbing for apples, and he caught his apple and swallowed it whole.Â  This hippo was so large that the apple in his mouthÂ  looked about as big as a grape would look in the mouth of a human being.Â  And this provided an extreme close-up of his humongous teeth!

Gorillas – When we got to the gorilla exhibit, it was empty.Â  But a friendly zookeeper told us to stick around for about 10 minutes for gorilla feeding time.Â  We then got to watch as the keepers threw greens, fruit, and straw all around the enclosure; taking care to place some on the various ledges and hide some within crevices of the exhibit (seriously, am I too old to embark on this as a career?!?Â  I’m afraid so…).Â  Then they let the gorillas back in, and it was a frenzy.Â  Well, an orderly frenzy – there was no pushing nor shoving; just some excited gorillas foraging in their exhibit.Â  They quickly found all the hidden surprises, and we laughed as one of the females hoarded as much lettuce as she could carry and brought it up to a high ledge to enjoy it all by herself.

Elephants – The elephants were indoors, and the now 6-year-old baby Louie was using his trunk to eat jello off the floor.Â  I really enjoy watching elephants use their trunks; it’s fascinating to me how dexterous they are – almost like they have 2 fingers on the end.Â  But we’ve watched Louie grow up ever since we’ve been coming to this zoo when he was just a year or two old, and now he’s getting pretty big!Â  Last time we were at the zoo, he was trying to get down a step so he could get to the water, and he ended up going backwards down the step – it was so cute!

So great day, awesome fun as always!Â  Like I said, every visit is different, and I am never disappointed!Â  I am a zoo-addict!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**YES... just give me a few weeks.  
**Megan**Ah just what I was thinking Jamy...we should all go to the zoo together sometime:) It seems like FOREVER since I have been there:(  
**Taylhis**I'd be happy enough TAKING an animal sciences class!  
**derek**Yep, teaching in the animal sciences for definitely for you. ;)  
**Phyllis Beyer**I really enjoyed this blog. I know I went one time to the Toledo Zoo with you but would love to go again.  
**justj**Of course, I just love the zoos in the area. I have been a member of the Toledo Zoo for 25 years now!!  
**jamiahsh**Agreed... all animals should be treated with respect or the consequences can often be disastrous.... no matter how well you are trained or how long you have trained with them.  
**taylhis**Roy Horn was mauled (by most accounts anyway... S and R maintain that the tiger was trying to rescue him and was spooked by an obnoxious fan in the front row who was wearing a large hat) by one of their tigers. Regardless of what really happened, when we saw the show, we were surprised by how close patrons were allowed to be seated. Wild animals should be respected as such, and they're completely unpredictable. Tigers are especially freaky like that. Being a former cat owner, I know how the mood can change in a split second, and that was a tiny domestic cat - I can't imagine being responsible for the damage a tiger could do. Jack Hanna had a few tiger mishaps on his watch at the Columbus Zoo - once a male tiger snapped the female's neck during mating, no apparent reason, no warning. The way the tiger was looking at my kids at the zoo the other day gave me the creeps.  
**jamiahsh**Yes... never the same twice. Which one was it Siegfried or Roy who was attacked by one of their lions? White Lions are gorgeous animals. WOW... 2 zoo visits so close to one another. No magicians this time, eh? I would love to go sometime when I am free. I am sure it would be quite an experience going to the zoo with you all... wildlife safaris aside.

# Sick Of Winter?

If you’re like me, then you are sick of winter.Â  I’m sick of getting snowed in, sick of bundling up the kids, and sick of the high heating bills.Â  So even though it’s a very dark type of humor, I did have to chuckle at this picture of a poor snowman I received via email; no doubt created by some poor soul who is a victim of the winter blues:



And since we’re on the subject of snowmen, I read an article a few weeks ago with many interesting tidbits about them, so I’ll share a few.Â  After all, it’s the least I can do after sharing such a depressing picture like the one above, right?

– Snowman art is one of the few activities modern man shares with his earliest ancestors.Â  The earliest illustration of a snowman found was made in about 1380, and snow sculpting was a popular pastime during the Middle Ages.

– In the year 1494, Michelangelo sculpted snow figures in Florence, Italy.

– In 1999, residents of Bethel, Maine constructed the largest snowman ever built with 8 million pounds of snow.Â  They beat their own record in 2008 using 13 million pounds of snow when they created Olympia (actually a snow***wo***man) who stood 122 feet and one inch tall and could be seen from 4 miles away!Â  They used snow skis for her eyelashes, car tires for her lips, trees for her arms, and kids created her 6-foot nose from chicken wire and muslin.Â  Her hand-stitched hat had a 48-foot circumference.Â  Here is a picture of Olympia:



So don’t let the winter blues get you down, especially since us here in the Midwest are having a winter relapse today with icy winds and snow flurries – yuck!Â  Get some snowman inspiration, and go out there and try your hand at building your own winter work of art!Â  Hurry – the first day of spring is only a month away – and thank goodness for that!

*The preceding blog post contains information obtained from [American Profile magazine](http://www.americanprofile.com/).*

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Aren't we all? ;)  
**justj**I'm looking forward to that softball game ;)  
**jamiahsh**Let's see... when I am on stage and it is 90 degrees outside or when we are on the softball field in the same?  
**justj**I am also ready for some warmer weather. But when will we start complaining that it is too hot????  
**jamiahsh**Yeah... cabin fever. Eight million pounds of snow?!

# Happy Birthday To My Blog!

Happy Birthday to my blog!Â  Today is the one-year anniversary of the day I started my blog on tangents.org!Â  And 381 blog posts later, here we are!Â  So even though I haven’t been able to blog every day, there were a few days when I got more than one post up, and so in a 366 day year (leap year in 2008), I was able to make 381 blog posts, and that averages more than one a day, surpassing my goal I had when I started this thing!Â  So I’d like to thank everybody who trudges through my rambling garbage – those who have read all 381 My Food Chain Gang blog posts and those who pretend to have read them 

Having this blog has been a great way to vent my feelings (from pride about my kids to my frustrations with Walmart), share news stories I find interesting (from funny police happenings to interesting animal tidbits), write movie reviews, and most importantly, keep in touch with my family and friends who live far away – especially when our lives are too busy to allow us to chat on the phone when we want.Â  THANKS AGAIN FOR VISITING my site!

### Comments

**derek**Nah, I really meant ;)  
**derek**Late, but still ahead of me. :evil:  
**jamiahsh**We can all celebrate again then, justj :D  
**justj**I think I started in March, I was late to the party. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I did... Happy Birthday to all of our blogs. I was checking the archives and had yet to post about it.  
**derek**Happy birthday! And to my blog too- first post was 2/18/08 just like yours. I didn't think it had been that long. Didn't Jamiahsh start the same time as well?  
**Phyllis Beyer**I really enjoy reading your blog. As I have told you before, I think you have a knack for writing. I enjoy reading about my grandchildren and your various activities. Keep them coming! Love, Mom

# And Speaking Of Discoveries...

Unlike my Steve Wilkos show discovery, the following revelation is a great one!Â  My daughter brought home a Weekly Reader from school – you know, it’s like a newspaper for kids.Â  We used to get those when I was in school too, and I really enjoyed them.Â  So we’re sitting in the waiting area of H & R Block waiting for my husband to get our taxes done, and my 9-year-old daughter says to me, “Mom, did you know that they found an animal that they haven’t seen for, like, a really long time?Â  They thought there weren’t any more left in the world!Â  It looks like a Furby!”Â  We talked about extinction for a little bit, and then my daughter said she couldn’t remember what the animal was called or where they found it.Â  So when we got home, she showed me the Weekly Reader, and I found that she was talking about the pygmy tarsier.Â  Scientists believed this type of primate went extinct because no one had seen any specimens for about 70 years, but they recently found two males and a female tarsier alive in Indonesia.Â  The animals each weigh only about 2 oz.!

So yes, it’s safe to say this is a much better discovery for me than the Steve Wilkos show.Â  Here’s hoping the pygmy tarsier can re-populate and once again establish itself as a thriving species!Â  And thanks to the Weekly Reader which has been publishing great kid-oriented articles for decades.Â  These stories help youngsters develop many different kinds of interests in the world around them!

### Comments

**derek**The popular reader around here is Time for Kids, or TFK. There are others, but that's the big one. Finding new (or new again) life is pretty cool. I think they have found a bunch of water species near the poles recently.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I remember the Weekly Reader, too. I think we got them on Friday and read them in class about a half-hour before dismissal. thanks T for sharing

# Insomniac Discovery

Though I wouldn’t call it a great discovery, by any means…Â  Every few months, I go through a period of insomnia that lasts a few days.Â  I don’t know why this happens, but it starts when I stay up too late a few nights in a row, waiting for my kids to go to bed and then having too much fun to go to bed myself.Â  Then for some reason, I start waking up early in the morning and am unable to fall back asleep, and the more tired I get, the less easy it is for me to sleep and the cycle continues.Â  So anyway, a few weeks ago, during one of these bouts of insomnia, I was flipping channels and I came across the Steve Wilkos show.

In case you don’t know (and I hope you don’t) Steve Wilkos is best known for being the main bodyguard on the Jerry Springer show – a talk show that aired in the ’90’s that was a total raunch fest.Â  The show pushed the limits of television at the time and helped to give talk shows an even worse reputation than they already had.Â  Nearly every episode of the Jerry Springer showÂ  contained bleeped-out profanity, guests taking their clothes off (censored for tv thank goodness) and brawling.Â  It was a disgusting example of junk tv and helped give birth to the term “trailer trash”.Â  And Steve Wilkos had a big part to play.Â  As the main bodyguard, he would have to break up the fights, often climbing in between scantly-clad (if that) guests as they tried to duke it out on the stage.Â  As his popularity rose, the audience would often chant Steve’s name as he broke up the fights with his trademark smirk and chrome dome.Â  And how do I know this?Â  Well, I was a college student at the time, and I guess I’ll reluctantly admit to being present as some of my friends would get a big kick out of this show and watch it in their dorm room.

So anyway, the other night, it was really late, and I thought I must be hallucinating when I came across Steve the bodyguard from the Jerry Springer show hosting his own talk show here in 2009.Â  And it didn’t seem to be like the Jerry Springer show…Â  no fights, no swearing, no nudity…Â  Just Steve, the ex-Chicago cop complete with his thick Chicago accent, trying to work out life’s problems for his “lucky” guests…Â  He doesn’t seem very natural in front of the camera, and I don’t know whose idea it was to give this guy his own show…Â  What is this (tv) world coming to?Â  [Check it out for yourself](http://stevewilkos.com/), if you dare!Â  And, just for kicks, here is a link to [some classic Jerry Springer moments](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_334td7t5I) someone put up on youtube; I’m NOT embedding that garbage on my blog – you can just click on the link if you really want to see it.Â  Where has the former-mayor-of-Cincinnatti-who-wrote- a-check-to-a-prostitute-and-got-caught been these days anyway?

### Comments

**justj**Can't say I've ever discovered much on late night TV during my periods of Insomnia.  
**jamiahsh**That's a good question, but I think MOST "trash talk" has now been moved to the wee hours or thankfully removed (at least in this area).

# Pole Dancing In Gym Class?

We were grocery shopping the other night and my 9-year-old daughter was jumping around and telling us about some kind of dance she was learning in gym class.Â  “And then you dance with the pole…”, she said, and that got our attention – pole dancing in gym class?Â  She then went on to explain that they have 2 little poles (closer to stick-sized, it sounds like) the kids dance with…Â  but you can see where I’m coming from.Â  In this day and age, pole dancing has a much different meaning.Â  It’s something popularized in the adult entertainment industry, and because I’ve heard that it’s recently found its way into normal (?) families’ homes as a form of exercise.Â  Not that I know of anyone who actually exercises this way (and if any of my friends or family reading this have taken up pole dancing, I really **don’t** want to know about it, even if it is just for exercise!), but for a minute during my daughter’s story, I was worried that this form of “exercise” had become SO mainstream that they were teaching it in the schools!Â  I couldn’t be happier to be wrong, but the misunderstanding makes for a funny story!

### Comments

**derek**I guess I just had a "clean mind" moment. When you mentioned pole dancing, I actually thought of the traditional dance (I don't know where I remember it from) instead of the "gentleman's club" version. I just wish my mind wasn't so corrupt on other things though. My first thoughts should always be clean. :)  
**jamiahsh**HEHEHE! Not going there.

# Happy Birthday Abe!

Today is Abraham Lincoln’s birthday.Â  The 16th president of the United States would be 200 years old today if he was still alive.Â  Unfortunately, an assassin’s bullet cut his remarkable life short at the age of 56 – not that he would still be alive today, but his assassination was still very tragic of course.Â  Because this is such a milestone “birthday”, Lincoln has been in the news a lot lately.Â  I learned something really interesting about his widow, Mary Todd.Â  Ten years after Lincoln’s death, Mary was hospitalized in a mental institution for being delusional and for spending too much money.Â  I guess her delusions were caused by a sleep medication she was taking, but intriguing to me is the fact that the institution where she was hospitalized was in Batavia Illinois – a stone’s throw from where I spent most of my childhood.Â  Next time I’m in the area, I’m going to have to take a look at the place – it’s now apartment buildings, but I think it would still be cool to see the land that used to be the mental institution which housed Mary Todd Lincoln.

Another interesting Lincoln tidbit; I found this picture on the internet, and I thought it was so cool I had to share it.Â  It captures Lincoln in real life, not just posing for a portrait as many people are used to seeing him.Â  The man on his left was his bodyguard, Allan Pinkerton, and the man on the right was Major Gen. John A. McClernand.



### Comments

**taylhis**Interesting - earliest cameras date back to the 1660's. Now to find an actual photograph from that era...  
**taylhis**I agree - I think they cleaned it up a little, if it is real... But I THINK it is... the tent, etc. seems relevant to that time period. I didn't even know they had cameras back then. But Taylor has lots of photographs of Lincoln at her school - it's the name of the school - so they must have had cameras back then... time to wikipedia the camera.  
**derek**Well, it's a very good photo for 1862.  
**taylhis**Nope, I think it's a real photo. The original caption read: Lincoln's bodyguard was Dundee's Allan Pinkerton, on the left here in Antietam, Md., with Lincoln and Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand.  
**derek**Isn't this a photo of people *portraying* Pinkerton, Lincoln, and McClernand? I thought that's what a source said when I first saw it. In any event, much better to think of Lincoln's birthday than the author of a great deception, Charles Darwin. Happy belated birthday, former President Lincoln!  
**jamiahsh**Was there not a detective organization associated with the name Pinkerton? Cool tidbits... Happy Birthday, Abe wherever you are.

# Farm Frenzy

You might have noticed a decrease in the frequency of my blogging.Â  I am still super-busy with my 4 kids, but now that the horrible months-long-lasting illness has run its course through our house, I have more energy and time than I’ve had in a long time…Â  so why am I posting less?Â  Because I’ve gone and gotten myself addicted to a video game, of all things!

It’s called Farm Frenzy Pizza Party, and it’s addicting to play!Â  Basically, you get this little plot of land where you choose what animals to buy and manage.Â  Each different kind of animal drops a type of product, and you can either use these products to make other products, or you can sell them.Â  You can upgrade your warehouse to make it store more products, you can upgrade your factories to produce products more quickly, and you can upgrade your vehicles to make them faster.Â  The game is surprisingly complicated, yet easy to learn.Â  Ultimately, the more difficult levels consist of making pizzas, and each pizza is made up of five types of product.Â  Complicating the game player’s goals is the fact that some of the pizza components are made up of two different products themselves, so you have to choose which animals and factories to buy and it what order to make the products with the funds you have.Â  There are also bears that drop down from the sky that eat your animals and even trample your factories!Â  It’s really fast-paced (you get rewarded for completing the levels in a timely fashion also), and like I said, it’s very addicting.

I was looking for a hobby, but this is ridiculous.Â  I could have chosen something a little more productive than sitting on my butt and playing a video game.Â  But this isÂ  *fun*.Â  And I haven’t let myself indulge in a hobby that’s non-productive in a long time…Â  Usually in my spare time I organize our family photos or work on our kids’ school memory books or things like that…Â  What’s that you ask?Â  What about my blogging?Â  Well, ok, I see your point.Â  So I have a few hobbies now; they’ll have to compete for my time.Â  And right now, Farm Frenzy is winning!Â  Here is a screen shot:



### Comments

**taylhis**oops... didn't see it in there, sorry about that! Glad you reminded me!  
**derek**So, you're not going to approve (from moderation) my last comment then? ;)  
**derek**I just bought [Hamsterball](http://www.raptisoft.com/index.php?page=hamsterball) when I saw it for $9.99 at Target. It's a [Marble Madness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marble_Madness) clone I have been wanting to get for awhile. Now I just need a trackball to properly play it...  
**Phyllis Beyer**It is good for your health (mental and physical) to have a "fun" hobby. You don't always have to be doing something productive. Life is too short. Enjoy!  
**jamiahsh**Cards on the computer never appealed to me. I'm trying to think of any game that got to that point.  
**justj**I know how addictive some video games can be. I've known people addicted to cards on the computer, now that is a simple game.

# The Crabby Magician

Saturday was one of the funnest days I’ve had in a long time.Â  I’ve been having *major* zoo-fever lately, and my husband knew this and renewed our Toledo Zoo membership online before I even woke up Saturday morning.Â  When I finally arose, he said, how about going to the zoo today?Â  So we packed up all the kids, and took advantage of the almost 50Â° weather and headed to the zoo.Â  We first ate lunch at our new favorite eating establishment in the Toledo area; a place called Nick’s Cafe on Reynolds Road in Maumee.Â  They have excellent gyros and scrumptious Greek salads, just to name a couple of their delicious dishes…Â  pretty much everything is made from scratch.Â  Potatoes are sliced up for french fries right there in the kitchen, gyros are off the spit, the burger meat is hand-rolled… you get the idea.Â  Awesome food and great service too.Â  Highly recommended from this hard-to-please food critic!

On Saturday, everyone at Nick’s was staring at us because of our ~~four~~ five adorable kids – we let our oldest invite her friend along who had slept over the night before.Â  It made for a mini-van filled to capacity, but I’m so glad we invited her because she is a great kid, a big help (especially with our little ones because in her family, she is smack dab in the middle of 5 in birth order and knows how to help in cases of sibling rivalry!), and she had never been to a zoo before!Â  If I had known that, we would have taken her sooner…Â  **Every kid needs to get to a zoo!** This little girl is 9-years-old and for me, a highlight of my trip on Saturday was getting to witness her experience the zoo for the first time: the cuteness of a real-life cheetah, the immensity of a white rhinoceros, the playfulness of the baby orangutans…Â  I’m currently reading Jack Hanna’s new book, *My Wild Life* right now and it details many of the trials and tribulations the Director Emeritus of the Columbus Zoo has gone through to get where he is today.Â  In one chapter, he addresses his many critics (people who protest live animals being held captive in zoos, as well as protesting Jack’s taking animals on television show appearance tours), and Jack says something in defense of these practices which I completely agree with: Captive animals are ambassadors of their cousins in the wild.Â  We NEED to have zoos and reach out to the public with animal tv appearances; it’s the only way to get people to care enough to help with conservation.

So anyway on Saturday, after lunch, we made our way to the zoo.Â  When we first got in, we discovered there was going to be a magic show in the Museum of Science (one of those old Works Progress Administration buildings from the post-Great Depression era; I love their architecture!).Â  We settled in with the kids looking forward to a fun show.Â  My husband is into magic, and we staged a magic show for our local theater company a few years ago, so I know a little bit about how some tricks are performed – enough to know that this guy hired by the Toledo Zoo last Saturday was simply *awful*.Â  First, he began the show with a crabby demeanor.Â  He didn’t have much charisma or charm; he wasn’t very good with the kids, and his tricks *stank* – everything he performed could be bought in a magic store for under $100 – for the whole lot!Â  And during the show, he would literally sum up his tricks with one sentence – “and that’s the magic coloring book.”Â  Also, according to my husband, he continuously broke one of the cardinal rules of magic – telling his audience what to expect ahead of time.Â  For example, he had a ball trick where he told the audience, “Wouldn’t it be amazing if the red ball were no longer on the top?”Â  And then *magically*, it wasn’t…Â  Amazing trick, maybe; amazing magician, I think not…Â  On top of all that, he messed up some tricks (which happens, I guess…Â  a little hard to forgive when it involves tricks this simple, but…), and announced the fact that he did indeed mess them up!Â  Oh well, this “magic” show was free with zoo admission.Â  I was a little anxious after the first 7 or 8 minutes; wanting to make sure we had enough time to see actual animals, but the kids seemed to like the show, so we did not leave the magic show before its finale.Â  I will mention that we literally broke into a run when the guy announced that he was doing a puppet show next…Â  Our 4-year-old was asking to see it, but I cannot imagine what that guy (his name is [Chris Clark](http://clarkshow.com/index.html) and you can click on his name to visit his website if you’re interested in renting a ~~magician~~ ~~entertainer~~ popcorn machine) would do with puppets, so we told her we missed the puppet show…Â  Besides, we were at the zoo to see animals, and we were running out of time!Â  Here is a picture of the crabby magician (sorry Derek for the large pics – I don’t really have time to be trying to figure out how to change code):



But not a terrible experience, because look at the amazement on the face of our 4-year-old when she witnessed the “magic”:



Luckily, we did get out of the magic show in time to see lots of animals at the zoo.Â  The elephants were moved from their outdoor exhibit to indoors, and in the process, they crossed the path right in front of us zoo visitors:



Then, the silverback (dominating male and largest) gorilla was sitting right up against the glass of his exhibit, and at the Toledo Zoo, the visitors are allowed to get right up close and personal with the great apes.Â  Unfortunately, I had run out of available space on my camera after taking so many pictures of the worst magician in the world – I was worried people wouldn’t believe me about how awful he was,so I made sure to snap lots of pics!Â  But anyway, the silverback gorilla was right there, and as we did with the chimp just minutes before, we held up everything we had in our arsenal (double-stroller) that we thought might interest him, but all to no avail.Â  Maybe he likes shiny things, we thought, so we held up our car keys.Â  Maybe he will recognize babies, we decided, so we held up our 7 month old son…Â  and no reaction (held up the baby with caution since witnessing a gorilla CHARGE a little boy and pound the glass really hard in his exhibit in Omaha Nebraska years ago)…Â  This gorilla stayed cool as a cucumber and didn’t react to any of it.

My one complaint about this zoo visit (besides the magic show!) is:Â  where the heck is the octopus?Â  He is usually one of our favorite animals to see at the zoo, and this time he was missing – something else was in his tank.Â  That’s disappointing, the octopus was always fascinating for our family and fun to watch.Â  I hope nothing bad happened to him…

Dinner at Steak N Shake after the zoo was also a fun treat – yes, even Steak N Shake is a treat when you live in a rural utopia like we do since the closest decent sit-down chain restaurant is an hour away.Â  A fun treat (had to be something casual after a big day with 5 kids who had had a sleepover the night before), and Disney, our 2-year-old, went poopie on the potty for the first time EVER at Steak N Shake!Â  That reminds me, we used to live in the same town – Normal, IL (which is actually anything but normal) as the very first Steak N Shake restaurant – it is (or at least was 10 years ago when we lived there) still in its original building – too bad I wasn’t into history as much then as I am now…Â  Oh well, anyway, extremely fun time at the zoo.Â  And as I always ask the kids, what was your favorite animal that you saw today?Â  Mine was the silverback gorilla.Â  He was magnificent.Â  For awhile, the gorillas were my favorite animal to see at the zoo.Â  Then we visited frequently last summer and got to know the family of orangutans, especially dad Boomer (an extraordinary orang because he actually plays with and helps care for his offspring – orangs in the wild and even in captivity are very easily annoyed with youngsters).Â  Boomer and the fam are doing great and only fell short of being my favorite animal at the zoo this weekend because of the close proximity of the humongous silverback gorilla…Â  Maybe my preferences will reverse next spring when I visit and the orangs are back outside and pushing their button which sprays water upon unsuspecting zoo guests…Â  Looking forward to that!

### Comments

**taylhis**You're right... that does sound easy enough even for me. I'll have to give it a try... thanks!  
**derek**I don't mind the large pics. I just thought it would be neater to make them smaller, with a click to open them full size. That's all. Actually, it couldn't be easier to do it this way. Just click the add media button, choose the file to upload, then once it "crunches" and shows the options, just choose a size smaller than "full size," and above that choose "to file" by "link" and you're set. I guess I just never tried before.  
**justj**Long time member of the Toledo Zoo here. As a family we've been going for 25 years. It has been a wonderful zoo for years. Others in this area, Ft Wayne, Battle Creek and Lansing. I've always enjoyed taking first time visitors to the zoo.  
**Phyllis Beyer**What a great way to spend our first warm day in months. I can't believe Taylor's little friend had never been to a zoo. You girls were there a couple times a year all your life. Way to go Disney. Maybe I can see the Toledo Zoo sometime this summer with you guys.  
**jamiahsh**Based upon the picture and comments made on Sunday, the Crabby Magician was everything you said he was. I wish I could have gone... Morat could have REALLY upstaged him. He looks bored to tears and not very entertainiing and as if he couldn't wait to get rid of the kid with him. WAY TO GO, DIS! Steak n ' Shake...oooohhhh.

# Good Movie, Bad Title

I stopped my blog posting of reviews for every movie I’ve been watching – you’ll know why when you read a post I’m writing for next week called Farm Frenzy.Â  But I saw a movie last night that is totally worth mentioning – “The Uninvited”.

The movie has a really bad title, I’ll admit that.Â  But what a good suspense thriller it turned out to be!Â  The best one I’ve seen in a long time; maybe one of the best thrillers I’ve ever seen!Â  The movie is scary at times, creepy at others, and constantly fast-paced and riveting.Â  The movie was not at all what I expected when I came in, and I left the theater very pleasantly surprised.Â  The plot centers around a teenager named Anna who is just getting out of the psych ward after a 10 month stint as a result ofÂ  a suicide attempt.Â  10 months earlier, her mother was terminally ill and bedridden, her father was having an affair with her nurse, and there was a terrible fire that took the life of her mother.Â  When Anna gets out of the hospital, her father’s girlfriend (her mother’s nurse) has moved into her house, and it doesn’t take long for Anna to begin to suspect the new woman in her family’s life is up to no good.

I can’t begin to explain the mind-bending plot – there’s much more to it than I’ve explained, but I really don’t want to go into too much detail.Â  The point is, I highly recommend this movie.Â  Especially if you like suspense thriller movies, this one is a must-see.Â  Seriously, with respect to its genre, it’s a near-perfect movie.Â  My only problem with it is its weak and undescriptive title – good movie, bad title, but a must-see, nonetheless!

### Comments

**Drop Hangars And Other Uninvited Guests | Morat's Blog**[...] the final showing of The Uninvited.Â  A very suspenseful movie that I will not dwell upon since taylhis has already done so.Â  I, too would find it hard to post a full review as there are so many twists [...]  
**taylhis**You might like it Mom... a little on the scary side for you - I know you like action movies the best... For you, I highly recommend Changling. VERY good movie!  
**Phyllis Beyer**It sounds like my kind of movie. Maybe when it comes out on DVD.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... it does look like a good creepy movie. Now if I only had time to see it... but, OH, WELL!!

# I Know Who To Blame For This Economy

**WAL-MART!** I can find many ways to blame Wal-Mart for the way the economy is tanking.Â  Time for my latest beef about the place.Â  We went over there Friday morning because my husband didn’t have to work until after lunch, and we need an oil change.Â  So we thought we’d get the oil change done together this time, which made me really happy because normally it’s just me and my two children (ages 2 and 7 mos.) who have to kill around 2 hours there every 3 months (or sometimes even more frequently).Â  If you’re thinking that spending 2 hours at Wal-Mart with 2 little kids while trying not to spend a lot of money is both exhausting and frustrating, you aren’t very far off the mark.Â  So anyway, Friday I thought I had company for the oil change, but even so, who wants to spend hours at Wal-Mart?Â  When we pulled up, I was pleasantly surprised to see that there weren’t any cars waiting, so I thought we might actually be out of there in under an hour – WRONG!Â  The wait time they quoted us was an hour and a half!Â  But we needed the oil change and were kind of trying to kill time until the area restaurants would start serving lunch, so we decided to go for it, especially since they’ve opened an H & R Block in the Wal-Mart for tax season.Â  Taxes and an oil change – kill two birds with one stone, or so we thought…Â  We get to the other side of the store where the makeshift H & R Block is, and we find out it’s not open until 1pm.Â  So we went back to the Automotive Department to sign in our car anyway, and that’s when we discover that an oil change at Wal-Mart is now $30!Â  That is a $7.50 increase in price over the last 3 months!Â  So no taxes to get done + expensive oil change + long wait = forget it!Â  And I will add the fact that Wal-Mart sucks at oil changes.Â  Almost every time I’d come home with the car, it would act funny or something else would be wrong with it.Â  Once they forgot to put the air filter back in, several times they didn’t replace the wiper fluid when it was checked off on the to-do list, and a few times I had to go back and have them re-vacuum the interior of the car because they said they did it but clearly had not.Â  Those were the days when oil changes were still so reasonable in price that we got the full monty of services, including the vacuuming and the refilling of fluids – not anymore!

We called other places around town, and we found that Wal-Mart is now the most expensive AND takes the longest.Â  But at the other places you needed an appointment, so we’ll have to wait until next week – no problem if I don’t have to go back to Wal-Mart!Â  Plus I’d rather support the little guy anyway (ever hear the country music song “Little Man” by Alan Jackson?Â  It’s a good one and I highly recommend listening to it if you’re frustrated about Wal-Mart’s world take-over).Â  And that brings me to why I’m blaming Wal-Mart for the awful economy…

They’re putting all the little guys out of business, so there go the jobs and the competition in the retail world that was keeping product and services prices reasonable.Â  Wal-Mart sets the pricing trends, unfortunately.Â  Mark my words, as soon as the little guys in town get wind that Wal-Mart upped their oil change prices, they will follow suit and you won’t be able to touch an oil change for under $30.Â  And worse yet, I read in the newspaper just yesterday that Wal-Mart is the only retail place that posted profits for January.Â  In fact, they’re doing even better than Wall Street predicted for them, which in this economy, makes them stand alone in that respect.

The state of our economy is so bad right now that I suppose it’s not logical to blame just one entity.Â  But moaning about Walmart is a good venting tool, and they p\*ss me off!

### Comments

**derek**I generally get it done by my mechanic, but I'm not sure how much it is because the car is always there to get something else done and I just tack on the oil change.  
**jamiahsh**What is that new slogan "Save money... Live better" I guess you aren't saving much money there... and reading the post doesn't sound like you are living much better, either.  
**justj**The quick lube spots are around $50 and they get it done in 15 minutes. You don't even get out of your car. Me, I generally go to the dealer, and walk around town.

# Random Kid Stuff

The other day, my husband reminded me of a cute story about something our oldest daughter did when she was younger, probably around 4 years old.Â  He said I should write it down somewhere so we don’t forget about it, so I decided to write something about all four of our wonderful kids, starting with the oldest and going down.Â  Here’s a visual:



TAYLOR – About 5 years ago, we began finding the letters “WCPL” all over the house.Â  The letters were always written together like a word, and they were everywhere – walls, books, VHS movies, chairs, everywhere.Â  We couldn’t figure out what word our then-4-year-old was trying to spell, so we had a talk about not writing where we’re not supposed to, cleaned it all up, and moved on.Â  A few weeks later, I took my daughter to the library to check out some books and movies, and that’s when I saw the labels on the VHS cases – WCPL = Williams County Public Library!Â  She had noticed that all of her books and movies that came from the library had those letters on them, so I guess she figured things were supposed to be labeled WCPL – hehehe!

SAMANTHA – Sammie is a very unique child.Â  She can be a real spitfire, but she just has this incredible spirit about her…Â  But she’ll ask me questions that I have no idea how to answer.Â  When her older sister was her age, she would ask the normal kid questions about life and how things work, and even if she didn’t phrase her questions correctly, it was always easy for me to figure out what she wanted to know and where she was coming from.Â  Not true with Samantha!Â  Since half the time I don’t know what she’s asking about, I can’t think of any of her confusing questions to share here on the blog, but I will say that she is the type of kid who asks the embarrassing questions in public – and *loudly*.Â  We went to a nursing home to sing Christmas carols during the holidays, and there was a gentleman in a wheelchair who suffered from a muscle illness that made his tongue swell.Â  He loved the caroling and really got into it, singing quite loudly.Â  This got Sammie’s attention.Â  She asked me, “Does your tongue hang out because you get so old?”Â  She just has such a different way of looking at things…Â  This is the same kid who asked me one time (really loudly of course) why someone was wearing purple underwear in the bathroom stall next to us!

DISNEY – It’s funny because Disney and Sammie look very much alike, almost like twins years apart.Â  But their personalities are night and day.Â  The other day, Disney, our 2-year-old, looked up at the sky and said, “Airplane!Â  See it, on ceiling?”Â  Awwww…..

CHRISTOPHER – I remembered something I forgot to mention about my son’s 6-month doctor visit.Â  The nurse said he should be eating 3 meals a day – something that seems obvious, but I’m actually really glad she mentioned it!Â  When you have a baby and you’re used to popping bottles in his mouth all the time, you forget that when he’s old enough to be eating solid foods that he needs meals just like big people!Â  My son loves all kinds of food; he tries to grab as much as he can, and he shoves it into his mouth with his little fists.Â  As he gets older, I’m starting to notice the difference between girls and boys, especially when it comes to their eating habits.Â  Boys are messier and more enthusiastic eaters, while girls tend to be dainty and more picky.Â  But again, maybe these are just differences in *my* kids, rather than a difference based on gender, who knows.Â  And from what I remember, all the kids started out not being picky about their food – they were just so happy to be experiencing flavors after an entire life of only formula!

I have been blessed with 4 kids, and they have 4 very individualistic personalities.Â  It’s really neat to watch how they interact with each other.Â  Well, except when the interacting involves fighting!

### Comments

**derek**Well, as I said you should be able to add it through the "add media" button and get it to show up as a reduced link to a larger picture. That's how I did all the pictures on the "New HPX" page a while (and a couple Wordpress versions) ago. I'll look into it again and let you know.  
**justj**It isn't Greek to me, but I don't usually do that. After many years of moving stuff on dial-up, I shrink the pictures before uploading them. If somebody really want a big pic of anything on my blog, they will have to ask.  
**taylhis**It's Greek to ALL of us... except Derek and JustJ probably... I'm sorry Derek, but you'll just have to view my large pics - I don't have ANY time to be messing around with code! But thanks for the hints!  
**Phyllis Beyer**It's all Greek to me. I am a computer idiot. Actually I took the picture and put it on my desktop as wallpaper.  
**derek**:?: What happened to my last comment? It was a correction to the above comment. If you use the above code, { should become <, and } should become >. Part of the last sentence got cut.  
**derek**Blah. It still cut out the proper braces. The last sentence should read: Change { and } to < and >  
**derek**By the way, when making your posts, you can manually make your pictures small and linkable to the full-sized pics so you can have nice small pics for the blog but people can still see the full-sized one by clicking on it (I'm sure there is still a way to do this with the editor but I no longer know how since wordpress was updated by our admin a couple times- he might be able to show you how). After adding your picture, go to the html tab and find the picture code which will look something like this (from your post): {img class="alignnone size-full wp-image-880" src="http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/02/1-2-09-003.jpg" alt="1-2-09-003" width="1024" height="768" /} And change it to this: {a title="My goofy kids" href="http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/02/1-2-09-003.jpg"}{img src="http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/02/1-2-09-003.jpg" alt="My goofy kids" width="500" /}{/a} Then go back to the visual tab and make sure it worked. It should have. Note that I changed the braces so the code would show up in the comment. Change { and } to .  
**derek**The mystery... The excitement... The intrigue... The enthusiasm... All can be yours- be a parent! :D  
**justj**Ah the stories that parents have. Every one of my girls have different personalities too. Life would be dull without that.  
**taylhis**YAY! Grandma left a comment! Now you can leave me comments directly on the blog rather than sending me an email with the subject, "your blog". ;) Thanks so much for commenting; good to see you here! When you comment, check the little box about subscribing to comments if you want to receive an email any time someone comments.  
**Phyllis Beyer**I loved reading about 4 of my "angels". I miss them so much. Yes, they are each unique and I love them all.  
**jamiahsh**All very unique and lovable even Dis seems to be getting out of her boy shyness... or is it just me? What is the red streak in Sammie's head...abover her right eye... brown eyes cool color. Must be one of those interactive moments that involve fighting... KIDDING.

# My Lobotomy

I just finished reading an engrossing memoir entitled *My Lobotomy*.Â  It took me a really long time to read it because I had to put it on hold since another book I had requested from the library came in.Â  I was number 223 on the waiting list for the other book, so when it came in, I had no choice but to put down *My Lobotomy* for about a month.Â  I was reluctant to put it down though, because Howard Dully’s life story is fascinating.Â  The book details a kids’ life growing up in the 1950’s and 1960’s under the thumb of his ‘evil’ stepmother.Â  As cliche as it sounds, there really is no better way to describe Howard’s stepmom, but ‘evil’ is my adjective for her, not his.Â  I find it very surprising and admirable of Howard that his memoir never takes a direction of self-pity, blame, nor hatred toward any of the people who were responsible for the trauma he endured as a child and young man.Â  Rather, the narrative is written very matter-of-factly, and it follows Howard on his fascinating, though tortuous journey through the United States mental health system in the 1960’s.

Howard Dully was forced to undergo a lobotomy at the tender age of 12.Â  Basically, his stepmother resented him because he was a reminder to her of his real mother, his father’s widow.Â  So stepmother Lou was determined to get rid of Howard any way she could.Â  When the lobotomy didn’t turn him into a vegetable, she shipped him off to loony bins, insane asylums, or mental institutions, whichever term would best describe these places in the 1960’s.Â  This is a picture of an anesthetized 12-year-old Howard getting an ice pick lobotomy:



Lou convinced Howard’s father and a doctor named Freeman that Howard was mentally ill.Â  Well actually, Dr. Freeman did not need much convincing.Â  He was the ‘father of the lobotomy’ and was eagerly looking for patients upon whom he could practice his ‘procedure’.Â  The procedure consisted of sticking an ice pick into one’s eye sockets and swirling it around – seriously.Â  And poor Howard was forced to endure this ‘operation’ as a kid at the age of 12.Â  His memoir details every aspect of his life; it’s riveting, heartbreaking, and finally triumphant because Howard is now a full grown man who seems like a genuinely nice guy, especially given everything he’s been through and had to come to grips with in his life.

The book starts at his birth and chronicles his early life with his doting biological mother; taking the reader through all his trials and tribulations with stepmother Lou, the lobotomy, his struggles with addiction as a young adult, and finally on his search through his medical records and the touching interviews he conducted with his own father about his role in the events that shaped Howard’s life.Â  The book also includes the many notes taken by Dr. Freeman after his meetings with Howard and his family, which offer a very interesting and unique perspective…

After I finished this book, I was curious about many of the things I had read about, so I conducted a little research of my own, and I found [recordings Howard made about his story for the National Public Radio](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5014080), as well as some [more information about Dr. Freeman and his ice-pick lobotomies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Freeman_(surgeon))…Â  Fascinating stuff, and I encourage you to check out Howard’s story – the book is *My Lobotomy* by Howard Dully.Â  Like I said, it’s truly amazing to me that after all he’s been through, Howard just seems to want to know **why** it happened, rather than **who** to blame for it…Â  an extremely commendable type of attitude which is growing increasingly rare in this day and age and was very refreshing to read about.Â  Thanks, Howard, for such a compelling read!

### Comments

**taylhis**Bowling Green is a bit far for a school night, but thanks anyway! Tell your mom (and you if you go) to have a good time!  
**jamiahsh**hmm... being wednesday I will prolly have to work that night, but we'll see  
**Megan**I read the first one also. How coincidental, my mom just said that she is going to go see the author on wed. at Bowling Green, he is having a book signing. Which I just heard about, (she said she supposedly told me, but I don't remember) I'm gonna check if I'm working, it starts at 7 if you are interested and came make sitting arrangements.  
**jamiahsh**I read the first "It" book and it was very good.  
**taylhis**Haven't read those books - looked them up on wikipedia though, and they sound interesting.  
**Megan**Wow! He is such an inspiration to all of us! BTW, have you ever read the "A child called it" books?  
**jamiahsh**Sounds amazing especially to read about someone not placing blame but yet going beyond it and becoming stronger for it. That would take a great amount of strength and will.

# Birthday Miracle

A few months ago, I learned I had a second cousin in Florida who was killed in a horrific car crash.Â  She was on her way to a fun outing with her daughter when out of nowhere, a drunk driver (mid-afternoon on a weekday – not that there’s ever **any** appropriate time to drink and drive, but still) who was going the wrong way on the expressway hit her car head-on, killing her and gravely injuring her young daughter.Â  The little girl persevered, came out of her coma and re-learned to walk and talk.Â  She was recently in the news again because she just turned 5 years old and sadly, she still thinks her mother is coming back.Â  Her courage and strength is inspiring, so I’d like to share this clip of her on the Florida news.Â  Please keep Summer in your thoughts and prayers.Â  [Click here to see the news story about Summer’s 5th birthday](http://www.abcactionnews.com/mediacenter/local.aspx?videoid=12643).Â  And please, **please**, if you’re going to drink, **always** have another mode of transportation set up ahead of time!

### Comments

**derek**Thanks. I'll take a look at it.  
**taylhis**I don't know what if anything the driver has learned... if you really want to know about her or the story, here is an article with more info: http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/article879595.ece  
**derek**8O What J said. Praise God for Summer's recovery so far from this. The video didn't say anything about the drunk driver, but I really hope (s)he has learned big time from this. My condolences for your second cousin.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... what an amazing little girl. Indeed, my prayers are with her.

# Super(fun)Bowl

I am much more of a baseball fan than a football fan (see my countdown timer to the first game of Cubs spring training to the right).Â  But I will admit that I love watching football; mainly because my husband loves it, and I love to see him enjoy things that make him happy.Â  Oh, that and the fact that whenever he watches football, it’s become sort of a tradition with us that he gives me excellent backrubs!Â  So while I couldn’t care less who won yesterday’s Superbowl,( although I chose the Cardinals to root for because it’s always fun to pick a team and scream and shout and get into the game) I did have a great time watching it.

We had decided to have a get-together; a fun evening filled with friends and food (too much food!Â  We had to have pizza for dinner again Monday and will have it twice more this weekÂ  just to get rid of all the extras!).Â  Because I have 4 kids, I didn’t get to see all of my favorite part of the Superbowl – the commercials.Â  But that’s ok, I’m sure I can catch them online somewhere if I’m so inclined.Â  The ones I did see were pretty good – I especially liked the Potato Head one (think it was for tires).Â  It just cracks me up when Mrs. Potato Head changes into her ‘angry’ eyes, hehehe!Â  I also really liked the careerbuilder.com commercial with the moose head on the wall – I won’t spoil the rest of it because I recommend you go out and find it yourself if you haven’t seen it.Â  I missed the newest E-Trade.com commercials with the talking baby, so those I will have to find because I always enjoy those.Â  Oh, and I’ll have to see the latest chapter in the saga of the Budweiser Clydesdales…

As for halftime, I’m not a fan of “The Boss”, so I wasn’t paying attention to Bruce Springsteen’s performance.Â  I am glad to note, however, that he didn’t incur a wardrobe malfunction ala Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson circa Superbowl XXXVII in 2004.Â  Also during halftime, there was a special 3D event.Â  We had picked up enough pairs of 3D glasses for the party at a store ahead of time (we actually got enough to last us until Superbowl L!), but in my opinion, they should have given a few minutes warning for people to get their glasses ready.Â  We had ours ready because they did mention it in the 2nd quarter, but I didn’t get a chance to get my regular eyeglasses to wear underneath, which guaranteed an absence of 3D for me.Â  But other people seemed pretty impressed…Â  I have seen the preview for Monsters Vs. Aliens in the movie theater and it looks really funny – I’m looking forward to that movie coming out.

Well, anyway, much fun was had by all.Â  We had originally intended to make this a game night / Superbowl party, but by the time the big game ended, there wasn’t any time for board games.Â  Next time!Â  And oh yeah, I should report that the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Superbowl, in case you’re using my site for a news report 

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I also don't know how Springsteen's show compared over others, but from what little I saw, it wasn't too much to write home about. I didn't really care who won either, but decided to go with the team who had not won several previous championships.  
**jamiahsh**I second that motion. If you happen to have found a sweater vest on the table, CAC lent it to me for to see if I could use it in MMiSL. There were lots of good commercials. Watching football... any football... game at your house is always a fun experience.  
**derek**I had to scramble to get 3D glasses Sunday morning- just for the one break. Though I really picked them up for the TV show I watch that was aired in 3D Monday night. I haven't watched it yet- still have a few episodes to catch up on first.  
**justj**The Steelers won? ;) There were many Cardinal fans at your party and very few Steeler fans, so I thought it would have been better not to mention that fact. I think a good time was had by all. Good food, good friends, what more do you need?

# BLOG NOTES

size of pictures to post: After you upload it you can choose but I would say under 650wide and 400 long (650×400)  
embedding videos in the blog – If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

inserting poll –

**If you won the lottery, what are some of the things you'd do first? Choose as many as apply:**

* build a community theater building
* build a community theater building anonymously
* consult an attorney
* change my phone number
* quit my job
* take a vacation
* hire a nanny
* hire a laundry service
* hire a housekeeper
* donate to charity
* build a zoo
* build a dream home
* I wrote a creative answer - read it in the comments section
* go to the casino

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

Â Â  where 4 is the number of the poll

### Comments

# Am I The Only One Who Didn't Know This?

I received an interesting email forward from my mom last week, and I’m sharing it on my blog because it’s a helpful household tip that most people I asked didn’t know about.Â  I had actually heard this Heloise-worthy hint before, but I had forgotten about it.Â  Here is a copy of the email forward:

*I had to go into the kitchen and check this out for myself. Who looks at the end of an aluminum foil box? You know, when you try to pull some foil out and the whole roll comes out of the box. Then you have to put the roll back in the box and start over. The darn roll always comes out at the wrong time.*

*Well, I would like to share this with you. Yesterday I went to throw out an empty Reynolds Wrap foil box and for some reason I turned it and looked at the end of the box. And written on the end it said, “Press here to lock end.”*

*Right there on the end of the box is a tab to lock the roll in place. How long has this little lockng tab been there? I then looked at a generic brand of aluminum foil and it had one too. I then looked at a box of Saran wrap and it had one too! I can’t count the number of times the Saran wrap roll has jumped out when I was trying to cover something up.*

**What do you think about the foil box hint?**

* I knew that already - where have YOU been?
* I'm glad I found out and will find it useful
* I don't care
* I didn't know about it, and I won't be using it

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**Megan**Good to know! And all those times I have waisted so much aluminum foil. I'm surprised that they don't make the sign that you can lock it, a little more noticeable.  
**derek**I voted that I knew this, but only since I read about it on another forum. I encourage you to check out [Worthy Christian Forums](http://www.worthychristianforums.com). I think the women outnumber the guys by a fairly significant margin, so you should be comfortable there. They have a chat board as well.  
**justj**Some of the cheap wraps don't have the locking tabs. So you have to be careful.  
**jamiahsh**Reynolds added the feature in 1996. Wonder how long they have been around or if they were the first.... seems highly likely that they introduced the tabs.  
**jamiahsh**Ok... so maybe I really won't find it so useful, but I did look and pushed in the tabs on both ends and by golly, it works.

# Sick Of Being Sick

The past week and a half in our house has been awful.Â  It all came to a head last Friday when our two-year-old got sick in the car.Â  Last weekend, when she wasn’t sleeping, she was throwing up or in the words of Chandler, played by Matthew Perry on the tv show Friends, “visiting a town a little south of throwing up…”.Â  Later in the weekend, her baby brother was afflicted with the same illness, and now we had huge messes x2.Â  Big sister Sammie got it later in the week, but luckily, the little ones started feeling better.Â  Add in a snow day and a couple of weather delays, and our house was chaos for what seemed like forever.Â  On top of everything, I had some sort of extreme fatigue.Â  I was so worried about it that I even made a doctor’s appointment and went in, where the doctor ran some blood tests and even gave me a neck xray since I had a strange achiness accompanying the fatigue.Â  I guess it didn’t occur to me that I could have the same virus that struck down the kids, mainly because I didn’t have the same (disgusting) symptoms they had, but I did look up some stuff on the internet in an attempt to ~~scare~~ diagnose myself.Â  The good news is, my xrays and blood tests came back normal (well, I’m actually still waiting on one of the tests, but it’s Friday and the nurses are out to lunch and won’t be back until Monday afternoon – what is that?Â  Can I have a job like that?), but the tests that did come back show that there is nothing wrong with my thyroid or my iron levels, both of which I thought were possibilities.Â  So that’s good…Â  I guess.Â  If there was something wrong with my body chemically, we’d be able to fix it, and then I’d have the energy I need to keep up with my 4 little kids.Â  Now that most things came back normal, I don’t know where to start to feel better…Â Â  Although I do feel much better today, but still no where near normal, and that makes me think it might be the illness my kids had after all.Â  But it was a bizarrely lengthy version of the stomach flu, and it will take us weeks (at least!) to catch up on all the work that didn’t get done in the week and a half of illness, sigh.

My husband had to take off from some of his work so he could watch the kids while I rested, and especially with all the laundry we’ve had to do around here, Mt.Â  Washmore is once again threatening to take over the second floor of our house.Â  All this catching up, and I’m still exhausted…Â  My husband seems to think I have sleep apnea, mostly because I snore often and loudly and I’m always needing more sleep.Â  I forgot to bring this up to the doctor, but if I ever get ahold of her and that last test comes back normal, maybe we can go from there…Â  I do seem to need an awful lot of sleep to function.Â  Well, anyway, that’s my story – sorry if I grossed anyone out (especially body-function-joke-hater Derek), but I thought people should know where I’ve been for the last two weeks.Â  At least the kids are feeling better – it was beyond sad to see them crabby, lethargic and not able to keep anything down…Â  Is it time for summer yet?!?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**See ya then.  
**jamiahsh**I will be brave and cross my fingers; but I am sure it will be wonderful and everyone will be healthier and it will be a super Super Bowl. Glad to hear you are all returning to whatever normal is.  
**derek**Just be sure to wear surgical masks. :D I'm glad to hear you and your family are getting better, L.  
**taylhis**I can't guarantee I got every contagious germ out of the house... but I sure tried because I'm really looking forward to the party since we are all finally feeling better! So it's up to you if you want to brave it, and I hope you will!  
**justj**Is this going to affect the Super Bowl gathering? I really hope everyone in your household is feeling better.  
**derek**Nah. I'm not grossed out. I mentioned a student who upchucked the other day in class. I just don't like it when they use stuff like that as so-called entertainment.

# It's The End Of The World As We Know It... And I Feel Fine

Every few years, it seems that people are worried about an Armageddon date.Â  They chose some sort of date based on something and promptly report it to the media as the date the world will end.Â  Nine years ago now, it was Y2K – do you remember how many people built shelters, stockpiled canned food and emergency supplies?Â  I was due to have my first child as the ‘millennium baby’, and I was worried something catastrophic would happen; at the very least, the lights would go out in the hospital or something.Â  My daughter arrived a few weeks early though, on December 21, 1999, so we were at home safe and sound to ring in the new year – and surprise, surprise, nothing happened.Â  So it’s not a shocker that people have pinpointed a new date for the Apocalypse; this time it’s based upon an ancient Mayan calendar – well, some scholars’ interpretation of it anyway.Â  What will you be doing in 2012?Â  According to some people, you should live 2011 to its fullest, because that’s all we’re going to get!Â  The following article is from cnn.com and was written by A. Pawlowski.

*Just as “Y2K” and its batch of predictions about the year 2000 have become a distant memory, here comes “Twenty-twelve.”  
The sun shines through the door of the Seven Dolls Temple, in the Maya ruins of Dzibilchaltun in Mexico.*

*The sun shines through the door of the Seven Dolls Temple, in the Maya ruins of Dzibilchaltun in Mexico.*

*Fueled by a crop of books, Web sites with countdown clocks, and claims about ancient timekeepers, interest is growing in what some see as the dawn of a new era, and others as an expiration date for Earth: December 21, 2012.*

*The date marks the end of a 5,126-year cycle on the Long Count calendar developed by the Maya, the ancient civilization known for its advanced understanding of astronomy and for the great cities it left behind in Mexico and Central America.*

*(Some scholars believe the cycle ends a bit later — on December 23, 2012.)*

*Speculation in some circles about whether the Maya chose this particular time because they thought something ominous would happen has sparked a number of doomsday theories.*

*The hype also has mainstream Maya scholars shaking their heads.*

*“There’s going to be a whole generation of people who, when they think of the Maya, think of 2012, and to me that’s just criminal,” said David Stuart, director of the Mesoamerica Center at the University of Texas at Austin.*

*“There is no serious scholar who puts any stock in the idea that the Maya said anything meaningful about 2012.”*

*But take the fact that December 21, 2012, coincides with the winter solstice, add claims the Maya picked the time period because it also marks an alignment of the sun with the center of the Milky Way galaxy, and you have the makings of an online sensation.*

*Long Count 101  
â€¢ The Long Count calendar was one of several created by the ancient Maya.*

*â€¢ It consists of the following units of time:*

*kin = one day  
uinal = 20 days  
tun = 360 days (18 uinal)  
katun = 7,200 days (20 tun)  
baktun = 144,000 days (20 katun)*

*â€¢ The calendar shows the number of days elapsed since the beginning date: August 13, 3114 B.C. (some scholars think the date is actually August 11, 3114 B.C.)*

*â€¢ The dates are written as numbers separated by periods in the following order:*

*(baktun).(katun).(tun).(uinal).(kin)*

*â€¢ July 20, 1969 — the date of the first moon landing — would be written as: 12.17.15.17.0*

*â€¢ December 21, 2012, would be written as 13.0.0.0.0 and the day after that as 0.0.0.0.1*

*Source: Howstuffworks.com*

*Type “2012” into an Internet search engine and you’ll find survival guides, survival schools, predictions and “official stuff” to wear, including T-shirts with slogans such as “2012 The End” and “Doomsday 2012.”*

*Theories about what might happen range from solar storms triggering volcano eruptions to a polar reversal that will make the Earth spin in the opposite direction.*

*If you think all of this would make a great sci-fi disaster movie, Hollywood is already one step ahead.*

*“2012,” a special-effects flick starring John Cusack and directed by Roland Emmerich, of “The Day After Tomorrow” fame, is scheduled to be released this fall. The trailer shows a monk running to a bell tower on a mountaintop to sound the alarm as a huge wall of water washes over what appear to be the peaks of the Himalayas.*

*‘Promoting a hoax’*

*One barometer of the interest in 2012 may be the “Ask an Astrobiologist” section of NASA’s Web site, where senior scientist David Morrison answers questions from the public. On a recent visit, more than half of the inquiries on the most popular list were related to 2012.*

*“The purveyors of doom are promoting a hoax,” Morrison wrote earlier this month in response to a question from a person who expressed fear about the date.*

*A scholar who has studied the Maya for 35 years said there is nothing ominous about 2012, despite the hype surrounding claims to the contrary.*

*“I think that the popular books… about what the Maya say is going to happen are really fabricated on the basis of very little evidence,” said Anthony Aveni, a professor of astronomy, anthropology and Native American studies at Colgate University.*

*Aveni and Stuart are both writing their own books explaining the Mayan calendar and 2012, but Stuart said he’s pessimistic that people will be interested in the real story when so many other books are making sensational claims.*

*Dozens of titles about 2012 have been published and more are scheduled to go on sale in the coming months. Current offerings include “Apocalypse 2012,” in which author Lawrence Joseph outlines “terrible possibilities,” such as the potential for natural disaster.*

*But Joseph admits he doesn’t think the world is going to end.*

*“I do, however, believe that 2012 will prove to be… a very dramatic and probably transformative year,” Joseph said.*

*The author acknowledged he’s worried his book’s title might scare people, but said he wanted to alert the public about possible dangers ahead.*

*He added that his publisher controls the book’s title, though he had no issue with the final choice.*

*“If it had been called ‘Serious Threats 2012′ or ‘Profound Considerations for 2012,’ it would have never gotten published,” Joseph said.*

*Growing interest*

*Another author said the doom and gloom approach is a great misunderstanding of 2012.*

*“The trendy doomsday people… should be treated for what they are: under-informed opportunists and alarmists who will move onto other things in 2013,” said John Major Jenkins, whose books include “Galactic Alignment” and who describes himself as a self-taught independent Maya scholar.*

*Jenkins said that cycle endings were all about transformation and renewal — not catastrophe — for the Maya. He also makes the case that the period they chose coincides with an alignment of the December solstice sun with the center of the Milky Way, as viewed from Earth.*

*“Two thousand years ago the Maya believed that the world would be going through a great transformation when this alignment happened,” Jenkins said.*

*But Aveni said there is no evidence that the Maya cared about this concept of the Milky Way, adding that the galactic center was not defined until the 1950s.*

*“What you have here is a modern age influence [and] modern concepts trying to garb the ancient Maya in modern clothing, and it just doesn’t wash for me,” Aveni said.*

*Meanwhile, he and other scholars are bracing for growing interest as the date approaches.*

*“The whole year leading up to it is going to be just crazy, I’m sorry to say,” Stuart said.*

*“I just think it’s sad, it really just frustrates me. People are really misunderstanding this really cool culture by focusing on this 2012 thing. It means more about us than it does about the Maya.”*

### Comments

**derek**People have long looked to the end of the world. Even some first century Christians thought Jesus's return would be coming in their lifetimes. Nearly 2000 years later, the world is looking more like what's described in the Bible pertaining to His return, but we still can't say for sure. I know one who prophesied the Rapture for March 2011, and Jesus's return for September that year. Some list says there is no Pope after Benedict. This Mayan thing says 2012. Lots of guesses, but only God knows the timing. We should be ready, but not putting everything aside to wait for it. To all readers of this comment: have you accepted Christ yet? If not, you are not ready. Here's a place to start: [Got Forgiveness?](http://www.gotquestions.org/got-forgiveness.html)  
**Maggie’s Blog » Blog Archive » An Agenda of Controlled Chaos Â« the Nyu College Democrats**[...] Itâ€™s The End Of The World As We Know Itâ€¦ And I Feel Fine | My Food … [...]  
**jamiahsh**Sounds like a possible Un-Happy Birthday for T. Yeah, sure. I remember Y2K, I was sick on the 1st day... and no, not because I had partied too much the night before.

# He Said WHAT?

The continuing saga of Illinois’ embattled governor just keeps getting more and more interesting.Â  As his impeachment trial opened yesterday, Rod Blagojevich took to the tv airwaves to defend (?) himself.Â  I saw clips of a few of his tv appearances, and that’s why I included the little question mark above.Â  It didn’t seem to me that he was doing a good job of defending himself.Â  In fact, the ladies on The View noticed the same thing, with them noting, “Seems like you’re doing yourself more harm than good.”Â  The View ladies then hilariously chided the governor, asking him to say “I’m not a crook” – Richard Nixon-style.Â  Blago refused.

And of course by now you’ve heard about the Oprah for Senator announcement he made on Good Morning America – Blago has admitted that he actually considered Oprah Winfrey to fill Obama’s old Senate seat.Â  I’m not even going to go there – there were too many other gems that came out of Blago’s mouth yesterday.Â  Among them:

On his Larry King Live appearance, Blagojevich launched into a bizarre analogy involving cowboys and steer to describe his situation…Â  I’m not going to go into detail; it was quite lengthy, but it’s worth looking up on youtube or somewhere if you’re so inclined.Â  WHAT was he TALKING about?!?

Back to Oprah for a minute.Â  According to Blagojevich, Oprah has more influence than all 100 United States senators combined.Â  She does have lots of dough; as well as an uncanny ability to get women to diet and save money.Â  But she doesn’t have the power to declare war or pass legislation that changes lives…Â  so no, Blago, not even close on that one.

Also on Larry King Live, Blago was shown clips of Saturday Night Live where they make fun of him, namely his thick mane of hair.Â  “He looks like one of those Fisher Price toy people with its hair on backwards!”Â  Too funny!Â  But Blago didn’t think so.Â Â  “What show was that?”Â  he asked.Â  But a few sentences later, he talked about how they can make fun of him during skits or whatever and that he didn’t care.Â  But if he had never heard of Saturday Night Live as he acted, how would he know it was a show comprised of skits?Â  He was just trying to insult Saturday Night Live by acting as though he had never heard of it!

And throughout the governor’s press junket yesterday, he kept repeating – “The fix is in” referring to the “fact” that the Illinois House is impeaching him because they’re out to get him – not because he did anything wrong.Â  I agree with Blago on one aspect – his impeachment in inevitable.Â  In the mean time, I have to admit how fun it is to watch this guy in action and marvel at the fact that he was ever elected to such a major public office.Â  I think he might be certifiably nuts!

### Comments

**taylhis**Yes... time to take down all those signs he put up on the tollways labeling them as his... what a waste of $  
**derek**Oh, how one day makes a difference. Earlier the House was unanimous on his impeachment. Tonight the Senate completed his dismissal with their own unanimous votes- one for his removal, one for barring him from any Illinois political office. At this point, I don't care whether or not he's criminally charged- I'm just glad he's finally gone. No more Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich. Even though he's still a democrat, I welcome Gov. Pat Quinn.  
**derek**I am really getting tired of this whole thing. The secession of Palatine Township from Cook County is back in the news too. They want to put it on the next ballot as a non-binding referendum.  
**jamiahsh**I watched at least half of the Larry King interview Monday night. I missed the cowboy analogy. Didn't he miss the opening of his impeachment to begin his NY tour? He should be invited to host SNL and get Sean Astin to make an appearance. He is already being tapped for the movie.

# Zoo Traveler

I really like to travel (NO FLYING THOUGH!), and we were fortunate enough to do lots of it – before we had so many little kids, of course.Â  We still try to make a yearly trip to Florida, especially while we can still fit the entire family in one car – something that soon won’t be easily accomplished as the kids grow older.Â  At each travel destination, I have to admit that my favorite tourist attraction is always the local zoo.Â  I made a list of all the zoos and/or wildlife parks I have visited, and I hope to add to it soon!Â  Here is the list by state, country, or territory, followed by the city in which it’s located.Â  An asterisk following the zoo means it no longer exists.Â  I put notes about some of the places in *italics* as sort of a guide in case you’re interested in visiting one of those particular attractions and want some info straight from a tourist’s mouth.

**California**:  
Sea World San Diego  
San Diego Zoo

**Canada**:  
Bird Kingdom Niagara Falls Aviary, Niagara Falls, Ontario  
Marineland, Niagara Falls, Ontario – *this place is very cool.Â  You can hand-feed deer, Beluga Whales or even Orcas (Killer Whales).Â  You can throw food down to bears who beg and do tricks.Â  There are also a variety of amusement park rides for the whole family.Â  Look at me petting the Orca!*

**

**Washington, DC**National Zoo

**Florida**:  
Wooten’s Wilflife Park, Florida Everglades – *a cool, family owned place where you can see animals on display; including alligators, crocodiles, and Florida panthers.Â  You can also hold and feed baby alligators!Â  I wonder if they still exist; their website hasn’t been updated since ’06!*Sea World, Orlando  
Gatorland, Orlando  
Animal Kingdom, Orlando

**Idaho**:  
Zoo Boise, Boise

**Illinois**:

Brookfield Zoo, Brookfield – *this is the zoo I grew up going to.Â  In the 80’s when I was a frequent visitor, they had many ‘celebrity’ animals, with interesting stories to match.*Shedd Aquarium, Chicago  
Peoria Wildlife Park, Peoria  
Cosley Zoo, Wheaton  
Glen Oak Zoo, Peoria  
Henson Robinson Zoo, Springfield  
Miller Park Zoo, Bloomington – *yuck, not one of my favorite places.Â  Their tiger exhibits consisted of teeny tiny cages, and they had a really scrawny, terrible looking tiger, at least in the late ’90’s when we lived in the area.Â  Hopefully they’ve cleaned the place up.*Scovill Zoo, Decatur

**Indiana**:  
Ft Wayne Children’s Zoo – *a perfectly sized zoo to visit with kids.Â  They have a wide variety of animals and some nice exhibits.Â  They just recently built a chair-lift type ride that will take you over the lion exhibit once it’s finished – cool and scary at the same time!*Potawatomi Zoo,Â  South Bend  
Fun Spot, Angola

**Michigan**:  
Binder Park, Battle Creek

**Minnesota**:  
Minneapolis Zoo, Minneapolis

**Missouri**:  
St Louis Zoo, St. Louis

**Nebraska**:  
Henry Doorly Zoo, Omaha – *I know they’ve since rebuilt it, but when I visited back in 2001-2002, they had a teeny-tiny exhibit for the gorillas, which made them none too happy.Â  I actually witnessed a huge male gorilla charge a kid and beat on the glass from his small exhibit – scary!*Henry Doorly safari park, Omaha  
Folsom Children’s Zoo, Lincoln – *a very nice little zoo located in the heart of Lincoln.Â  It’s so well-laid out that you can forget you’re in the middle of a capital city, and they have lots of animals in a variety of nice exhibits.*

**Ohio**:

African Safari Wildlife Park, Port Clinton – *I love this place!Â  You can feed deer, elands, huge buffalo and a variety of hoofed mammals from the comfort of your own vehicle.Â  In season, they have pig races, animals shows, and camel and pony rides for the little ones.*Akron Zoo, Akron – *I was really impressed with the layout, exhibits, and the happiness of the animals – a very impressive little zoo!*Cincinnati Zoo, Cincinnati  
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Cleveland  
Columbus Zoo, Columbus – *a zoo no one had heard about until my favorite celebrity, Jack Hanna got ahold of it and made it a world-reknown facility.Â  Huge zoo, and the only place to see my favorite animals, manatees in my home state of Ohio!*\*Sea World Ohio, Aurora – *we actually lived in Illinois at the time we visited here, but I’m glad we got to see it before they sold it to Six Flags, who sold it to Cedar Fair.Â  Any of the other Sea Worlds are quite a hike from IL or OH for that matter, especially for a non-flyer such as myself.*Toledo Zoo, Toledo

**Pennsylvania**:  
Pittsburgh Zoo – *very impressive zoo!Â  Lots of kid-friendly playgrounds and interactive areas.* *The polar bear habitat looked really cool – people go through a tunnel that the bears can swim over – but we didn’t see it since the bears weren’t in the pool.Â  I NEED a second look at this zoo and will definitely allow more time when I get back there!*ZOOAMERICA North American Wildlife Park, Hershey – *We did not care for this zoo at all.Â  We visited in the late ’90’s, so maybe they’ve added more to it by now.Â  But at that time, they only had animals indigenous to North America, and let’s face it, those are easy to spot in most areas of the U.S.Â  And let’s face it, the real star tourist destination in Hershey is the chocolate factory!*

**South Dakota**:  
Great Plains Zoo and Museum, Sioux Falls – *I visited here with my family when I was 15.Â  This place was amusing to us because attached to the zoo is the museum, which has many taxidermied specimans.Â  We joked that this zoo had more dead animals than live ones!*\*Marineland, Rapid City – *note the asterisk, this place doesn’t exist anymore, thank goodness.Â  When we visited in the summer of ’93, they had dolphins and sea lions held in such tiny cages and pools, it was sickening.Â  I haven’t been able to find much info on this place, but I’m sure they were shut down because of poor treatment of their animals.Â  I can only hope the animals found a better home.*Bear Country USA, Rapid City – *a cool drive-thru bear habitat experience – keep those windows rolled up!!!Â  And check out the baby bear nursery – so adorable!*

**Wisconsin**:  
Henry Vilas Zoo, Madison  
\*Serpent Safari, Wisconsin Dells

**GRAND TOTAL AS OF 2009:**

**41 animal-themed places in 2 countries, 13 states, 1 district…Â  and counting!**

### Comments

**derek**Is that a picture from Free Willy 4, starring Taylhis? :D  
**justj**The Detroit Zoo covers more ground than the Toledo Zoo by far. It was a longer walk between the animals too. I liked the zoo, but the walking threw me, and that was in my younger days when I didn't mind walking as much. In Michigan, I'm missing the zoo in Grand Rapids. I just haven't been traveling in that direction. I know I've visited close to 30 zoos/attractions, but I never counted.  
**jamiahsh**Oh, yes... How Could I forget the frog?  
**taylhis**I count the San Diego attractions separately, and I haven't been to the Wildlife Park - they are in separate locations, so I count them separately. Never been to the Cedar Point nor King's Island safaris. Which one are you missing in Michigan? I did forget the Shedd Aquarium; thanks for the reminder! But believe it or not, I never went to the Lincoln Park zoo. Maybe I can add some of the Michigan locations this summer... Toronto isn't too far, but if they passed that rule where everyone needs a passport, that will be too pricey. I LOVE the Works Projects buildings! Toledo has lots of walking too - how does Detroit compare? Jamiahsh - I remember Miller Park out there in E-town. Attended a wedding there that was crashed by a frog from the swamp, remember? :0  
**justj**Do you count the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Wild Life park as two separate attractions? What about the animal safaris that used to be in Cedar Point and Kings Island? I'm almost certain the one in Cedar Point is gone, but I haven't been to Kings Island in years. I think I've been to every major animal park/zoo in Ohio, I'm missing one in Michigan, and a couple in Indiana. I can't believe I've been to two Chicago animal attractions that aren't on your list. I didn't see the Shedd Aquarium on your list. If you haven't been there you should go. And Lincoln Park Zoo. I don't really remember much about Lincoln park, but it wasn't that bad or I'd remember that. You should also hit Potter Park in Lansing, and the Detroit Zoo if you have a good day to spend. The Detroit Zoo covers a lot of ground, so if you aren't up to walking a lot, you may want to skip it. Potter Park is a zoo very similar to the Toledo Zoo. They have a lot of 1930's works projects buildings on the grounds. Very similar to the design and look of many of the old buildings in Toledo. Outside the country you should get to Toronto. They have a fabulous zoo. I'm going to have to count up my zoo trips to see how many I've been to.  
**taylhis**It's a goal of mine to get to one in every state - and some foreign countries if they can ever get me to fly - and I had to start the list to keep track of ones I've already been to before I forgot!  
**jamiahsh**SWEEET... Miller Park Zoo.... makes me think of our town's Miller Swamp... oops, Park. Used to have a decent pond and has since turned into YUCK. But you have been to FAR more animal attractions that I. Course I only vaguely remember the trek to CA so I dunno if we had the pleasure of visiting the SD Zoo. GO LUDO, I loved the Wildlife Park, too.  
**Zoo Traveler | Hazel Woods**[...] the original post:Â  Zoo Traveler | Tags: Celebrity, cincinnati, cleveland-columbus, cleveland-metroparks, columbus, favorite, [...]

# A Living Breathing Hoax

A while ago, I decided to write a series within my blog about animals, my favorite things.Â  I just can’t find enough time to learn about animals, and I love sharing knowledge about their incredible attributes.Â  Here is chapter two in my Interesting Animals series.Â  To read chapter one about a scaly mammal called the pangolin, [click here](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2008/12/10/these-are-a-few-of-my-favorite-things/).

For chapter two, I chose to focus on the duck-billed platypus; an animal who is so strange looking that people thought it to be a hoax when it was first discovered in 1798.

The platypus is one of 3-5 species (depending on the source – animal knowledge is very differential) ofÂ  monotremes or egg-laying mammals.Â  I know, at one point we were all taught that one of the characteristics of mammals is that they give birth to live young, but that is not the case.Â  Monotremes lay eggs, and the platypus join echidnas (spiny anteaters) in this animal order.Â  The platypus is found in Australia – seems like they have all the cool animals, doesn’t it?Â  I just wish they weren’t so stingy with their animals.Â  I know they stopped loaning out the Tasmanian Devil years ago, and now that the last one died (it resided in Fort Wayne Indiana until its death – I could kick myself for not making the less than hour trip over there to see it while it was alive), the only place to see them is in Australia.Â  The same goes for the platypus.Â  I’ve visited many zoos, and I’ve never seen a live platypus.Â  A quick check on the internet reveals that they are only found in Australian zoos.

But anyway, aside from being an aquatic (with water-repellent fur), egg-laying mammal, another cool thing about the platypus is that the males are actually poisonous.Â  Both genders have a spur on their left foot, but the males’ spur produces enough venom to really hurt a human being.Â  Here is a picture of the duck-billed platypus – note the soft, leathery duck-bill which is actually used by the animal to sense the electric fields caused by its moving prey (feeds on shrimp, fish eggs, small fish, and aquatic invertebrates found in streams and lakes).



Easy to see how this duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed, egg-laying mammal was once thought to be an elaborate man-made fraud, huh?

### Comments

**derek**A genetic engineer from the year 2300 traveled back in his time machine with the platypus to play a joke on all of us. :mrgreen:  
**justj**Platypus in zoo, that was over 25 years and at least that many zoos ago. I'm thinking Cincinnati Zoo, but I'm not sure. Back in the 80's there were many outside of the US animals coming in. Cultural exchange programs. Problem with platypus is that they don't do well with travel. High mortality rate in traveling platypus.  
**jamiahsh**VERY COOL. Yes, Australia is awfully stingy with their animals. As many times as I heard that they are overrun by kangaroo from a friend who spent her senior year in high school there (she often went on 'roo hunts with her host family), you would think they would be less stingy.  
**taylhis**That's interesting. I never thought about the size. On the websites I research, they always give the size in meters, so I just never thought about it in actuality. Where did you see the platypus?  
**justj**I remember seeing a platypus years and years ago. I just remember thinking how small they were. Looking at pictures and seeing them on nature shows, I always thought they were bigger animals. I was always thinking they were the size and weight of beavers, but they are about the size and weight of a medium-small woodchuck.

# Me Want Cookie

Jamiahsh, a fellow blogger friend of mine, had a point when he noted that it’s been a long time since one of my famous anti-Walmart posts.Â  I hate the place, but as a mom of 4, I don’t have any other options that compare to the time and money I reluctantly have to admit I save shopping at Walmart.Â  It’s just their dirty tricks that drive me crazy, and I’ve ranted about those long enough – if you’re interested, flip through my blog posts and search for Walmart.Â  Right now, I need to address my most current Walmart disappointment: no more free cookies for the kids.

Those of you who have kids know that Walmart used to give out cookies at the bakery as a sort of rescue for tiresome kids whose parents are taking too long with their shopping.Â  I shop at Walmart once, sometimes twice a week.Â  It is a familiar habit for my two-year-old to get her cookie at the bakery while we shop.Â  If I’m lucky, it will keep her busy until I hit the dairy section.Â  But the other day during my weekly visit to Walmart, imagine my surprise when the lady in the bakery said they didn’t have any cookies.Â  Not only that, she thinks they won’t have them anymore, ever.Â  She wasn’t sure because the lady who usually handles the cookies (?) was on vacation.Â  Sounds like a cop-out to me…Â  I mean, is there really a lady who regularly handles the cookies?Â  I think she just didn’t want to have to tell this angel-face ‘no cookie':

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/december-kids-001.jpg)

My daughter actually took it quite well…Â  of course, I bought her a pack of donuts instead…Â  It’s not that I’m a softie, but I just don’t think it’s fair that a two-year-old should have to bear the brunt of a mega-company’s policy change.Â  They gave cookies every time before this, and she has had to sit in the shopping cart and be good and do her time, and now all of a sudden, no cookie?Â  So I HAD to buy her a replacement treat, at least for this shopping trip.Â  Maybe in the future, I’ll try to prepare her ahead of time or just bring my own treat from home.Â  But in the mean time, their little plan worked, didn’t it?Â  Lure all the housemoms over to the bakery to get free cookies for their kids…Â  over time, they will grow to expect it, and then one day, no free cookies will cause them to *pay money* for something else for their kids – $CA-CHING$!

I admit it was a nice gesture on Walmart’s part to offer the free cookies in the first place.Â  Then again, we do spend enough over there; they should be able to afford it…Â  But it was a nice little perk, and as I said, something for the kids to look forward to about shopping at Walmart…Â  But in the end, it ended up being just another disappointment from our favorite big box retailer.

Our local non-Walmart grocery store still has free cookies for the kids, AND they’re fresh baked…Â  If I find more time and money, maybe I will make it a point to do more of our shopping over there…

How about your grocery store?Â  Is it a small mom-and-pop-owned place or a big box retailer?Â  Do they give free cookies to the kids?

### Comments

**Tale Of Tartar | My Food Chain Gang**[...] the search and link to a few of the various episodes depicting the times they wronged me.Â  Like this time.Â  And this time.Â  And this time, to name a [...]  
**derek**I think you know about where I live. ;) While I have never know our WM to give free cookies, I have never before had a reason to know if they did, myself being a nonparent.  
**wal mart » Me Want Cookie | My Food Chain Gang**[...] entry is fully written in it’s author’s blog. Read all about this here. This entry was posted on Friday, January 23rd, 2009 and is filed under Uncategorized. You can [...]  
**jamiahsh**Small place; no bakery so no cookies. But I missed your WM rants... while I know you are serious about each post, they always brought a chuckle b/c I know where you are coming from ;)

# Checkup Time!

INSERT DISK HERE:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/insert-disk-here1-09-003.jpg)

My son Christopher passed his 6 month baby checkup at the pediatrician with flying colors.Â  If only adult physical tests were this easy – pass a block from hand to hand, pick up a raisin (which was promptly taken away because he’s too little – where’s the reward in that?), a turn of the head when your name is called…Â  He has mastered all of it and is right where he should be developmentally.Â  Except for one thing – sitting up.Â  No I didn’t forget the ‘p’ – he *has* mastered *s****p****itting* up…Â  haha.Â  But he can’t *sit* up unassisted yet, and he doesn’t even seem to be close to doing so.Â  The problem is that he refuses to bend at the waist.Â  If I can get him into a sitting position, (and that’s a big IF!) he arches his back immediately and tries to stand.Â  I tried to explain this to the nurse so she wouldn’t think he is physically slow, but he lost points anyway.Â  Never mind that he can use his legs to jump vigorously in his bouncer that hangs from the doorway, or that he can single-handedly pull and move a heavy dining room chair with his iron grip – he still loses points for not being able to sit unassisted.Â  Oh well, if that’s how they score it, that’s how they score it.Â  It’s not like it bothers me at all; I actually find it amusing.Â  I think he might be crawling and walking before he sits…

Other news from the doctor appointment is that he weighs 16 lbs. 13oz. which is in the 30 percentile for weight.Â  An easy explanation of the percentile comparison is this:Â  If you take 100 babies my son’s age, 30 of them would be at his weight or lower and 70 of them would weigh more than he does.Â  He is 27Â¼ inches long, which puts him in the 75th percentile for height.Â  His head circumference is 45.2 cm which is exactly average.Â  I think he is probably our most average-sized baby; our oldest was always small for her age and the two in the middle were huge – Disney was once in the 100th percentile for height!Â  Just another example of how different kids are, even ones in the same family.Â  My 4 children physically remind me of each other, yet it’s so fun to watch their differences emerge as they learn and grow!Â  Here are Disney and Christopher, my two youngest:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/1-21-09-disney-and-christopher-003.jpg)

### Comments

**jamiahsh**So cute :)  
**jamiahsh**Yes... I think he wants to skip crawling and go straight to walking. FUN TIMES!!  
**derek**Hi Christopher, Hi Dis!  
**justj**I just want to know when teething rings got so big. ;)

# You Live In Chicago If...

Even though I don’t live in Chicago anymore (thank goodness because I’m not a big fan of crowds or traffic, two things which help define the city!), I still appreciate the humor in the following forward sent to me by a relative who ironically also moved away from the Chicago area a few years ago.Â  If you’ve ever lived in or near the 3rd largest city in the country, or even if you’ve just visited Chicago a few times, you will be able to appreciate the humor in the following one-liners:

If your local Dairy Queen is closed from September through May, you live in Chicago.

If you’ve worn shorts and a winter coat at the same time, you live in Chicago.

If you’ve had a telephone conversation using more Spanish than you thought you knew with someone who dialed a wrong number, you live in Chicago.

If “vacation” means going anywhere south of I – 80 for the weekend, you live in Chicago.

If you measure distance in hours, you live in Chicago.

If you have switched from ” heat” to “A/C” in the same day and back again, you live in Chicago.

If you can drive 75 mph through 2 feet of snow during a raging blizzard without flinching, you live in Chicago.

If you carry jumpers in your car and your wife knows how to use them, you live in Chicago.

If you design your kid’s Halloween costume to fit over a snowsuit, you live in Chicago.

If the speed limit on the highway is 55 mph — you’re going 80 and everybody is passing you, you live in Chicago.

If driving is better in the winter because the potholes are filled with snow, you live in Chicago.

If you know all 4 seasons: almost winter, winter, still winter and road construction, you live in Chicago.

If you have more miles on your snow blower than your car, you live in Chicago.

If you find 10 degrees “a little chilly”, you live in Chicago.

### Comments

**derek**So true. :) I didn't know about DQ, but perhaps that's because I never go to DQ.  
**taylhis**Agreed - many of the weather-related ones are also applicable to NWOH. Hmmm, I should have added something in there about how the kids will be in school even if there's 4 inches of snow on the ground...  
**jamiahsh**That's funny :D There are even a few of these that you could say the same about NWO. Our DQ (Eric's, anyway is closed about the same time :( ). I have worn shorts and a winter coat a few times when it was wintery. Nowhere near as bad as the strange person who was in shorts, t-shirt, and sandals when the temp was -8.

# Presidential In-Laws

In-laws have a bad stigma in our country, to say the least.Â  From sayings like, “You can choose your friends, but you can’t choose your relatives” or “When you marry your spouse, you’re marrying her whole family” to classic TV shows which depict the dreaded mother-in-law as a horrible threat or consequence for a character’s bad behavior (The Honeymooner’s, Bewitched, The Flintstones, to name just a few), in-laws definitely have a bad rap.Â  Scenes from these shows flooded my brain recently when I read the following article on cnn.com – seems even the leaders of the free world have had problematic situations with their mothers-in-law.Â  The reason the article was published is because apparently Barrack Obama’s mother-in-law, wife Michelle’s mother Marian Robinson, might move with the new first family to Washington.Â  So will Mr. Obama’s situation be comparative to poor Harry Truman, whose mother-in-law refused to call him anything but Mr. Truman?Â  Or will it be more like Dwight Eisenhower, who got along famously with his mother-in law – in a good way?Â  In recognition of Inauguration Day, read the following article for some interesting historical lessons about the complex familial relationships formed as a result of the union of two people:

*From cnn.com, by David Holzel  
(Mental Floss) — President-Elect Obama’s mother-in-law will be moving to Washington with the first family, at least temporarily, his transition team has confirmed. Marian Robinson will be the latest in a line of presidential in-laws who, for good or ill, lived under the same roof as the president.  
President Dwight Eisenhower and his mother-in-law, Elivera Doud, pose for pictures with some of the grandchildren.*

*President Dwight Eisenhower and his mother-in-law, Elivera Doud, pose for pictures with some of the grandchildren.*

*Here are four stories that confirm the old truism: While America can choose its president, the president can’t choose his in-laws.*

*1. Ulysses S. Grant and ‘The Colonel’*

*You would think that the Civil War was settled at Appomattox, and no question of its outcome would have been raised in the White House of Ulysses S. Grant, who, after all, was the general who won the war.*

*But you would be wrong, because living with Ulysses and Julia Grant was the president’s father-in-law. Colonel Frederick Dent (his rank seems to have been self-selected) was an unreconstructed Confederate, a St. Louis businessman and slaveholder who, when his daughter Julia went to the Executive Mansion early in 1869, decided to relocate there as well.*

*The Colonel didn’t hesitate to make himself at home. When his daughter received guests, he sat in a chair just behind her, offering anyone within earshot unsolicited advice. Political and business figures alike got a dose of the Colonel’s mind as they waited to meet with President Grant.*

*When the president’s father, Jesse Grant, came from Kentucky on one of his regular visits to Washington, the White House turned into a Civil War reenactment. According to “First Families: The Impact of the White House on Their Lives”, by Bonnie Angelo, Jesse Grant preferred to stay in a hotel rather than sleep under the same roof as the Colonel.*

*And when the two old partisans found themselves unavoidably sitting around the same table in the White House, they avoided direct negotiations by using Julia and her young son, named for the president’s father, as intermediaries, Betty Boyd Caroli writes in “First Ladies”: “In the presence of the elder Grant, Frederick Dent would instruct Julia to ‘take better care of that old gentleman [Jesse Grant]. He is feeble and deaf as a post and yet you permit him to wander all over Washington alone.’ And Grant replied [to his grandson and namesake], ‘Did you hear him? I hope I shall not live to become as old and infirm as your Grandfather Dent.'”*

*The Colonel remained in the White House — irascible and unrepentant — until his death, at age 88, in 1873.*

*2. Harry S Truman and the Mother-in-Law from Heck*

*Harry Truman and Bess Wallace met as children. He was a farm boy; she was the well-heeled granddaughter of Independence, Missouri’s Flour King. When they married in 1919, Truman was a struggling haberdasher, and Bess’s mother, Madge Wallace, thought Bess had made a colossal social faux pas. Until she died in 1952, Madge Wallace never changed her mind about Harry Truman. Her Bess had married way below her station.*

*Madge had plenty of opportunities to let her son-in-law know it. The newlyweds moved into the Wallace mansion in Independence, and the three lived together under the same roof until the end of Madge’s life.*

*When Harry Truman was elected senator, “Mother Wallace,” as Truman judiciously called her, moved with her daughter and son-in-law to Washington. In the family’s apartment, she shared a bedroom with the Trumans’ daughter, Margaret. And when Truman became president, she moved with them into the White House, where she cast her cold eye on the new commander-in-chief.*

*“Why would Harry run against that nice Mr. Dewey?” she wondered aloud, as Truman was fighting for his political life in the 1948 presidential race, according to “First Mothers” by Bonnie Angelo. And when Truman fired Gen. Douglas MacArthur for insubordination, Mother Wallace was scandalized. “Imagine a captain from the National Guard [Truman] telling off a West Point general!”*

*In December 1952, shortly before Truman’s term ended, Madge Wallace died, at age 90. For the 33 years they lived together, she never called her son-in-law anything but “Mr. Truman” to his face.*

*3. Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Mother-in-Law of the Year*

*If Truman’s story sounds like the set-up for a film noir, his successor’s relationship with his mother-in-law might have been a Technicolor musical.*

*Elivera Mathilda Carlson Doud, Mamie Eisenhower’s mother, was “a witty woman with a tart tongue,” Time magazine wrote, and Dwight Eisenhower thought she was a hoot. “She refuted every mother-in-law joke ever made,” Time wrote. There was no question that she would join her daughter and son-in-law in the White House.*

*Ike called her “Min,” the name of a character in the Andy Gump comic strip. Ike and Min “constituted a mutual admiration society, and each took the other’s part whenever a family disagreement would arise,” said Eisenhower’s son, John. The New York Times observed, “The president frequently looks around him sharply, and inquires, ‘Where’s Min?'”*

*Widowed shortly before Eisenhower became president, Min spent the winters in the White House and summers at her home in Denver. It was while visiting his mother-in-law’s home that Eisenhower suffered a heart attack in 1955. Two years later, in failing health, Min returned permanently to Denver. She died in 1960, at age 82.*

*4. Benjamin Harrison and the Reverend Doctor*

*Benjamin Harrison’s father-in-law, John Witherspoon Scott, bore a double title: “reverend doctor.”*

*Scott was born in Pennsylvania in 1800, did post-graduate work at Yale and took a professorship in mathematics and science at Miami University, in Ohio. He was also a Presbyterian minister and an outspoken abolitionist. The reverend doctor was rumored to have shielded runaway slaves in his home as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Whatever the truth, Miami University dismissed him for his anti-slavery beliefs.*

*He accepted a post at Farmer’s College, a prep school in Cincinnati, where he became a mentor of a student named Benjamin Harrison. During his visits to the Scott home, Harrison became friendly with the reverend doctor’s daughter, Caroline.*

*Young Harrison spent so many evenings at the Scotts’ home that he got the nickname “the pious moonlight dude,” according to “The Complete Book of the Presidents” by William A. DeGregorio. He and Caroline were married in 1853 at the bride’s house. The reverend doctor officiated.*

*John Witherspoon Scott later became a clerk in the pension office of the interior department. He gave up the position when Harrison was elected president in 1888. A widower since 1876, Scott moved into the White House with his daughter and their family.*

*It was the president’s custom to lead the family in a half-hour of Bible reading and prayer after breakfast, Anne Chieko Moore and Hester Anne Hale wrote in “Benjamin Harrison: Centennial President.” When the president was absent, his father-in-law took his place.*

*Caroline Harrison died in October 1892, two weeks before her husband lost the presidential election. Her father died the next month, at age 92. An obituary described John Witherspoon Scott as “a man of wonderful physical vigor, tall, broad chested and well preserved mentally.”*

### Comments

# This Town's Got Talent AND Faith

I already wrote about our 3D movie-going experience in my previous post, so I will skip that part of the weekend here, but I neglected to mention the cool restaurant we found because I didn’t want to enlarge an already lengthy post…

Friday night after seeing My Bloody Valentine 3D in Maumee Ohio, a suburb of Toledo, we noticed a restaurant across the street called Nick’s Cafe who advertises breakfast all day.Â  My husband and I are both Eggs Benedict connoisseurs – we really appreciate a great-tasting serving of Eggs Benedict, which is a breakfast dish consisting of English Muffin halves topped with Canadian bacon, poached eggs, and a layer of Hollandaise sauce.Â  In our pre-parenthood days, we explored the country and sampled various versions of the dish along the way to our traveler’s goals; whether they were destinations of business or pleasure.Â  A requirement of great Eggs Benedict is homemade Hollandaise sauce, and by ‘homemade’, we (unlike many of the restaurants we tried) don’t mean mixed up in the kitchen from a package.Â  You need a double boiler to make it, and good Hollandaise sauce has nothing to do with a powder or a package.Â  In all of our travels, we never found anything that even compares to the Hollandaise sauce at Uptown Cafe in downtown Arlington Heights, Illinois.Â  We’ve visited numerous restaurants in our quest, and we’ve called some of them ahead of time, but even if you ask if their Hollandaise sauce is homemade, many will say yes, even if we don’t agree on the definition of homemade.Â  Such was the case Friday night at Nick’s Cafe in Maumee, Ohio.Â  They said their hollandaise sauce was homemade on the phone, but oddly, when we arrived, they wouldn’t let us taste a sample.Â  That was a first!Â  Of the dozens of restaurants we’ve visited in search of the perfect Eggs Benedict, no restaurant had ever denied us a sample!Â  On Friday night, my husband bravely ordered the Eggs Benedict at Nick’s Cafe without trying the Hollandaise sauce ahead of time, and disappointingly, it was of the non-homemade, out-of-the-package variety.Â  He did say that the Canadian bacon on the Eggs Benedict was great, but it unfortunately cannot rescue the dish if it uses packaged Hollandaise.Â  So negative Eggs Benedict experience aside, the reason I would highly recommend this place is for their Mediterranean cuisine.Â  And regular readers of my blog (and of those email forward all-about-you quizzes) know that this is my favorite type of food, therefore I am a huge critic.Â  But Nick’s Place in Maumee has excellent gyros, Tzatziki sauce, and Greek salads.Â  Gyros are only good when they’re off the spit and even then, it’s easy for them to taste too salty.Â  Not the case at Nick’s Place; if you like Mediterranean food, I **highly** recommend their gyros and Greek salads – incredible.

But I must move on to Saturday afternoon, when we took our kids to see the movie, [Hotel for Dogs](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0785006/).Â  I’ve been waiting for this movie for months, which is probably why we didn’t want to cancel our planned outing there on Saturday even though Kid #1 went off her rocker.Â  Seriously, the kid went berserk and I was really tempted to give her “the talk”, especially after I noticed a pimple on her cheek… (well, one of ‘the talks’ anyway – the one about womanly bodily changes – she’s 9 years old and I would rather we talk about puberty stuff *before* it happens to her).Â  But anyway, she’d probably be *mortified* if she knew I was posting this on the internet (what are mothers for?), so I better get off this tangent…Â  After the episode Saturday morning, our oldest really didn’t deserve to go to the movie, but it’s difficult in a large family to not ‘let the bad apple spoil the bunch’.Â  Our younger girls had been very good all morning, so why keep them (or me!) from going to the movie?Â  Our oldest was punished for the tantrum by having to go without a Kid’s Pack (popcorn, pop, and candy) at the movies, and to her credit, she was mature about the consequences of her actions.Â  However, soon after our arrival at the movie theater, the tide changed and our 2-year-old became the problem.Â  I don’t know why we keep trying to take a 2-year-old to the movie theater, but every time, it’s regrettable.Â  Actually, it’s been this way since even *months* before she turned two…Â  I guess we keep hoping that one of these times, she’ll actually settle down enough to enjoy an entire movie without driving anyone crazy.Â  So anyway, I’m trying to keep our 6-month-old busy and quiet while attempting to watch Hotel For Dogs and not disturb our neighbors, and my husband is busy with our handful of a 4-year-old, so next thing we know, our two-year-old is drinking my Mountain Dew.Â  Of course she loves it, but even *before* the Mountain Dew she’s had a sugar-infused Kid’s Pack, and now she’s practically bouncing off the walls.Â  She smiles and announces in a loud voice, “**I take clothes off!**“, so now I’m trying to put my son back in his car seat so I can stop his sister from stripping off her clothes right there in the movie theater…Â  Too late.Â  She is down to her diaper by the time I get both hands free, so my husband covers her with a coat.Â  For some reason, she’s willing to wear nothing but a coat and a diaper in the movie theater, and somehow we make it through the rest of the movie without having to leave.Â  So as for Hotel For Dogs, I liked it (I think – I actually didn’t see much of it)…Â  it’s a cute, predictable fun movie, and if you’re a dog lover, there’s plenty of canine eye candy.

Following the movie, I went to a local talent show based upon the popular “American Idol” TV show.Â  Some great friends graciously stayed with the kids, and my husband also stayed home to catch up on the work he missed last week during the 2-hour-school delay and the school closing we have on Friday and Monday.Â  He works from home, and it’s all I can do to keep the two little ones out of his hair every day – add the older two to the mix and all Hell breaks loose – any chance of getting anything productive done flies out the window.Â  So, a strange occurrence at the talent show – me, myself, and I for a change.Â  I did attend with friends, but it’s not like I would bother Carol next to me with my philosophies on music or the tone of one’s voice; that would be something to make my husband endure.Â  And it was bizarre to simply sit back and listen and watch the show…Â  For those hours, I had absolutely **not one thing** else to do besides enjoy the show…Â  such a change of pace for me and much appreciated.Â  Not that I would want to experience that all the time, but it was very nice for one night…

Adding to the relaxation for me was the spiritual tone of the evening.Â  I had known the event would be sponsered by a local church, but I didn’t realize that we, the audience,Â  would be praying to both open and to close the show; as well as the fact that the majority of the acts were religion-themed.Â  As I said, for me, it was refreshing and relaxing, but I think they should properly advertise such a theme if they do this again next year.Â  Less open-minded people may have been displeased.Â  My dear friend and the entire reason I was a part of this concert experience in the first place, performed wonderfully and I was pleasantly surprised to be able to pick out her voice from the rest of the delightful group with whom she performed.Â  Despite my best efforts to vote for them, however, they didn’t win the competition, and the top prizes went to a drama group from the church who sponsered the event (!), a very talented violinist, and a well-known local talent who is only a Junior in high school but who has already been a vocalist with the Toledo Opera going on her 3rd year.Â  Besides seeing and hearing my friend perform, my favorite part of the evening was when a boy who was part of the drama group that won burst into tears.Â  Their skit was acted out to music, and it portrayed a young girl being bullyed by ‘temptations’ but ultimately triumphing over sins and choosing Jesus.Â  The group got a standing ovation after they performed and because they were from the church that sponsored the event, it was no surprise when they won first prize in the competition, but the kid asked the crowd, “I just want to know that everyone was moved – was everyone moved?”Â  There was applause and verbal affirmations, and the next thing I knew, the kid had burst into tears and it slightly reminded me ofÂ  the movie [Leap of Faith](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104695/)…Â  But it was sweet and real, and I was glad to be a part of it.Â  Even though the talent show did a poor job of advertising the theme of the show; thereby the religion kind of snuck up on its patrons, it was a welcome and calming change of pace – at least for this member of the audience.Â  And even though I wasn’t aware that I needed it, the evening restored my faith while proving to me yet again what a great place it is in Northwest Ohio to raise kids – we have so much talent and so many opportunites here for our youth!

### Comments

**Denver**"Less open-minded people"? Funny I never considered my self 'close-minded, and the very idea of it all made my skin crawl. Then again, I'm a curmudgeon. And shouldn't it be "Bryan Has Talent"? We have faith, but lack grammar. The best eggs Benedict I have ever devoured was served in the dining room of the Hay-Adam Hotel in Washington DC. Superb!!! I didn't think people ate eggs Benedict anymore---thought it went the way of sweetbreads and quail eggs. Good to know someone else appreciates this wonderful dish.  
**derek**Ah, so they did think of America's Got Talent before Idol. :) Why does Hollywood think every dog movie needs bodily function jokes? Sigh. I just read about a new blog by the way from some people who work in Hollywood that highlights how Hollywood is becoming increasingly anti-American, not that this has anything to do with their dog movies of course.  
**taylhis**Hmm, after a quick check I see that Hotel for Dogs doesn't have a parental advisory and Marley's parental advisory doesn't have body function jokes in it. And I forgot to mention my favorite part of Hotel For Dogs - no stray gets turned away! I am a huge believer in finding homes for strays before patronizing pet stores and breeders! Can't believe I forgot to mention how cool it was that these kids were taking care of all the strays... oh well, I'd say my post (and comments!) are long enough!  
**taylhis**It's probably a good idea to wait until children are old enough to sit through a video at home. But going to the movies is one of our favorite things to do, and Saturday is family day, so I'd rather find something else to do as a family rather than take the little ones to a babysitter. If we had family nearby, I would call Grandma over for a few hours to watch Dis, but we don't have that option, so it's all for one and one for all! But seriously, we're going to probably have to find something else to do for a few years... Christopher will probably be old enough to go to the movies right as Taylor decides she doesn't want to be seen at the movies with us... :) There were some poop and vomit jokes in Hotel for Dogs of course... I think it would be hard to avoid in a PG movie about dogs. The kid designs an entire machine that takes care of dog waste, and there are a few jokes centered on that... and some pee jokes, I think... Marley had some as well; I don't remember if it was excessive. Check out the parental advisories on imdb.com - they might detail the quantity of bodily function jokes on there. The name of the show was Bryan's Got Talent.  
**derek**Three posts in one. :) I can't really comment on the first, so I will move to the second. I suppose you took Dis to see it because if she couldn't, one of you two couldn't, correct? :D Next time, just bring some rope and duct tape- an idea from the bad parenting institute of wherever. :P Seriously, it sounded like some drama there. This movie sounded kind of interesting. How was it (that you noticed) for poop and vomit jokes? Come to think of it, how was Marley on it? Overt? Three people blogging about the talent show- must have been something! If they were going to base it on a TV show, wouldn't it have more in common with America's Got Talent than American Idol? Easy to come up with a name, too: Rural Ohio Has Talent, (I don't know the name) Church Has Talent, Bryan County Has Talent, or something like that.  
**justj**Interesting, I never enjoyed Eggs Benedict, mainly because of the sauce, now you're saying that it was bad sauce.... I guess I'll have to find some good sauce. Another place for Gyros, wonderful. I find it entertaining that you take all four children to the movies. I remember waiting until my girls could sit through a video at home before taking them to a movie. The exception was our oldest. Video players were quite expensive at that time and we didn't have one.

# My Bloody Valentine 3D

It’s almost embarrassing to admit that I saw a movie called, “[My Bloody Valentine 3D](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1179891/)“.Â  But the reason I’m writing a blog about it is because I actually *liked* it.Â  A true slasher film; the grisly violence was excessive.Â  But I actually didn’t find myself rolling my eyes at the constant gore fest, which is what I did during the last few movies in the Saw franchise.Â  In the poorer quality Saw movies, some of the violence doesn’t really even make sense.Â  It’s almost like they’re trying to see how far they can go, how shocking they can be, and what they can get away with, even if it’s not integral to the plot.Â  My Bloody Valentine 3D actually has a well-developed, interesting plot.Â  If you don’t pay attention to the newspaper headlines that *come out of the screen* in the beginning of the movie (very cool 3D effect – definitely more on those later), the plot might actually be hard to follow.Â  I know, a good plot is unheard of for a slasher flick, but I was even left to piece together some plot details after the movie was over.Â  Not that it was *too* hard to follow, just a lot of continuous action that makes it difficult for one to think about character relationships and how they relate to the plot while also watching the movie.Â  So for my best attempt at a plot synopsis, here we go…

Harmony is a small mining town where everyone knows everyone else, and the mine is the lifeblood of the town.Â  The filmakers very successfully give the audience a good feel for the sleepy little mining town.Â  Decades ago, there was an accident in the mine which was initially blamed on the owner of the mine, Hanniger.Â  When it was found that the victims of the mining accident were actually brutally murdered, it was blamed upon the sole survivor of the accident, Harry Warden, who is left in a coma.Â  A few decades later, he wakes up and slaughters 22 people, including a group of teenagers having a party at the mine.Â  Four of the revelers make it out alive, and flash forward 10 years to now.Â  Hanniger’s son (he was one of the 4 survivors) returns to the town as a new rash of murders unfold, and he finds himself accused of the brutal crimes.Â  There’s actually more to it than that, but this kind of gives you an idea about the movie.Â  The plot and direction of the movie allow the audience to never be sure who to suspect of the murders, and there are various twists and turns.Â  Very well done for a horror movie, especially one belonging to the slasher genre.Â  Now on to the 3D effects…

3D does not often work for me because my eyesight is very uneven – I have near perfect vision in my left eye, and terrible vision in my right eye.Â  But I was sure to bring my eyeglasses, which kind of levels the playing field for my eyes, and so when I wore the 3D glasses on top of my regular eyeglasses, the 3D worked very well.Â  I’ve been to various 3D shows at Disney World and Universal Studios, and I would say those are the best of the best – but even they don’t always work for me; sometimes I have to squint to be able to see the 3D.Â  But now it seems there have been some advancements in the technology, and it’s clear the movie industry wants to showcase these advancements given the rash of 3D movie previews I’ve seen in the theaters recently.Â  Among the 3D features that will be out in 2009 are: Monsters and Aliens, Up, Disney’s a Christmas Carol 3D, Ice Age 3, and Toy Story in 3D.Â  But anyway, My Bloody Valentine 3D was very cool – the entire movie was actually in 3D for me, and all I had to do was sit there – no fiddling with glasses, no squinting…Â  and that was a first for me.Â  The murderer’s weapon of choice is a miner’s ax, and there were many times it would actually appear to come out of the screen (along with disgusting bits of gore, of course)!Â  Besides that effect, other things about the movie were cool because of the 3D as well; even scenes that consisted exclusively of dialogue.

As one reviewer on imdb.com mentioned, My Bloody Valentine 3D does not take itself too seriously – and that’s a good thing.Â  In fact, a few months ago when we first saw the movie’s preview and tagline “Nothing says ‘date movie’ like a 3D ride to Hell!”, we thought it was a joke…Â  you know, one of those “previews” that actually ends up being a commercial.Â  But it was for a real movie, and so we couldn’t resist venturing to the big city to utilize aÂ  free voucher we had gotten on a previous visit to see the otherwise expensive 3D ride to Hell.Â  If you are a fan of horror movies, My Bloody Valentine 3D is a must-see.Â  I’m not sure how this movie would translate to a regular screen.Â  It might still be a good horror movie, but given the 3D effects, it was nothing short of awesome!Â  I would almost classify it as a sort of haunted house experience, except you’re sitting in a seat and not walking around.Â  If you look at it that way, the $13.50 price tag ($11 matinee) would be a bargain for the over 90 minute experience compared to admission at most haunted houses.Â  Of course, haunted houses don’t have the extra-long, very gratuitous nude scene, which I could have definitely done without, but since that’s my only complaint about the movie, overall I would definitely consider it an afternoon well-spent with hubby (no we did not take the kids to this feature!)Â  After all, nothing says ‘date movie’ like a 3D ride to Hell!Â  Apparently so!

### Comments

**taylhis**No flat backrounds. Excellent use of 3D - great job on stuff coming out of the screen as well as the depth going into the screen.  
**derek**I don't want to comment on the movie itself, but the 3D. I'm just curious if the movie suffered from any flat backgrounds? I saw Journey to the Center of the Earth in 3D last year and there were some times where the flat background kind of stood out against the 3D scene in front of it.  
**jamiahsh**It sounds like a lot of fun. I don't know too many movies of the genre that take themselves TOO seriously.  
**justj**Thanks for the wonderful description of the show. It is one I don't have to rush to the theater to see. ;)  
**Twilight Saga**Hi! Thank you for this post. Actually, I'm not very familiar with this topic but after reading your post, it's clear now! Keep up the good posts like this. Take care!

# The Unborn Gran Torino

Luckily for us, Tuesday’s date night was not hindered by the recent barrage of snow in any way.Â  We ventured to the larger town nearby to see what all the Golden Globe fuss was about Clint Eastwood’s latest movie, [Gran Torino](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1205489/) (they didn’t have [Slumdog Millionaire](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1010048/)).Â  But after the previews and especially when the movie started, it became painfully obvious that there was something wrong with the theater’s sound – you couldn’t hear the dialogue.Â  My husband went to report it, and all that did was cause several loud popping noises and lengthy annoying electronic burps while they tried to fix it.Â  There were 3 other people in the theater with us, and we all left – seemed like a movie where you really need to hear what the characters are saying.Â  They offered our money back, but that wasn’t really enough because we had spent $7 on pop and popcorn that we wouldn’t have bought if we weren’t going to a movie.Â  The incredibly flustered but sensible kid working the counter saw our point, and apparently his manager agreed, so they let us go into another movie AND get a refund – COOL!Â  Earlier in the day, we had been up in the air trying to decide between seeing Gran Torino and The Unborn anyway, so I guess the choice was made for us – We only had 20 minutes to kill before a showing of [The Unborn](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1139668/).

The Unborn was just as I expected – a PG13-rated supernatural horror movie, not quite as good as others in the genre like The Ring, Shutter, or One Missed Call.Â  There were some jump-out-of-your-seat moments in The Unborn, but it was obvious when they were coming, at least to me.Â  I don’t want to give away too much like an article did that I read in the newspaper, so I’ll just say that if you like the supernatural horror genre, check out The Unborn because it’s entertaining.Â  Back to the newspaper article I read…Â  seems the little boy who plays a scary kid in the movie is from the area where I grew up, so they featured him in the suburban Chicago newspaper I sometimes like to read online – but they spilled a major spoiler about the movie at the end of the article!Â  But anyway, that’s another thing I enjoyed about The Unborn – it is set in Chicagoland, so I enjoyed the sweeping overhead views of the city and some of the familiar sites in suburbia.Â  Apparently the screenwriter of The Unborn, David Goyer, has a fancy for Chicago since he also wrote The Dark Knight which was filmed in Chicago, although set in Gotham City.Â  But anyway, enjoyable movie for what it was – I might have liked Gran Torino better, but I guess I’ll have to see that one another time.

And that brings me to the Applebee’s saga.Â  We don’t really like Applebee’s.Â  They try to tell us we belong there, but I don’t buy it.Â  Their food seems pricey for what it is, and we stopped going there when the kids are with us because their food takes *forever* to come out (that and the small fortune it would cost our family of 6 to eat there).Â  My husband was given an Applebee’s gift card for serving on the board of a local non-profit agency (no, I am not talking about the community theater – did you really have to ask?), which is really nice of the agency of course.Â  We got the same gift card last year, and so back then we decided to give Applebee’s another chance.Â  Last year, we got some sort of bland pasta dish and an appetizer sampler and shared everything, but we left there hungry AND having to add money to our gift card in order to cover the check.Â  Flash forward to now, and we find ourselves with another gift card.Â  Time to give Applebee’s another try, we decided; after all, how bad can it be?Â  They have lots of corporate suits overseeing those kinds of places, so maybe they’ve implemented lots of changes in the past year to make it a better establishment.Â  Not the case.Â  First, our food took forever to come out.Â  I had gotten a soup-and-sandwich combo, and the waitress came to tell me they burnt the soup and it would be a few minutes while they made a new one.Â  My husband wondered if that meant his food was sitting under a warmer while mine was re-prepared, and his concerns were legit because when he got his food, the shrimp was cold.Â  Not only that, but they had given him the wrong kind of buffalo wings.Â  So they apologized, and that’s another thing about places like Applebee’s that really bug me – the pesty fake gushy niceness.Â  I do appreciate a friendly server, but the people who work at these places are *way* over the top…Â  I will cite an example in the hilarious movie [Office Space](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0151804/) – there’s a character in the movie who is Jennifer Aniston’s coworker at a TGIFriday’s type of place who acts just like these people…Â  annoyingly and unrealistically enthusiastic about his job – funny stuff, but only in the movies.

So anyway, we’re waiting for my husband’s new wings when the manager comes out to say that they have now put the wrong sauce on them, and they’d have to make him yet *another* order.Â  Honestly, what is the cook *doing* back there?Â  Again, for the second time this day (see my Dawn’s Great Idea post), my fears of starring in a hidden camera show run rampant…Â  And what has happened to all the food that they’ve messed up?Â  From just our party of 2, they must have had 2 orders of wings and a bowl of soup all go to waste.Â  I’ve often thought that restaurants should have a deal with local homeless shelters, giving them their leftovers and food mistakes, but I guess that wouldn’t be considered sanitary.Â  I wish they’d change this; something tells me that food is food and many people would be very grateful for restaurant “leftovers”…

We calculated our bill correctly this time, and we were about to rid ourselves of the entire giftcard, when the waitress showed up to tell us that because of all the errors, they were going to give us the employee discount on the bill.Â  That was really really nice of them, but that means we STILL HAVE $ LEFT ON THE GIFTCARD for another trip to Applebee’s!Â  I told my husband, maybe we’ll just stop in for a couple drinks sometime, but of course, you can’t use a giftcard on drinks, at least on alcoholic ones, and after trying their flavored tea yesterday, I won’t be stopping in for any more of that – yuck!Â  And in case you’re wondering, both my sandwich and my soup were virtually tasteless, save for the cheese on top of the soup – that was really good!

**What is your favorite party-style restaurant chain?**

* Applebee's
* TGIFridays
* Ruby Tuesday's
* Chili's
* Hooter's
* Buffalo Wild Wings
* You forgot one - see my answer below!

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Hehe... old post, I know but I do remember your making mention of Gran Torino somewhere. Did you ever get to see it? Just finished watching it. I liked it... very untypical Eastwood. Definitely not what I expected and you definitely needed to be able to hear it. Ol' Clint's voice is really starting to show its age ;)  
**justj**I was just talking with my youngest today. While I have complained multiple times on the time it takes for Applebee's to get the food to the table, I don't think I've ever complained about the food. Not that I can say I ever had their French Onion Soup. But then again, I do order the spicy foods and I never expect them to be as spicy as I like. There aren't too many restaurants that make food as spicy as I like.  
**taylhis**French Onion with the cheese on top. Cheese = good, soup=bland They were slow for you too, huh? And Derek, I do like the parmesan garlic sauce at Wild Wings - when I was pregnant Chris treated me to a few bottles, even though it's quite pricey. What bugs me about them is their lack of sides. Their popcorn shrimp is good, but again, they have no sides!  
**jamiahsh**Burned your soup? What kind? Applebee's... EECH :( They are slow and pricey.  
**derek**I voted TGI Friday's from memory. I haven't actually been there in awhile. Buffalo Wild Wings has good wings, but they didn't really impress me the two times I've been there though they're not bad. Chili's I understand has gone downhill, and I agree with you about the value of Applebee's. The other two I have never been to if I recall correctly though they do exist over here.  
**justj**I guess I like Chili's food the best, but I've never really had a bad experience at any of these restaurants. Sometimes it does take some time to get the food at some places, but it has always been as advertised.  
**whatever**Mine has to be "Home Hooters". When my wife dresses in a revealing top and serves me dinner. Ok -- so that doesn't happen... But oooh would it be awesome!

# Dawn's Great Idea

My husband and I were in charge of our local community theater’s version of the Oscars ceremony (ours is called The Williesâ„¢), so it was our responsibility to organize the skits, songs, and entertainment for the fun evening in December.Â  In doing so, we needed to borrow a specific camera which played a prop in a very funny show that was staged in our community theater last year.Â  My friend had borrowed the camera from her workplace, so I asked her if we could use it for a skit in the awards show and she obliged.Â  She couldn’t make it to the awards show, and I still haven’t gotten the camera back to her.Â  Through a series of email exchanges about how to get her the camera back, she came up with an idea:Â  why not just drop it off at her husband’s workplace – which is only 2 blocks away from my house – rather than drive the camera all the way out to her house in the country.Â  Great idea, I told her, and I meant it… until I found myself walking into the county *courthouse* carrying an ominous large silver metal case.

Turns out, my friend’s husband works in the county’s adult probation department, and so now I’m walking around the courthouse with something that looks, well, *extremely* fishy to say the least.Â  My husband was with me, thank goodness, and I was glad to have the moral support because of the many strange stares we received…Â  We found her husband’s office, and when you enter the adult probation department, there is a counter with a bulletproof glass above it.Â  So evidently, they tend to be skeptical of their visitors to begin with, and now here we are with our peculiarly large metal case.Â  We asked to see my friend’s husband (he knows us at least), but as luck would have it, he was out to lunch.Â  “Can we just leave it here?” we were forced to ask, prompting a very skeptical probation officer to ask, “Is it ticking?”Â  I started thinking about those signs they have at the airport that explain how joking about bombs or explosives is a felony offense, so I bit my lip, worried I might accidentally utter some sort of lame quip that would get us into deep trouble.Â  My husband opened up the case and showed them what was inside…Â  just a camera, we swear!

Not really a big deal, but a funny experience nonetheless.Â  Had we been in a bigger city, we might have been thrown to the floor and cuffed – it really was a shady looking case, and I can’t blame people for being a little cautious and apprehensive about it, especially in this day and age.

So thanks for saving me the trip out to the country, Dawn, but honestly, I don’t think either of us thought this idea through…Â  unless you were setting me up to get some sort of hidden camera prank footage, maybe to be shown at next year’s Willie Awardsâ„¢?Â  

### Comments

**derek**Glad you made it out alive and unscathed, and no court date. :P  
**jamiahsh**That would be a funny skit. Willie worthy.  
**justj**I think we could use this for next year's Willies. Things we do for theater?

# How Sweet It Is

Two different family members sent me an email forward with the following video because they knew I’d love it.Â  They were right!Â  The following is a touching story about the unlikely but very true friendship between a dog and an elephant – you have to see it to believe it!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**derek**Smile moment. :)  
**justj**Wow, and I thought our dog and rabbit friendship was special.  
**jamiahsh**That is cool.  
**Megan**Sooooo CUTE! Thanks so much for sending this to me:)

# Superbowl Poll

The big game is only weeks away.Â  Will you be doing anything to celebrate the occasion?Â  Do you know which big game I’m referring to?Â  If not, then disregard the following poll…

**Are you going to watch the 2009 Superbowl?**

* Yes - I always do because I love football
* Yes - I have a favorite team playing in it
* Yes - I will watch it with a spouse or someone I live with who will be taking over the tv
* Yes - for the commercials
* Yes - I'm going to / having a Superbowl party
* No - I don't like football and couldn't care less
* Other - please explain below in the comments section

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**derek**I think you can guess which vote is mine. ;)  
**jamiahsh**I will be watching regardless if I get invited to a party or not. But oh, what fun it would be if I were.  
**justj**I guess my answer will depend on if I get invited to a Superbowl party.... I usually only watch at someone's party. Otherwise I just kind of flip in and out.

# Cute And Cuddly? I Think Not.

Did you hear the one about the Chinese man who found himself in a dilemma?Â  His son’s toy fell into the panda enclosure at the zoo, so he jumped in after it.Â  The panda attacked him, and because the creatures are so coveted in China, he didn’t fend off the animal because he feared he would injure him.Â  He survived the attack, as did the other 2 victims of this particular panda.Â  But as the below article notes, in China, there is no “3 strikes, you’re out” policy for pandas because they are so highly regarded.Â  Particularly amusing is the tale of the drunken tourist who was also a victim of this malicious panda.Â  Read about Gu Gu the not-so-nice panda here:

*(CNN) — Gu Gu is not your typical soft and cuddly giant panda.  
Zhang Jiao was attacked by Gu Gu the panda when he fell into the pen at the Beijing Zoo on Wednesday.*

*Zhang Jiao was attacked by Gu Gu the panda when he fell into the pen at the Beijing Zoo on Wednesday.*

*For the third time, he’s tasted the flesh of an unwitting intruder in his pen at the Beijing Zoo.*

*His most recent victim was 28-year-old Zhang Jiao, who told CNN he fell into the panda pen Wednesday while trying to catch a small toy thrown by his young son.*

*“My son and I were playing with a panda doll, throwing it to each other, when I dropped with the toy” into the pen, Zhang said.*

*The barrier around the pen is about 5 feet tall, but on the other side is a drop of 9 to 10 feet, and Zhang says he could not climb out.*

*That’s when Gu Gu went on the attack.*

*The 240-pound giant panda sunk his teeth into Zhang’s left leg before moving on to the right leg.*

*“The panda is a national treasure, and I love and respect [him], so I didn’t fight back,” Zhang said. “The panda didn’t let go until it chewed up my leg and its mouth was dripping with my blood.”*

*Zookeepers needed to use tools to pry open Gu Gu’s jaws.*

*Zhang said he never imagined a panda could be so vicious.*

*“I always thought they were cute and just ate bamboo,” Zhang said.*

*According to Dr. Wang Tianbing, who treated Zhang, his wounds were severe, especially the damage done to the muscle and ligaments in his left leg.*

*“Normally, we think the panda is very tender animal, but actually it’s a bear, not a cat. If the animal thinks it will be hurt by human beings, it is very dangerous.”*

*Wang should know. In 2007, he treated another one of Gu Gu’s victims, a 15-year-old boy who climbed into the pen to get a closer look. A year earlier, state media reported that a drunken tourist tried to hug the panda, who bit him. In an odd twist, the tourist reportedly bit back.*

*But being an endangered species and much-loved national icon means there’s no “three strikes and you’re out” for Gu Gu.*

*In fact, there’s a possibility Zhang may face charges for entering the panda pen.*

*Zoo officials did not respond to CNN’s request for an interview but are reportedly considering new measures to keep tourists out of Gu Gu’s pen.*

A panda’s mouth dripping with blood?Â  That sounds like a horror movie!

### Comments

**taylhis**I really like Leno. Too busy to watch the show anymore, but I'm sorry he's leaving. One of the people who went in was drunk, probably thought the panda was too cute to resist. Bet he regretted that the next day because the panda bit him - and he bit back.  
**derek**Guaranteed the cost for medical treatment exceeded the cost for a new panda toy. Slightly.  
**justj**I wish I could find Jay Leno's response to this. It was something along the line of how long it would take to train people from jumping into pens with large animals. The whole joke was very funny, but it did make me wonder why 3 people went into this panda's area.  
**jamiahsh**I guess the have "Don't feed the animal signs poster for good reason.

# Three Blind Mice... Err, Rats

Our new pet rats are great, and Oreo is becoming a real friend.Â  Bobby Jack, however, seems very nervous all the time.Â  He squeaks and sneezes a lot, and he uses his nose to try to burrow into my hand when I hold him.Â  We are thinking he might be blind.Â  I don’t know that much about rat behavior; these are my first pet rats.Â  But it just seems like Bobby Jack can’t see.Â  Are there vision tests for rats?Â  I guess I have some research to do about rat blindness, squeaking, and sneezing…

### Comments

# Diving For Victory

For those habitual readers of my blog who couldn’t make it to our regular game night last night due to the blizzard, you missed an ‘event’ – one of the funniest things I’ve ever seen.Â  I’ve been chuckling about it all day!Â  But before I get to that, I will start at the beginning of the evening.

One of our guests showed up with a dog.Â  Not just any dog; *our* dog Beesly.Â  If you’ve read my blog post called Pet Roll Call, then you know that Beesly is an escape artist.Â  But imagine our friend’s surprise when he came across Beesly a few blocks away from our house as he was walking over for game night.Â  He was glad he remembered her name, and he brought her back to her grateful family who didn’t even realize she was missing.Â  Maybe we should have named her Houdini…

So then we played some games, including a new one a friend brought called Left, Right, Center.Â  I really liked it; especially because it was very simple and easy to learn.Â  And then we brought out Pit.Â  We don’t play Pit very often because it’s not really appreciated by some members of the game night crew.Â  It’s a very loud game that is played at a frenzied pace.Â  I really like to play it, but I don’t think I’ve ever won a hand of Pit.Â  My friend had the same issue, but last night while we were playing, she finally got a winning hand.Â  In Pit, when you have a winning hand, you are supposed to ring a little bell, much like a bell you’d ring for service at a front desk of a hotel or at a store.Â  My friend (who shall remain nameless; I don’t want to embarrass her, but I’ll give you a hint – her name rhymes with “feral”) was ***extremely*** excited to have a winning hand, but there was one problem – she couldn’t reach the bell from her seat.Â  So what does she do?Â  This sweet, very quiet, normally passive person lunges…Â  no wait, let’s be honest.Â  She *dives* across the table for the bell.Â  I mean, it was a feet-off-the-ground, laying-on-the-table, horizontal, head-first dive across our dining room table, and *she landed on my arm* in the process.Â  She was immediately embarrassed and apologized profusely, maybe because I was crying.Â  But mine were tears of laughter because her behavior was so shocking – my arm was fine.Â  I guess Pit is such a crazy game that it can bring out the insanity in anyone.Â  And by the way, she did win the round Â  So congrats, \_\_\_\_\_, on winning your first round of Pit.Â  Please forgive me for publishing this story on the internet, but I thank you for giving us such a fun memory.

I’m sorry it snowed, but I’m glad our absent friends stayed safe.Â  We missed you a lot, and we really hope to see you next time!

### Comments

**justj**That must have been some game. It would have been interesting to see. I haven't been out to see if our road was plowed yet. I just stayed in since Friday afternoon.

# Free Rice!

A great friend told me about a website where you answer trivia questions for fun, and every correct response you give earns free rice for starving people!

So close that pointless solitaire game you were playing and go to [http://www.freerice.com](http://freerice.com/).Â  You start donating the rice by taking the vocabulary quiz in the middle of the page.Â  If you want to change the category of your questions, click ‘subjects’ at the top of the page.Â  You can do math, language, chemistry, geography, all kinds of subjects.  
If you’re the type of person who enjoys this kind of thing, why not learn something while helping to feed starving people?Â  Win-win!

### Comments

# Hannah's Wish

Our 4-year-old daughter Samantha is having her first sleepover tonight.Â  She’s been here when her older sister had friends sleep over, but tonight it’s her friend, just for Sammie.Â  Four years old is a little bit young to have a sleepover.Â  And tonight is the second sleepover in a row since older sister Taylor had a friend sleep over last night.Â  I don’t usually condone two sleepovers in a row because that would make for a very crabby Sunday.Â  But this is a special sleepover.

Sammie’s friend, Hannah, is an extraordinary little girl.Â  She was born with a condition that made her spine grow into her brain.Â  My daughter knows her from preschool, and then she was invited to Hannah’s 4th birthday party – that’s where we learned of her condition.Â  In the weeks after the party, Sammie called Hannah to see if she could come over and play, but Hannah could not – she was scheduled to have brain surgery in early December, but it was postponed because she suffered a seizure and was also diagnosed with asthma.Â  Then she underwent the brain surgery just before Christmas, and Sammie called her to see how she was doing.Â  For an entire week after the surgery, Hannah was bedridden and in constant pain.Â  She couldn’t come to the phone, much less go anywhere to play.Â  Now she’s feeling better, although her symptoms are starting to reappear.Â  So crabby Sunday, shmabby shmunday – my kids are having 2 sleepovers in a row.

Hannah’s recovery wish was to sleep over at Sammie’s house.Â  And even if it involved a 4-year-old with a double sleepover, what parent would be able to refuse Hannah’s wish?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Your entire family has a great gift for welcoming in people of all ages and backgrounds that is just so fantastic. I also hope Hannah continues her recovery.  
**justj**I hope that Hannah and Sammie have a wonderful time. That is a touching story. I hope her recovery continues. Third browser

# Flavor Poll

Since I’m on the subject of Girl Scout cookies (per my previous post), I’m going to conduct a flavor poll.Â  Girl Scout cookies are very popular.Â  So many people enjoy them that I would consider them a slice of Americana.Â  So what’s your favorite flavor?

**What is your favorite kind of Girl Scout cookie? Feel free to check more than one if you can't decide!**

* Thin Mints
* Do-si-dos - Peanut Butter Sandwich
* Trefoils - Shortbread
* Tagalongs - Peanut Butter Patties
* Samoas - Carmel DeLites
* Daisy Go Rounds
* Thanks-A-Lot
* Lemon Chalet Cremes
* Sugar Free Chocolate Chips
* Dulce de Leche
* Lemonades
* I don't like Girl Scout cookies
* I've never tried Girl Scout cookies

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

And thanks to Jamiahsh for giving me the idea for the poll!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**You're welcome.  
**justj**All of them!  
**taylhis**Strange... Which browser doesn't it like? Even though I'm not a big cookie person, I LOVE the Carmel DeLites, formerly Samoas! I was pregnant and craving sweets during Girl Scout cookie season once, and those Carmel DeLites tasted unbelievably good... how I guarded those things!  
**justj**Me, I like all of them, but the Thin Mints and Shortbreads are my favorites Posting from another browser again...

# It's Cookie Time!

It’s that time of year again – my daughter will be one of thousands of girls selling the yummily famous Girl Scout cookies.Â  I’m not selling them online, but rather using my blog to post info you may need to help you decide how many boxes of what kinds you’d like to order.Â  [Click here to meet the cookies](http://www.girlscoutcookies.org/meet_cookies.asp).Â  If you’d like to support the wonderful cause of Girl Scouts and get some delicious snacks at the same time, just let me know how many boxes of which flavor you’d like – they’re $3 per box.Â  Thanks for your support!

### Comments

**Rantings and Ramblings From All Around.. » Blog Archive » Itâ€™S Cookie Time! | My Food Chain Gang**[...] It’s that time of year again - my daughter will be one of thousands of girls selling the yummily famous Girl Scout cookies . I’m not selling them online, but.[Continue Reading] [...]  
**Sharon Pristas**Lisa, Please order us 2 boxes: 1 Thin mint and 1 Samoas Thanks! Sharon Pristas  
**Kim**Hi Lisa, Put me down for two boxes, please: one lemon chalet cremes and one thin mints. My neighbor is selling them,too, but they are $4.00 per box here! Strange! Love you, and hope everyone is doing well! Love, Kim  
**justj**Taylhis That is just sad about the leader. Even sadder that the Girl Scouts did nothing to correct the situation. Yes, that sounds like a blog post.  
**Taylhis**No and no. She lied about things, never apologized. Told the kids they were going to Build-a-Bear (and other places) with their cookie money and never took them. I wrote to the Girl Scouts, but they never responded... I feel a blog post coming on!  
**derek**That wasn't cool. Was she prosecuted? And did she apologize?  
**Taylhis**Yes she enjoys it very much, thanks for asking! They have a great leader this year, unlike 2 years ago when the troop leader STOLE their money and didn't take them on outings.  
**derek**Something to think about. I'll let you know. Is Taylor enjoying being a Brownie?  
**justj**Cookie time!!! I will have to think about my decisions on this. Trying again on another browser, the spam blocking doesn't seem to like me.  
**jamiahsh**I sensed a poll with this, but all those flavors.  
**jamiahsh**Ok... one THIN MINT (YUMMMMY), one Do-Si-Dos, and one Tagalongs. Total $9.00. And yes, I had to cheat on the last two :)

# Boy, Was His Face Red...

I received an interesting email forward today about a letter someone wrote to the editor of The Arizona Republic newspaper.Â  I checked it out on snopes.com to make sure the story was true and not just someone with too much time on their hands making stuff up.Â  The story was true, although the letters that were reprinted in the email had been embellished somewhere during the course of the email forward.Â  Here are the reprints of the letters written to the editor:

*A letter to the Editor;  
Question of the day for Luke Air Force Base: Whom do we thank for the morning air show?  
Last Wednesday, at precisely 9:11 a.m., a tight formation of four F-16 jets made a low pass over Arrowhead Mall, continuing west over Bell Road at approximately 500 feet. Imagine our good fortune!  
Do the Tom Cruise-wannabes feel we need this wake-up call, or were they trying to impress the cashiers at Mervyns’ early-bird special?  
Any response would be appreciated.  
Tom MacRae, Peoria*

The correspondent received a response from Col. Robin Rand, commander of Luke AFB’s 56th Fighter Wing, in the pages of that same newspaper the following day:

*Luke Air Force Base was asked to respond to a letter writer’s question about a “morning air show” he observed recently (“A wake-up call from Luke’s jets,” Letters, Thursday):  
The “wake-up call” witnessed the morning of June 15 was a formation of F-16 jets from Luke Air Force Base lining up for a memorial service in Sun City at the gravesite for Air Force Capt. Jeremy Fresques, an officer assigned to Air Force Special Operations. Fresques gave his life in defense of our country while serving in Iraq.  
It is unfortunate that at a time when our nation is at war someone would believe we have less than honorable and professional reasons for such a mission.  
The commander of the fighter squadron was given the difficult duty of informing the family of Capt. Fresques on Memorial Day that the officer, a husband, son and Arizonan, had died in Iraq.  
On behalf of the men and women at Luke Air Force Base, we continue to keep Jeremy and his family in our thoughts and prayers.  
Col. Robin Rand  
Luke Air Force Base*

Four days later, the newspaper also published a response from Lt. Col. Pleus himself:

*Regarding “A wake-up call from Luke’s jets”:  
On June 15, at precisely 9:12 a.m., a perfectly timed four-ship of F-16s from the 63rd Fighter Squadron at Luke Air Force Base flew over the grave of Capt Jeremy Fresques.  
Capt. Fresques was an Air Force officer who was previously stationed at Luke Air Force Base and was killed in Iraq on May 30, Memorial Day.  
At 9 a.m. on June 15, his family and friends gathered at Sunland Memorial Park in Sun City to mourn the loss of a husband, son and friend.  
Based on the letter writer’s recount of the flyby, and because of the jet noise, I’m sure you didn’t hear the 21-gun salute, the playing of taps, or my words to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques as I gave them their son’s flag on behalf of the president of the United States and all those veterans and servicemen and women who understand the sacrifices they have endured.  
A four-ship flyby is a display of respect the Air Force pays to those who give their lives in defense of freedom. We are professional aviators and take our jobs seriously, and on June 15 what the letter writer witnessed was four officers lining up to pay their ultimate respects.  
The letter writer asks, “Whom do we thank for the morning air show?”  
The 56th Fighter Wing will call for you, and forward your thanks to the widow and parents of Capt. Fresques, and thank them for you, for it was in their honor that my pilots flew the most honorable formation of their lives.  
Lt. Col. Scott Pleus  
Luke Air Force Base*

To his credit, the complainant, Mr. MacRae, tendered a written apology which was published in The Republic on 9 July:

*Regarding “Flyby honoring fallen comrade” (Letters, June 28):  
I read with increasing embarrassment and humility the response to my unfortunate letter to The Republic concerning an Air Force flyby (“A wake-up call from Luke’s jets,” Letters, June 23).  
I had no idea of the significance of the flyby, and would never have insulted such a fine and respectful display had I known.  
I have received many calls from the fine airmen who are serving or have served at Luke, and I have attempted to explain my side and apologized for any discomfort my letter has caused.  
This was simply an uninformed citizen complaining about noise.  
I have been made aware in both written and verbal communications of the four-ship flyby, and my heart goes out to each and every lost serviceman and woman in this war in which we are engaged.  
I have been called un-American by an unknown caller and I feel that I must address that. I served in the U.S. Navy and am a Vietnam veteran. I love my country and respect the jobs that the service organizations are doing.  
Please accept my heartfelt apologies.  
Tom MacRae, Peoria*

Well, anyway, I just thought it was an interesting email forward.Â  And it was thought-provoking and even contained some valuable life lessons: don’t jump to conclusions and appreciate everything in life.Â  God Bless our troops!

### Comments

**derek**Whoops! Probably had to change his number after that gaffe.

# Pet Roll Call

Once again, we have a bit of a food chain residing as pets in our home.Â  When my cat passed away a year ago now, it left a hole in our household food chain.Â  Although it’s not quite as balanced as it was when the cat was here, today we find ourselves with a small zoo nonetheless.Â  Here is the roll call of pets in our house:

Charity – almost 11-year-old female Jack (Jerk) Russell Terrier / Australian Shepard mix with one blue eye and one brown eye.Â  An extremely feisty but lovable loudmouth who doesn’t hesitate to let you know what she wants, when she wants it.Â  Will even growl for petting!Â  World’s worst puppy = World’s best family dog.

Beesly – nearly 7-year-old cocker spaniel mix with extremely thick fur.Â  We once shaved her and to our astonishment, she became a much smaller dog because her fur is so thick!Â  She really likes it outdoors, and we call her nordic (of or pertaining to the north, where it’s cold) because she doesn’t seem to mind the cold at all – probably can’t feel it through that blanket of fur!Â  We adopted her from the humane society in March 2008, and we’re SO glad!Â  GREAT with kids and an extreme snuggler.Â  The only problem we have with her is her nasty dog breath!Â  Oh, and her uncanny ability to escape.Â  She can open doors and can somehow (repeatedly, not just a fluke!) unhook her way off of 2 dog chains at the same time!Â  Luckily for us, she always comes back.

Squawky – an 8-year-old Scarlet Macaw parrot.Â  After living with him for 7 years, I do not recommend parrots as pets!Â  He screams (and I mean ear-splitting) constantly – a repairman once asked us if we had a pterodactyl behind the door after hearing him scream.Â  But he is beautiful and drops gorgeous feathers all the time.Â  And having him has been an awesome learning experience for us and the kids.Â  He can talk and is very curious about everything.Â  His vocabulary includes: hi, here kitty kitty, hi bird, and sometimes he just mumbles nonsense that sounds like human words.Â  In his spare time, Squawky likes to watch The Price is Right and Animal Planet.

Oreo – one of our new rat additions.Â  He is gray and white and smaller than Bobby Jack.Â  He seems a little more curious and less picky about food than Bobby Jack.Â  Had a close call with Charity this morning.

Bobby Jack – off-white colored rat who doesn’t like his rat food.Â  He enjoys many of the treats we’ve given him, especially junk food.Â  Just after we got them, he was the snugglier of the two, but I think he was just tired from his journey home from the pet store because now he’s as hyper and curious as his brother Oreo.Â  They are 5 weeks old, and so far, we would agree that rats make great pets!Â  They don’t bite like gerbils and hamsters, and they don’t scurry like mice.Â  They are fairly clean animals who groom a lot, are very intelligent and easily trainable.Â  I think one of the reasons they’re not popular pets to have is because of their super-short lifespans, about 1.5-3 years only.Â  

Francis – the ladybug I found that became my new pet before I had the rats.Â  I put him in a bug catcher, and then he went MIA.Â  Good news – today I found him.Â  Turns out, there was a little pocket in the bug catcher where he was hiding.Â  I would check the bug catcher every now and then, and today I saw that he had re-emerged from hiding!

No Name – another ladybug I found in the house.Â  I won’t kill any bugs I find unless they’re mosquitos – and how I enjoy killing those things!Â  But any other bug I try to set free, and I just can’t send ladybugs out into the Ohio wilderness to freeze to death.Â  No Name is in a little container in the kitchen…Â  I wonder what would happen if I put him in with Francis?

Mally – Ok, she’s no longer part of our family physically, but we will always remember her.Â  Since I mentioned her earlier, I thought I’d put her on the list.Â  She was a 10-year-old inbred farm cat.Â  My husband and I were in college, and we drove all the way out to a farm to get a kitten after reading an ad in the newspaper.Â  By the time we got there, we wanted a cat so badly that we got one even though the owners said the mother cat had mated with a boy from a previous litter, which is how Mally came to be.Â  Because of this, she was never ‘quite right’, and was always the size of a kitten.Â  We named her Malice as a joke, but we always called her Mally.Â  I was her world, and she hid from everyone else, prompting family and friends alike to joke about our “invisible cat”.Â  But she existed, I swear, and she was very sweet, at least with me.Â  She liked to lie on my pregnant belly and would ‘groom’ my hair.Â  I miss her a lot and wish I could get another cat, but I’m allergic.Â  I was allergic to Mally, but there was no way I was going to get rid of her.Â  I got her before any of my kids were born, and so I doted upon her and spoiled her while my husband was working in the wee beginning of our days together.Â  For those of you who never saw her, here is my little cat:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/scanner-cat.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**One of the rats doesn't like rat food? Did you try fine French cuisine? :P Welcome back, Francis! Might as well put the two together. You never know, the two could be lady and gentleman! A possible learning experience about life to your oldest girls since they certainly don't, er.. reproduce like us mammals, *that* being a lesson that should probably wait a bit of course...  
**jamiahsh**the three I have come to know and love are as much a part of your family as the rest of you and I am sure the new additions will only add to the fun. RIP, Mally.  
**justj**You need Chinchillas... ;)

# Where's My Happy Little Guy?

My son (after having only daughters for the past nine years, it seems weird to say the word son) must be teething.Â  He will be 6 months old on Sunday already, and for the last 5 days, he’s been crying constantly.Â  Yesterday was the exception, but 4 of the 5 last days, he’s been crying nonstop – it’s quite taxing for both of us.Â  Mostly, the exhaustion comes because I just feel badly for the little guy – he used to be the happiest baby and smiled constantly.Â  But after trying everything to cheer him up, sometimes I selfishly think about how hard it is on me as well.Â  I can’t imagine the pain he’s going through, but in the mean time, I can’t get anything done around the house – and leisure time?Â  Forget it.Â  It’s hard to get anything done while holding him, and holding him offers one of the only ways to keep him from crying – sometimes even holding him doesn’t work.Â  Sometimes there is no choice but to put him down somewhere, like when I’m cooking for instance, and he’s not happy anywhere right now…Â  not in his playpen, his bouncer, his bouncy seat, his crib, the floor, nowhere, which means he is screaming, and it’s a draining form of torture to hear a baby cry all day.Â  The only reason I’m actually able to sit down and write this blog (YES!Â  Leisure time after all!) right now is because he is passed out (after a crying spell) sitting on the couch next to me.Â  He sometimes likes it there too, but that means I’m glued to the couch – can’t leave a baby unattended on a couch of course.Â  So I can sit here and type this blog, but I can’t do things like tackle my accumulating clutter or begin the task of cutting Mt. Washmore down to size.Â  Mt. Washmore is the never-ending, magically replenishing pile of laundry often found lurking in households with 2 or more kids – I have 4 kids, so our Mt. Washmore is taking on a life of its own.Â  If we have any more kids, I’m afraid people who come to visit us will just arrive at the foot of a gi-normous pile of clothes where there once was a house and a family who lived inside.

I try to tell myself that things like backed-up laundry and clutter don’t really matter in the long run.Â  Heck, I’ll probably even be bored and WISH I had lots more laundry to do once my kids are all grown and in school during the day.Â  But just as I convince my brain that this is true, my feet stumble over something that’s in the way and shouldn’t be there – clutter or a basket of laundry to put away.Â  Speak of the devil, the laundry buzzer just went off…Â  if only my son will sleep through the transfer from the couch to his playpen so I can go fold it and put it away, thereby avoiding feeding Mt. Washmore.

HE DID!Â  He’s asleep in his playpen!Â  But now the dogs are barking at the neighbor’s cat again and WAAAAA, WAAAAAA!!!Â  Those dogs have woken the baby again!Â  Sigh…

I guess today will see yet another expansion of Mt. Washmore after all.

### Comments

**derek**A bottle of chloroform and a rag for your late Christmas gift. Check. (Just kidding!)  
**taylhis**Jamiahsh - enjoy today and tomorrow while you're still closer to 30 than 40!  
**jamiahsh**You mean I will be 35.5 on Saturday? Good heavens. I often wonder how Mom did it with her four... we were not that far removed in age either. Jeff is only 5 years older than I and Christi is three years younger. Poor Beeber.  
**taylhis**I should clarify - I like doing laundry, HATE folding and putting away. So our Mt. Washmore is a heap of clean laundry. I would probably notice some strange garments and wonder where to put them... but that's only IF I find the time to tackle the mountain! And now you gave yourself away - if you show up at the next game night with a suspicious bulge, I'm not letting you near Mt. Washmore! ;)  
**justj**So if I add my laundry to your mountain, you would never notice... Now if I can only figure out a way to get my clothes back when you do tackle the mountain.... ;) I just hate doing laundry.

# The Prize

In my previous post I was looking for the title of a song and the artist who sings it, and I promised a prize to anyone who could provide me with the info.Â  Two readers and fellow bloggers, [justj](http://justj.tangents.org/) and [derek](http://sublife.tangents.org/), successfully completed the challenge.Â  So what’s their prize?Â  A blog post of recognition, of course!

Alright, that’s dumb.Â  It’s going to make sure that people never take any challenges I offer again.Â  Isn’t just knowing that you helped a friend enough?Â  Of course it is, but you were promised a prize.Â  Maybe I can treat your ears to a round of *Senorita Mas Fina* (that’s the name of the song I was looking for in case you’re wondering, and it’s sung by Kevin Fowler).

Just kidding!Â  I won’t make you listen to the song.Â  It really seems like something only a country music lover would like – cheesy lyrics, hokey theme, obscene amount of twang – the kind of song I can really use to tease my friends who hate country music!

Well, thanks again derek and justj for playing and for coming up with the info I was looking for.Â  And it’s ironic, I did do searches myself, and I did come up with the name Kevin Fowler, but before I was able to listen to the song, I had to do something else (the baby has been crying for 3 days straight – teething), and I guess I forgot I was close to a result when my computer crashed.Â  So thanks for helping me, and you will get more than the blog post recognition I had planned – I will have a real prize the next time I see each of you – something small, but maybe a little better than blog recognition and being made to listen to an extreme lesson in the country music technique of twang.Â  Thanks for playing!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**what... honesty is totally unrewarded... hmmm... :D  
**justj**Or just the ability to post replies on your blog ;)  
**justj**I'm more than satisfied with the blog recognition too.  
**derek**Just give my prize to your best behaved child of the week, or to someone else who might need it. The blog recognition is enough for me, thanks. :)

# This Gringo Needs Help

From dictionary.com:

***gringo*** [gring-goh] â€“noun, plural -gos. Usually Disparaging.  
(in Latin America or Spain) a foreigner, esp. one of U.S. or British descent.

Sorry – didn’t mean to be disparaging, but I am of U.S. descent and I need help.

This post is an appeal to country music fans to please help me figure out the details of a country song I want.Â  I don’t know the name of it or who sings it.Â  It’s an older song – maybe from the 1980’s or ’90’s…Â  I wouldn’t even rule out the ’70’s.Â  Just about the only lyrics I can remember are “…be your little gringo…”Â  or something like that.Â  The song is uptempo and sung by a male.Â  If you can get me the name and artist of the song I’m looking for, you’ll win a prize.Â  Something tells me Carol might know this…Â  or my dad…Â  WHAT IS THIS SONG?

### Comments

**jamiahsh**no idea... sorry  
**derek**Whoops- the same as your link, justj! I didn't realize you guessed the same song- oops! :D  
**derek**Here's a Youtube vid of my guess: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS29unyG7zQ>  
**justj**Try again Just a bit of searching led me to this: http://www.freelyricsformusic.com/?sec=listing&lyricid=158679 And http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS29unyG7zQ  
**justj**Ok, now I'm trying to post a reply from Internet Explorer  
**derek**I did a search on google using the keywords {country lyrics "be your little gringo"} and found this song if it helps: [Kevin Fowler: Senorita Mas Fina](http://www.cowboylyrics.com/tabs/fowler-kevin/seniorita-mas-fina-6092.html)

# Is Winning The Lottery Worth The Ultimate Price?

As I was making lunch today, I heard the following fascinating story on the radio, so I had to look it up and read it for myself:

The following article is from baltimoresun.com:  
*DANBURY, Conn. (AP) â€” On the day that Donald Peters died, he unknowingly provided financial security for his wife of 59 years and their family.*

*Peters bought two Connecticut Lottery tickets at a local 7-Eleven store on Nov. 1 as part of a 20-year tradition he shared with his wife Charlotte. Later that day, the 79-year-old retired hat factory worker suffered a fatal heart attack while working in his yard in Danbury.*

*On Friday, his widow cashed in one of the tickets: a $10 million winner which, in her grief over her husband’s death, she had put aside and almost discarded before recently checking the numbers.*

*“I’m numb,” Charlotte Peters, 78, said at Connecticut Lottery headquarters in Rocky Hill.*

*Donald Peters usually bought the tickets for 10 weeks at a stretch, so the winning ticket he bought Nov. 1 for the Dec. 2 drawing was among several that Charlotte Peters put aside as she, their three children and two grandchildren coped with his sudden death.*

*“I was in the grocery store and I had it checked and they told me I was a winner,” she said. “I had no idea how much it was.”*

*She said she thought she had won $6 million but was surprised to learn from lottery officials she’d won $10 million.*

*Charlotte Peters has 60 days to decide whether to take a $6 million pre-tax lump sum payment or stretch the winnings into 21 yearly payments of almost $477,300 each.*

*She does not yet know what she will do with the money.*

*“I’ve always wanted a Corvette, but I don’t think I’ll buy one. I’ll stick to a small car. I might go to Mohegan Sun,” she said, referring to the casino in Connecticut. “I’m going to go home and sit and think.”*

*The Peters children think their father would have appreciated the irony.*

*“He’d be very mad, he just passed away and she won a lot of money,” said Brian Peters, one of the couple’s three children. “He’d say, ‘Figures!'”*

Even though Mr. Peters was not aware of his “luck”, in effect he paid the ultimate price to win the lottery.Â  Was it worth it?Â  Probably not.Â  Any sane person would rather have his life, health, and loved ones rather than an extremely large windfall if there was a choice.Â  Since that’s a poll I’d rather not take, here is one about what you would do if you won a huge amount of money in a lottery.

**If you won the lottery, what are some of the things you'd do first? Choose as many as apply:**

* build a community theater building
* build a community theater building anonymously
* consult an attorney
* change my phone number
* quit my job
* take a vacation
* hire a nanny
* hire a laundry service
* hire a housekeeper
* donate to charity
* build a zoo
* build a dream home
* I wrote a creative answer - read it in the comments section
* go to the casino

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I would pay MY bills, give some to family, build an anonymous theatre and subsequently move out of Ohio or at least to a larger city in Ohio.  
**derek**Okay, since you asked for the *first* thing, I would pay my bills. :mrgreen: After that, I would do other things like donate to charity, give family some money, move out to Ohio ;) , among other things.

# The Night Listener Returns

Regular readers of my blog know that I thought [The Night Listener](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0448075/) was a terrible movie.Â  It stars Robin Williams as a radio show host who…Â  you know what, I don’t even remember.Â  For a plot synopsis, click on the link above.Â  I was actually surprised that an A-list actor like Robin Williams would do such an awful movie as The Night Listener, but he did.Â  After sitting through a movie like The Night Listener, my husband and I are weary of Robin Williams.Â  However, 3 of our friends and fellow tangents.org authors all agreed that August Rush is a good movie, so we checked it out.Â  And you’ll notice that the title of this post is called, “The Night Listener Returns”, so uh-oh.Â  But that was more of a joke, and now I’ve explained it, so let’s get on with my review of August Rush.

Not nearly as bad as the Night Listener; I wouldn’t even call [August Rush](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0426931/) a bad movie.Â  At the very least, it was really refreshing to see a movie whose target audience was over the age of 18 that was absent any filth whatsoever.Â  August Rush is a cute story, but I think the movie could have been done a heck of a lot better in some ways.Â  The tale follows the life of a young orphan, an almost magical boy, named Evan Taylor as he “follows the music” to find his real parents.Â  There were a few circumstances and events in the movie that weren’t believable in any shape or form, and even if you suspended your disbelief, the cheesiness of other aspects of the movie was annoying.Â  The storyline is intriguing, and the acting is not bad, but there are a few things that would have to change about August Rush in order for me to consider it a great film.Â  To name just a couple of those things, I couldn’t get over the fact that this entire love story is based upon a one-night stand.Â  Tactfully done – as I said, there isn’t any filth in this PG rated movie, but still, knowing it’s true love after just a one-night stand?Â  Come on!Â  And, I guess you’ll have to see the movie to appreciate this, but would an abandoned theater really still have its electricity working?Â  Doubtful.Â  Like I said, just a few examples of what I perceived to be holes in the plot, but there are other things about the movie that could have easily been changed, improving the film’s quality.Â  Doing so would add much enjoyment and just plain common sense to this movie.Â  And Robin Williams was not the shining star in August Rush either; that was left for Freddie Highmore who played Evan – he was also wonderful playing twins in the great movie [The Spiderwick Chronicles](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0416236/) – another highly recommended flick.Â  Williams seemed almost annoying in his role as a musical outlaw with his multple piercings and goatee.Â  I flip-flopped between deciding if his character “Wizard” was a good guy or a bad guy.Â  Maybe that was the point, I’m not even sure.

The actor who played Buford Benjamin Blue (Bubba) in Forrest Gump played a preacher in August Rush, so I was wondering if the line, “Run August run!”Â  was a reference to the extremely famous line, “Run Forrest run!” from the Oscar-winning film based upon the Winston Groom novel, one of my favorite movies (one that**I** highly recommend).Â  Or maybe it was the filmakers’ way of laughing at us for even thinking of an awesome movie like [Forrst Gump](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0109830/) during August Rush.Â  Ok, it wasn’t that bad…Â  I did appreciate the sentiment.Â  But my lack of suspension of disbelief just got in the way of me getting swept into the magic of the movie, I guess.

Sorry for those who disagree with me, but I’m still glad you recommended the movie; it was definitely worth a screening – thanks!

### Comments

**derek**Oh, could you tell our friendly admin that I have comments awaiting moderation on the front page? I guess I had never commented on any of those posts before. ;)  
**derek**You raise some of the same points I read on IMDB by the ones who didn't like the movie, and they are valid. I guess for some, like me, suspension of disbelief is easier than for others. I do agree that Robin Williams was not at his best. His character actually made me think of a cross between Bill Sykes and Fagin rather than just Fagin.  
**justj**No problem with you not liking the movie. I guess it could have gone either way for me. I didn't have the problem with the 1 night stand that you did, but then my outlook on relationships is kind of based on a love at first sight, so it didn't seem out of place to me. The electricity in the theater could have been stolen from somewhere. There were enough people/children there. Someone may have had the knowledge to do that.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, Freddie is quite a talented young actor. Hopefully, he continues.

# More Cuties

No, I’m not talking about the oranges called Cuties.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/picture-47.jpg)

Have you heard of those?Â  They’re small oranges especially grown to be kid-friendly: less sour taste, seedless, and easier to peel and smaller than regular oranges.Â  I’ve been wanting to try them for our family, but when I finally remembered to pick them up at Walmart, the bag I had hastily grabbed contained smashed and rotten fruit.Â  What else is new – our Walmart always carries terrible produce.Â  But this is not going to be a Walmart-bashing post.Â  Tangents aside, I posted pictures of our new pet rat cuties in my previous post, so here are pictures of our real cuties.Â  Here is our one little guy with his 3 older sisters:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/1-2-09-0031.jpg)

And below are the oldest and the youngest kids in our family – they’re 8.5 years apart.Â  I wish I had blocked the sun before I took this picture!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/1-2-09-002.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Aww... :) (the rest of this is meaningless text so I don't get filtered for too short of a message...)  
**jamiahsh**SWEET... but at least the sun WAS SHINING :D

# You Dirty Rat(s)

According to Wikipedia.com, James Cagney never actually said the line, “*You Dirty Rat*“.Â  The closest he got was saying “Come out and take it, you dirty, yellow-bellied rat, or I’ll give it to you through the door!” in Taxi.Â  But *rats*!Â  That’s not the point of this post.

Seems I couldn’t resist adding to the Food Chain Gang – we’ve added two pet rats to our family, Bobby and Oreo – the kids chose the names.Â  It was kind of an impulsive activity to do today, pet shopping, but it was not an impulsive decision, the type that should never accompany a new pet.Â  We’ve been talking about getting a rat for some time now, but if it ended up being the wrong decision for our family, we didn’t want to *be like rats leaving a sinking ship* and ditch the responsibility. So we’ve been thinking about it a lot, and today just seemed like the right day to do it.

Rats are friendly, intelligent, non-biting rodents who make great pets.Â  Rat owners compare their companionship to that of dogs, believe it or not, and from what I’ve seen so far, I see what they’re talking about.Â  I think rats haven’t caught on as pets because many people don’t like the way their tails look, and they still have a negative stigma from a few incidents of centuries past, namely the Black Death outbreak and the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.Â  I did some research about both of these historical tales – not that they influenced my decision to get the rats as pets; the research was just for fun.Â  But I found that the Bubonic Plague, aka the Black Death was most likely transmitted by fleas rather than rats.Â  True the fleas would travel on the rats, but they more commonly preferred larger hosts such as dogs or cats and used rats when larger animals were unavailable.Â  The Bubonic Plague was attributed to causing the demise of one quarter of the Earth’s population of human beings at that time, it’s hard to blame people for taking it out on rats.Â  And the Pied Piper story is basically a legend that tries to explain the disappearance of over 100 children from the town of Hamelin in Germany just before the year 1300.Â  Most likely, the children were recruited to newer European settlements, possibly by a man in “pied” clothing.Â  In the legend, there is a rat infestation in Hamelin, and the Pied Piper leads the rats out of the town to a body of water where they all drown.Â  The townspeople neglect to pay the Piper for his rat removal services, and he returns and leads their children out of town.Â  Some versions claim they went to a cave, some say another village, and there are even a few versions that say the Piper had ill intentions toward the children – in one they meet a fate similar to the rats.Â  I enjoyed some of the rat research I read and wanted to share it.Â  If you want to continue the research on your own, I’ve added to the level of the cheesiness (and length) of this post by putting some common sayings involving rats in *italics* – try looking them up; the origins are interesting.Â  But anyway, back to our new little friends.

When we were at the pet store, I didn’t want any part of picking out the rat.Â  I felt like they are only in pet stores to become snake food (which is why I won’t join the *rat race* and work in a pet store, as much as I’d like to do the other work in the store), and I didn’t want to have to see the ones that wouldn’t get saved.Â  As it is, I went over there to take a glance, saw little Bobby, who was about to be put back in the snake food tank, and that’s what prompted me to say, “Maybe we should get two.”Â  The pet store sent the rats home to us like this, a brown bag lunch for snakes, thus proving my point:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/rats-1-3-09-001.jpg)

The rats my family chose for us are 4 week old brothers.Â  They are adorable, incredibly tame, and I’ve already really bonded with Bobby.Â  He cuddles me and sits on me and grooms himself – rats are actually very clean animals.Â  The entire start-up for this type of pet set us back about $25.  
$2.99 per rat + $3 for bedding + $9 cage + $3 food (for about 3 weeks worth) + $2 water bottle + tax.Â  We are going to be resourceful about toys and use my kids’ toys for the rats – we’ve already found that they like to crawl through these foam tunnel blocks they have.Â  And we were very resourceful when making their cage as well.Â  Instead of trying to decide between the $19 glass aquarium and the $24 hamster cage (I was concerned about the heaviness and the breakable glass of the aquarium and worried the rats would escape the cage), we opted for secret option #3 – a large $9 transparent Rubbermaid bin with a lid in which we poked air holes.Â  Overall, I’m very happy so far with the new pet decision, and my major concerns have not come to fruition which were: 1.Â  that our Jack (Jerk) Russell Terrier mix would try to hunt the rats, andÂ  2.Â  that the kids would unwittingly hurt the rats.Â  But our dog has not even noticed that the rats are here yet (she’s almost 11 and her sense of smell is failing faster than I thought – that makes me a little sad), and we laid down strict rules for the kids about handling the rats.Â  I was also worried about having yet another chore to do around the house, but I was promised help from both of the enthusiastic new pet owners (there’s a sucker born every minute).Â  Here are the cuties – Bobby is the beige one and Oreo is the gray and white one:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2009/01/rats-1-3-09-002.jpg)

### Comments

**Megan**We used to have pet rats and we loved them! Your story reminds me of when I brought home a rabbit from a reptile show I went to, to save it from being food. I can't believe I have had Dusty (short for dust bunny) for almost 3 years. BTW, the rats look adorable, can't wait to meet them:)  
**justj**Rats make great pets. You do need to keep their home clean, or they will get the typical rodent smell, but they are intelligent, fun pets.  
**jamiahsh**I also think rats have gotten a bad rap. Welcome to the menagerie Bobby and Oreo.

# Happy New Year!

Happy New Year!Â  Holy cow, 2009 already!Â  I hope you had a good New Year’s.Â  Ours was wonderul.Â  We hosted a bash, which is always great so that we don’t have to pack up the kids and all their luggage just to haul them out somewhere to stay until the wee hours of the morning.Â  We played charades and other games and ate lots of yummy treats.Â  Our kids – #2 and #4 in birth order – fell asleep way early.Â  The older one stayed asleep all night, but wouldn’t you know it – the baby woke right as we crawled into bed at 4 in the morning.Â  I was able to sleep for a few hours, but that’s more than I can say for my husband who woke with the baby.Â  But then he got a short nap while I ambled downstairs to do some much needed cleanup from the party.Â  After that, we were ready to drag ourselves over to a friend’s house for a New Year’s Day chili feast – I’m told the beans bring good luck in the new year.Â  More food, more fun, and we didn’t plan on staying long but ended up getting home about 7 in the evening.Â  I did miss the hockey game at Wrigley Field, but the Red Wings beat the Blackhawks anyway.Â  I’m not a big hockey fan; I just thought it would be cool to see Wrigley all decked out for hockey.Â  I wonder what they would have done if they had gotten some of that freak 60 degree weather again – how to maintain an ice rink in those conditions?Â  Oh well, that’s a tangent, good thing this site is called tangents.org

So the chili and rest of the food at our friends house was great, but I wish I could have enjoyed it more – seems I partied a little too hard the night before and felt a little tired and queasy come chili feast time.Â  But it’s my own fault – I should know that I’m getting older and can’t handle the late nights (or early mornings for that matter) like I used to.Â  But oh well – my friend did give me some delicious chili to take home, so hopefully it will be more enjoyable now that I was able to rest last night.Â  Now I’ll just have to get used to writing 2009 instead of 2008 all over the place…

### Comments

**justj**I'm also sorry I missed the chili. Your party was one to be remembered. A good time was had by all.  
**Jamiah**Yes, a great bash was had by all. Sorry I missed the chili.

# Last Post of 2008!

Because I barely have time to fit in the writing of this current blog post, I can safely say that with 4 kids running around (Christmas break = parental nightmare) this will be my last blog post of 2008!Â  What better way to go out then but to experiment with the new polling feature of tangents.org and make a New Year’s themed poll?Â  Enjoy, and have a very happy and safe New Year’s celebration!Â  Here’s wishing you the best of luck in 2009!Â  Check all that apply:

**What are your goals for 2009?**

* I don't have any goals for 2009
* lose weight
* further my education
* better my relationship with God
* give up a bad habit
* make more money
* nothing I can say on this blog
* perform in a play
* spend more time with family
* take a vacation
* write an e-book (submitted by Chris)

[View Results](#ViewPollResults)

Loading ... Loading ...

### Comments

**derek**As for goals, #4 is a given and #5 is tied to that one. As for other goals, I just don't know. do need to make a higher income than what I'm currently getting though. It wouldn't be so bad if it were an all-year job.  
**derek**We can do polls? I never saw such an option in the editor. Maybe I can hand-make one should the need arise.  
**jamiahsh**WOW... \*are now totally gone\*... Happy 2009 Everyone.  
**jamiahsh**Yes, I seem that my poll options or anything closely resembling them are not toatlly gone and I had some GREAT polls to make :(  
**justj**Glad to see someone can do the polling... ;)

# Marley and Me

Reluctantly, I saw [Marley and Me](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0822832/) in the movie theater yesterday.Â  It’s not that it was a bad movie, but I didn’t want to see it in the theater because I knew it would be a tear-jerker since I read the book by John Grogan.Â  Unfortunately, I don’t remember much about the book since I read it a long time ago, and I do all of my book reading while I’m dozing off just before bed, which sometimes makes it difficult to remember what I’ve read.Â  But I know I really enjoyed the novel and recommended it to my family and friends.Â  The story is about a family who gets a puppy named Marley, and the novel follows his journey through life as the ‘world’s worst dog’.Â  But eventually, Marley charms his way into the hearts of his family, even helping them through life changes and tragedies.

From what I remember, I think the movie stays pretty close to the book, although I don’t necessarily agree with the casting choices of Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson as Marley’s masters.Â  I was a big fan of the tv show Friends, but every movie I’ve seen Jennifer Aniston in since seems like she’s still Rachel, her character from Friends.Â  She’s just not a very diverse actor in my book, which I also think she has in common with Owen Wilson.Â  But characters in this heartwarming ~~family~~ film were not very deep, so in the end the poor casting did little to sink the movie.Â  And you’ll notice that I crossed out family film.Â  Another thing that disappointed me was the PG rating Marley and Me received.Â  There are about 3 too many adult-themed scenes that I wouldn’t want my kids to see, and I’m really glad I previewed this film before I let them see it, which I usually do anyway.Â  This movie should NOT have received a PG rating, and it will make me more careful about making sure I preview *everything* before the kids view it, regardless of rating.

But overall, cute movie.Â  If you’re an animal lover or have ever owned a dog, prepare to cry.Â  Sorry if you consider that a spoiler, but it’s been all over the media and has dominated water cooler talk everywhere about how sad the movie and book are.Â  I’m sure you can guess what happens and you think you can prepare yourself, but you can’t.Â  I was a total wreck in the theater and have had a bit of a cloud over me ever since.Â  But don’t let that scare you away from seeing Marley and Me.Â  I think it just struck a chord in me because we own a dog who was once ‘The World’s Worst Dog’ and is now an old lady who has been a huge part of our family for over 10 years.Â  I probably would not watch this movie again, but only for lack of wanting to ride the emotional rollercoaster it provokes in its viewers.Â  The big screen version of Marley and Me was entertaining, and it made me definitely want to read the book again…Â  if only I had time for that.

### Comments

# High School - yuck

I don’t have many fond memories of high school.Â  It wasn’t horrible, but it certainly hasn’t come close to being the best years of my life as some people had promised.Â  Even so, when I saw this copy of an email forward on my friend’s blog, I couldn’t resist filling it out and making it a blog post of my own, especially since he didn’t send me the email version for me to forward.Â  Feel free to make it an email and forward it to your friends.Â  Coincidentally, I’ve been working on a post about a different version of classmates.com…Â  stay tuned – I might eventually have time to finish it!Â  Here is a copy of the email forward:

*Here is a fun email I received from my cousin who shares my alma mater as well as the year I graduated.Â  Some of the questions brought a chuckle as well as made me think.Â  See if it does the same for you.*

*Fill this out about your Senior Year of high school! The longer ago it was, the more fun the answers will be!!Â  FORWARDÂ  (or post in comments) with name of high school and graduating year in the subject box. Send this to all your friends, but donâ€™t forget to send it back to me.  
> >  
> >  
1. Did you date someone from your school? No*

*2. Did you marry someone from your high school? No*

*3. Did you car pool to school?Â  yes*

*4. What kind of car did you have? black Pontiac Sunbird*

*5. What kind of car do you have now? minivan*

*6 . Itâ€™s Friday nightâ€¦where are you now? In high school?Â  hanging out at a friends house, shooting pool or hanging out at Denny’s – lots of hanging out*

*7. What kind of job did you have in high school?Â  Wendy’s*

*8. What kind of job do you do now?Â  Homemaker*

*9. Were you a party animal?Â  more than some, less than others*

*10. Were you considered a flirt? no*

*11. Were you in band, orchestra? band freshman year*

*12. Were you a nerd?Â  depends who you asked I guess*

*13. Did you get suspended or expelled? no*

*14. Can you sing the fight song? no*

*15. Who was/were your favorite teacher? I don’t remember*

*16. Where did you sit during lunch? in my car – how dangerous was it to speed to McD’s and back in 25 mins every day?*

*17. What was your schoolâ€™s full name?Â  this makes me nervous – are you trying to track me down?!?*

*18. When did you graduate? 1996*

*19. What was your school mascot?Â  Tigers*

*20. If you could go back and do it again, would you? no thanks*

*21. Did you have fun at Prom? not really*

*22. Do you still talk to the person you went to Prom with? No*

*23. Are you planning on going to your next reunion? no*

*24. Do you still talk to people from school? trade a few emails a year with some people back and forth*

*25. School Colors? orange and black*

*26. If you could do 1 thing differently in high school, what would itÂ  be?Â  I would have been a little nicer to people – not that I was mean, I was just quiet and disconnected from my huge community of a school.*

### Comments

**derek***1. Did you date someone from your school?* No *2. Did you marry someone from your high school?* Still a bachelor *3. Did you car pool to school?* No *4. What kind of car did you have?* Chevy station wagon *5. What kind of car do you have now?* Chevy Metro *6. Itâ€™s Friday nightâ€¦where are you now? In high school?* Nowadays? At home. In high school? Probably at home. *7. What kind of job did you have in high school?* Retail, though I did have a job involving newspapers as well. *8. What kind of job do you do now?* Substitute teacher. *9. Were you a party animal?* Parties? *10. Were you considered a flirt?* Nope *11. Were you in band, orchestra?* Yep- played trumpet *12. Were you a nerd?* Not really, though I *was* outside pretty much all social circles. *13. Did you get suspended or expelled?* One detention was all- I was a good boy. :D *14. Can you sing the fight song?* No, but I remember it was borrowed from Northwestern U *15. Who was/were your favorite teacher(s)?* In high school I don't remember most of them oddly enough. *16. Where did you sit during lunch?* At a table by myself. *17. What was your schoolâ€™s full name?* Named after the town. *18. When did you graduate?* 1988 *19. What was your school mascot?* Mustang *20. If you could go back and do it again, would you?* No, I think not. *21. Did you have fun at Prom?* This question assumes one actually went to said prom. *22. Do you still talk to the person you went to Prom with?* See answer to #21 *23. Are you planning on going to your next reunion?* Haven't been to one yet. I don't see this changing anytime soon. *24. Do you still talk to people from school?* None from my high school. *25. School Colors?* Purple and gold. *26. If you could do 1 thing differently in high school, what would it be?* Be more sociable? Get involved in acting sooner? I don't really know.  
**Chris**1. Did you date someone from your school? Yes 2. Did you marry someone from your high school? No 3. Did you car pool to school? No 4. What kind of car did you have? Like this one http://www.vfrclc.org/images/DMil76.jpg 5. What kind of car do you have now? Minivan 6 . Itâ€™s Friday nightâ€¦where are you now? In high school? Hanging out with Derek. 7. What kind of job did you have in high school? PJ's Trick Shop (Magician) 8. What kind of job do you do now? Witness Protection Program :-) 9. Were you a party animal? Not even a little. 10. Were you considered a flirt? No 11. Were you in band, orchestra? Nope 12. Were you a nerd? Nerd implies smart -- so no. 13. Did you get suspended or expelled? Got detention after detention. 14. Can you sing the fight song? We had a fight song? 15. Who was/were your favorite teacher? Mr. Druin (Acting) 16. Where did you sit during lunch? It depends on which lunch hour. I would skip Gym and attend them all. 17. What was your schoolâ€™s full name? John Hersey High School 18. When did you graduate? It would have been in 1993, but... 19. What was your school mascot? Huskies 20. If you could go back and do it again, would you? YUCK! 21. Did you have fun at Prom? I went to six proms, had fun at one. 22. Do you still talk to the person you went to Prom with? None of them. 23. Are you planning on going to your next reunion? No. 24. Do you still talk to people from school? Every once in a 5 year period I will get an email. 25. School Colors? Don't remember. Red and Grey? 26. If you could do 1 thing differently in high school, what would it be? My hair. P.S. I am in love with the author of this blog!

# Classmates.com

You’ve heard of it.Â  You might even be a member of classmates.comÂ – the first step is admitting it.Â  But seriously, based on the popularity of websites like classmates.com, reunion.com, facebook.com and myspace.com, it’s obvious thatÂ human beingsÂ have an innate curiosity regarding the fates of the people they knew way back when.Â  Well, I thought of a whole new take on these types of sites – a sort of a dark side…

See, the suburban Chicago high school I attended was large.Â  My graduating class numbered about 500.Â  Of those 500 students, there were more than a few who were always into some kind ofÂ trouble.Â  When I used to have free time a few years ago BK (Before Kids), I would occasionally rack my brain, trying to remember the names of the trouble-makers from my school daysÂ in order to be able to look them up on the Â IDOC’s website – Illinois Department of Corrections.Â  And surprisingly – or not so much, I guess; they haveÂ to come from somewhere – but anyway,Â in my random searches, I did locateÂ a few former classmates in the IDOCÂ who wound up serving time in the slammer rather than spending time atÂ our classÂ reunion…

First up isÂ Tracy Wargo, who was a girl who used to live down the street from us.Â  The family was known for getting into trouble, and so when I did the IDOC search and found her name, I wasn’t really surprised.Â  She was in for DUI, and has since been released.

Next is Tony Devitto who was the brother of one of my friends I had when growing up.Â  We’ve lost touch over the years, butÂ I wondered ifÂ my friend or her brother would wind up in IDOC’s systemÂ someday –Â they didn’t have a very nice home life.Â  Unfortunately, my prediction was right, and Tony was just put into custody in November for retail theft – at least it’s nothing more serious.

And finally, there’s James Ray, who I knew from middle school – by the time we got to high school, he had all but disappeared, probably dropping out.Â  But anyway, imagine my surprise when I saw that a boy I last knew at the age of 12 was in trouble for armed robbery and solicitation of murder.Â  I don’t know what happened, but it was sad to learnÂ that a former classmateÂ has to wait until 2038 to be considered for parole.Â  I don’t know the full story of what he did; I just hope no one was hurt.

So anyway, because it was easy enough to find these people and information regarding the poor choices they made in life leading to what they’re doing nowadays, I think it would be a fruitful endeavor to begin a siteÂ like cellmates.com, if it doesn’t already exist – a reunion-type site that lists the dark and depressing updates aboutÂ our classmates.Â  I knowÂ some of the readers of this blog have their own stories they could contribute, so come on, no holds “barred”.Â  Publish (brief versions of) your interesting stories in my comments.Â  I have more; these are just the ones I have links to right now.

### Comments

# Christmas With The Kranks

Ok, going in, I knew it would be a terrible movie.Â  When [Christmas With The Kranks](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0388419) came out in the movie theater, it was met with terrible reviews from critics, and its imdb.com rating is a measley 4.7 with over 7,000 votes.Â  So why did I want to watch it?Â  Two reasons – I wanted to watch a Christmas movie on Christmas Eve, and I had read *Surviving Christmas* –Â  one of the rare John Grisham books that isn’t legal fiction, “Surviving Christmas” months ago – I always like to see books come to life on the screen.Â  Well, ok, not always…Â  because Christmas With The Kranks was simply awful – even worse than I thought.

The story is about a couple of empty-nesters who decide to skip Christmas since their daughter will be out of town.Â  They plan to take a tropical cruise and go about getting fake tans and whatnot to prepare for their unconventional holiday celebration.Â  Not such a big deal, you’d think.Â  Except that the Krank’s live on a street that is famous for their Christmas decorations.Â  Every house is expected to put a Frosty the Snowman decoration on their roof every year, and so when the Kranks are preparing to leave town without doing so, the neighborhood is abuzz.Â  That’s it.

The novel was alright; it was a fun little story, and although it wasn’t one of the best books, I did get all the way through it.Â  But I can’t say the same about the movie.Â  We turned it off in the middle and I can’t say I missed the rest.Â  My main problem with it was the casting of Tim Allen as Luther Krank.Â  While reading the book, I kept picturing Luther as a crabby senior citizen, but Tim Allen made Luther more angry than crabby.Â  In the novel, John Grisham does a nice job setting scene of a small, close-knit community, but all that is lost in the movie, especially with Tim Allen involved.Â  I was shocked to read on imdb.com that John Grisham has casting approval rights for movies based on his novels.Â  Maybe that was established *because* of Christmas With The Kranks.Â  Well anyway, that’s enough time wasted on this movie.Â  From what I hear, it’s not the best example of a John Grisham book, but worth a try, I suppose, if you have lots of spare time and like to read.Â  On the other hand, I wouldn’t recommend the movie to anyone.

### Comments

**Entertainment News! | Eminem Disses Mariah Carey**[...] Christmas With The Kranks | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**Big Family Christmas » Blog Archive » Christmas With The Kranks | My Food Chain Gang**[...] unknown wrote an interesting post today onChristmas With The Kranks | My Food Chain GangHere’s a quick excerptOk, going in, I knew it would be a terrible movie. When Christmas With The Kranks came out in the movie theater, it was met with terrible reviews from. [...]  
**jamiahsh**Makes 4 Christmas seem like Citizen Kane.

# It WAS A Very Merry Christmas, Thank You!

Our Christmas was wonderful, thanks for asking!Â  Our ~~8~~ 9 year old and our 2 year old were awake first on Christmas morning, and they crept downstairs to see if Santa came.Â  He did, and surprisingly, they waited very patiently until Mom and Dad were ready to roll out of bed to open their presents.Â  Christmas Eve was a late night, and because we weren’t really being pestered, we stayed in bed until about 9:45 Christmas morning.Â  After that, it took A LOT of prodding to wake our middle daughter who is 4.Â  Believe it or not, even telling her to check if Santa came didn’t do the trick…Â  she was apparently tired!Â  Like I said, late night last night.

Finally she was awake and excited, so then the kids opened their gifts, and they were really happy with what Santa had picked out.Â  So happy, in fact, that they were really good during the day, and we had few fights amongst the natives – a rarity in our house.Â  Their favorite toys seem to be these large inflatable balls with handles that they sit on and bounce.Â  I guess Santa didn’t realize how annoying it would be to have 3 little girls bouncing all around the house 

So what did I get?Â  My husband got me a game based upon our favorite tv show, The Office.Â  A good friend had gotten us another board game (with a dvd as a big part of the game) based upon the show, and so now we have both games – the complete set.Â  I love it.Â  I was looking forward to playing it all day, and it’s easy to see that the game is REALLY cool.Â  It’s different than your average trivia game; lots of added elements, making it a stand-out favorite board game.Â  But then again, we feel the show is a stand-out favorite.Â  My husband also got me a Snuggie – ever heard of them?Â  Snuggies are big blankets with sleeves, essentially.Â  That way you can do many a chore (or even fun things, like changing channels on the remote or blogging) while still being covered by a blanket.Â  We’re waiting for mine to arrive, and once they do, they will be an especially appreciated gift since our electric bill *doubled* between last month and this month – must be all those space heaters we were using to supplement our giant furnace because we thought our gas bill was too high.Â  Just wait til we get that bill in the mail this month… ugh.Â  At least it didn’t come on Christmas Eve like I was sure it would.

So what did I get for my wonderful hubby?Â  It’s lame I know, but months ago while I was still pregnant with our son, I found a picture frame that says “I get my good looks from my Daddy”.Â  I liked it immediately and bought it, and it’s ironic that at that time, I thought we were going to have a baby girl instead of a boy which would make more sense when it comes to the photo frame.Â  But then we found out we were indeed having a boy, and so I was able to give my husband the picture frame with a picture of our son inside.Â  A good gift, but I had wanted to get him something else.

I almost asked a friend to get something for him from me.Â  My husband usually wants-for-nothing, but this year, he did spy a few gadgets for his wish list.Â  Since he’s usually with me when we’re shopping at the stores that carry the items, I was going to ask a favor of someone to pick them up.Â  But alas, my plan was foiled when I told my husband (and the captain of our family finances) I need some money for Christmas shopping.Â  He basically vetoed the idea of me getting him anything, and I was under the impression it was mutual, that we were going to focus on the kids this year and not get each other anything.Â  But he sneakily got me some really good gifts, and I’m not going to let this happen again – I’ll be squirreling away some money here and there until I have enough to buy him a birthday present in June – HA!

Hope you and yours had a very Merry Christmas!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**There you go... get him something tremendous for his birthday ;) I remember having a Mickey Mouse bouncy ball. Wonder why they don't make them adult sized. That would be fun. Somehow, I remember mine being even bigger than the girls'. Glad yo had a great day. I still can't believe your four year-old was in bed until after 10... or that you were able to sleep in that late. We would have been too impatient.

# Greenstuff

Ok, I have to issue a warning for the following post because admittedly, it’s in poor taste.Â  And I usually try toÂ write a family-friendly blog, but the following video has some non-family friendly content.Â  If your kids are anything like mine, they come running when they hear audio coming from theÂ computer.Â  Too many fun forwards andÂ youtubes of the DoodleBops and Barney, I guess.Â  ButÂ shoo the kids away andÂ consider yourself warned.Â  ThoseÂ of youÂ who find sloppy drunkenÂ behavior funny should proceed to watch the followingÂ video.Â  It’s a version of the 12 Days of Christmas sung by the late comedienne Fay McKay.Â  In the song, she replaces all of the presents from the true love with gifts of liquor, leading to her being completely trashed by the song’s end.Â  I heard it when I was a kid; they used to play it on the radio.Â  And although I didn’t understand the scope of what was happening, I knew that the singer was acting goofy andÂ it was fun for a kid.Â  So my sister and I called the song “Greenstuff” (you’ll know why when you hear the song), and we made a cassette tape of it.Â  Oops – I didn’t mean to lose all youÂ readers who are under the age of twenty (a WHAT tape?).Â  On the other hand, maybe you shouldn’t be watching this video if you’re not old enough to legally enjoy alcohol responsibly.Â  Thanks to the modern inventionÂ called youtube, I was able to dig up the recording of the song I enjoyed so much as a kid.Â  Maybe I shouldn’t admit that, it seems kind of strange…

The only video I could findÂ of Fay McKay performing the song was audio/video mismatched, if you know what I mean.Â  The audio didn’t match the way her lips were moving, and it was annoying, so I’mÂ reluctantly postingÂ a different version insteadÂ  – one with a slide show that matches the lyrics.Â  Some of the add-ins are funny, while I failed to see the humor in others.Â  And I don’t know why they showed the woman on the table so many times…Â  maybe she is someone that knows the youtube poster – how embarrassing.Â  How does something like that happen anyway?Â  See for yourself, if you dare, and don’t forget to listen to the song:

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Wonderfully twisted videos both :D  
**taylhis**a bit... Chris said, "Is that what they've been reduced to? Playing in a garage?"  
**derek**Apparently so- looking their age, aren't they? :)  
**taylhis**Is that the REAL Twisted Sister?  
**derek**If we're on this sort of thing, Twisted Sister apparently recently released [their own version](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grwP8QvI1jY)... :mrgreen:  
**justj**That was just plain wrong... And I loved it. ;)

# Merry Christmas!

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/christmas-2008-010.jpg)

***Merry Christmas!***

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/christmas-eve-2008-009.jpg)  
We hope this Christmas Blogcard finds you and yours happy, safe, and healthy.Â  We want to thank all of you who thought of our family this year and sent us the wonderful Christmas cards.Â  I was going to send out Christmas e-cards with pictures of the kids this year, but somehow time got away from me (somehow?Â  I have 4 kids!) and wouldn’t you know it – it’s already Christmas and we never even got our family Christmas picture taken!Â  So I gathered the kids, put them in front of the Christmas tree, and viola!Â  Our family’s 2008 version of Christmas cards, and this is the fastest way to make sure we sent our Christmas wishes before the holiday is over.  
As for our family, 2008 was busy but great.Â  The kids are doing wonderfully!Â  Taylor just turned 9 and really likes 3rd grade.Â  She loves to read and is a very talented artist.Â  Sammie is 4 and in preschool.Â  She is learning to write her name and loves Barbies.Â  Disney is 2 and still very sweet.Â  She loves to play with baby dolls and play-doh.Â  Baby Christopher has learned to jump in his bouncy seat, and he loves to use his hands, especially to grab his toes.  
God Bless everyone and we wish you and your family a truly happy holiday season, as well as the rest of the year, of course!Â  We are so lucky to have such wonderful friends and family!Â  Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
Love,  
Chris, Lisa, Taylor, Sammie, Disney, and Christopher

### Comments

**Aunt Deb**happy new year  
**Aunt Deb**Lisa, Chris and family, Good to hear from you. Sounds like you have a wonderful busy family. Thanks for the e-card. All the girls were home for Christmas, unfortunately, Em could only stay 36 hours. They drove in horrible weather. Everyone is great here. Have a Wonderful Christmas time and A Happy New Year. Aunt Deb, Uncle Bill, Christine, Patrick, Audrey, Katharine, Bridgette, Emily & Josh.  
**Shirley**Merry Christmas from rainy Cleveland! It's Christmas morning and the gifts have been opened and all is wonderful here. See you back in Bryan soon!  
**justj**Joining in on the best wishes for the Christmas season.  
**Chrismas Sale Online » Blog Archive » Merry Christmas! | My Food Chain Gang**[...] unknown wrote an interesting post today onMerry Christmas! | My Food Chain GangHere’s a quick excerptMerry Christmas! We hope this Christmas Blogcard finds you and yours happy, safe, and healthy. We want to thank all of you who thought of our family this. [...]  
**Denver**Thanks for including me in your 'extended' family. Merry Christmas and Happy Hannukah. (That last one is for Chris, my Jewish brother!)  
**derek**Merry Christmas, and thanks for the photo! Printing now. :)  
**jamiahsh**Thank you all. You guys are truly the best. These past few months have been really tough and you have been there for me... esp. with the trip south. Thank you so much. I love you all alot. Here's to a Happy Holiday season and an even better New Year. see you friday.  
**Chris**Merry Christmas everybody! And Merry Christmas Lisa. I love you!!

# Who Needs Pockets?

Given my fear of frogs, no matter how illogical it is, this video terrified me to the very core.Â  I couldn’t even watch the whole thing, and what I did see was watched with my feet picked up off the floor – just too creepy.Â  But I still hope none of the buggers were injured in the filming of this video from youtube called “Who Needs Pockets?”

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**derek**I think we're safe from that treatment- unless a rhinoceros starts wearing shorts. :D Agreed, poor frogs.  
**justj**All I can say is Poor Frogs.  
**jamiahsh**I can think of a few other little girls who would do that.

# Front Page News

My husband, aka Admin, logged into my computer to check stats, and never logged out, so my spellbinding account of unusualhotelsoftheworld.com was posted as an admin post and is now on the front page of tangents.org!Â  Just wanted to let you know what happened.Â  [Check it out here](http://tangents.org/2008/12/23/i-feel-like-i-am-already-sleeping-in-an-igloo/) – it’s called, “I Feel Like I Already Am Sleeping In An Igloo”.

### Comments

**justj**One should never leave an Admin Account unattended. All sorts of trouble could occur. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Yes, read it and did not make me any warmer sorry to say. But I think a hotel underwater would be interesting... now all that is needed is to win the lottery to afford the night's stay ;)

# I'm The Only One Professional Enough...

“…in this room, that I know of, to carry this force.” says the DEA agent teaching a class on gun safety seconds before he *shoots himself in the foot!* Seriously, this really happened, and it’s kind of funny.Â  Well, maybe that’s the wrong word to use since someone **did** get injured…Â  But admit it, the irony of the situation is tremendously thick.Â  And if *he’s* the most qualified person in that room to handle the weapon he accidentally *shot* himself with, how scary is that?!?

I consider it a small miracle that no one was seriously injured.Â  Obviously this guy should not have been teaching this class, and I would bet that he was **not** the only person in the room “professional enough to carry that force”.Â  But why was the gun loaded in a classroom in the first place?Â  And why was there at least one little kid in the class?Â  You can see someone carrying her out of the classroom near the end of the video.Â  I don’t really know what else to say, so watch it for yourself…Â  and don’t worry if you surprise yourself with a chuckle – I don’t think it means you’re twisted or anything…Â  just a healthy dose of irony.Â  If I was not writing this post so close to bedtime, I would use the opportunity for jokes on puns aplenty about shooting oneself in the foot, putting one’s foot in mouth…Â  oh, too easy, but not when I’m this tired!Â  Enjoy, and note how the guy is able to keep his composure and regain control of the classroom, all while being in tremendous pain and presumably bleeding all over the floor – he finally just limps on out of the classroom!

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**justj**This happened, a few years ago, to one of our local police officers. Sure am glad I get my police service from the county Sheriff, and not the town of my mailing address.  
**derek**Interesting. He said the gun was unloaded and even pulled the trigger once to prove it. Was it loaded with the safety on then? Then he took the safety off? Ouch.  
**jamiahsh**What is it lately... our out-going president having shoes thrown at him and now this.

# Awesome Anthem Of Moms Everywhere

Apparently while people are on Christmas break – off work or just home with their kids – they like to send email forwards.Â  I’ve gotten a burst of them lately, and 2 caught my eye so I will share them.Â  The first is another personality quiz, but it had some different questions than ones in the past, so I’m posting it.Â  Second is a really cute youtube video of a lady doing a marvellous job singing a song with which every parent will identify.Â  She is very talented, and it’s a good performance.Â  Not only do the lyrics ring true, but the woman has a niceÂ voice, and she just performs the song very well.Â  It’s amazing to me that she was able toÂ memorize all those words – they come awfully fast!

Here’s a copy ofÂ the personality quiz email with the answers I wrote:

A little fun thing to do.  
44 ODD Things about you! If you opened this, FILL IT  
OUT! Learn 44 things About your friends, and let them  
learn 44 things about you! Send back to Me and to  
several more friends !!

1. Do you like blue cheese? yes  
2. Have you ever smoked? yes  
3. Do you own a gun? NO!  
4. What flavor of Kool Aid was your favorite? mountain berry  
5. Do you get nervous before doctor appointments? yes  
6. What do you think of hot dogs ? like em – especially Vienna Beef or Nathans  
7. Favorite Christmas movie? Elf  
8. Favorite thing to drink in the morning:water  
9. Can you do push ups? barely  
10. Favorite piece of jewelry? my wedding and engagement rings  
12. Do you have A.D.D.? I just might  
13. What is one trait you hate about yourself?Â  that I can be high strung  
14. Middle name ?Â  Marie  
15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment. My Grandma’s Christmas village is cooler than the one they’re showing on the news – I can’t wait until Christmas – I can’t wait until Chris gets off work  
17. Current worry? money  
18. Current hate right now? arrogant, self-absorbed people  
19. Favorite place to be?Â  home  
20. How did you bring in the New Year? with friends  
22. Name three people who might complete this.Â  Jamy, Megan, Mary Beth  
23. Do you own slippers?Â  no – I wear imitation Crocs around the house  
24. What shirt are you wearing? a red sweatshirt with snowflakes on it  
25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? yes – but only in the summer  
26. Can you whistle? yes  
27. Favorite color?Â  green  
28. Would you be a pirate? I’ve got a parrot…Â  but I don’t really know what this question means.Â  I would not hijack ships and steal from people, so I guess not  
29. What songs do you sing in the AM. Country  
30. Favorite girl’s name?Â  Taylor  
31. Favorite boy’s name? Christopher  
32. What’s in your pocket right now? a piece of Barbie fake dog poop – don’t ask  
33. Last thing that made you laugh? My girls seeing their baby brother jumping in his bouncy  
34. What vehicle do you drive? minivan  
35. Worst injury you have ever had? emergency cesarean with a blood transfusion  
36.Â  Favorite Season?Â  Spring  
37. How many TV’s do you have in your house? 6  
38. Who is your loudest friend? Lisa H. I guess  
39. Do you have any pets? 2 dogs, a parrot, and one hibernating ladybug  
40. Does someone have a crush on you?Â  does marriage count as a crush?  
41. What is your favorite book? Monkeys on the Interstate by Jack Hanna  
42. Do you collect anything?Â Â  board games, Legos, Cubs stuff, local historical memorabilia and books  
43. Favorite sports team? Chicago Cubs / Bears  
44. What song do you want played at your funeral?Â  Whatever other people want to listen to, I guess…Â  it’s not like I’ll be enjoying it!

And here is the Mom’s Anthem video:

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**WOW... justj and I are alike in terms of dr. appts. I loved the video. "I'll thank you to not roll your eyes at me". 1. Do you like blue cheese? no 2. Have you ever smoked? only when the part called for it 3. Do you own a gun? NO! 4. What flavor of Kool Aid was your favorite? tropical punch 5. Do you get nervous before doctor appointments? depends on what it is for 6. What do you think of hot dogs ? like em 7. Favorite Christmas movie? Miracle on 34th Street (1947) 8. Favorite thing to drink in the morning? Orange Juice 9. Can you do push ups? sure 10. Favorite piece of jewelry? my class ring is the only piece I have 12. Do you have A.D.D.? never been tested... so couldn't say for sure 13. What is one trait you hate about yourself? procrastination 14. Middle name ? Lynn 15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment. Going out tonight to spread some Christmas cheer, Thank Elizabeth for wrapping my presents. Soap Operas are no good :( 17. Current worry? no worries 18. Current hate right now? the nearly sub-zero temps 19. Favorite place to be? on stage 20. How did you bring in the New Year? with friends 22. Name three people who might complete this. Terri, Courney, Megan 23. Do you own slippers? Pluto ones 24. What shirt are you wearing? The Clinic Sweatshirt with an OSU shirt underneath 25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? I'm sure I would 26. Can you whistle? let's see... Elizabeth says yes 27. Favorite color? red or blue both very close 28. Would you be a pirate? ARRRGH... That I would, Matey. Yo, Ho, Yo, Ho. A Pirate's Life for Me 29. What songs do you sing in the AM. Sing in the AM? You must be kidding... unless I'm playing a game that calls for it and it is after midnight 30. Favorite girl's name? Cruella... how's that for a name 31. Favorite boy's name? Elizabeth (niece) says Derek (Whoa, baby) 32. What's in your pocket right now? my empty wallet 33. Last thing that made you laugh? Elizabeth saying that her favorite boy's name is Derek 34. What vehicle do you drive? Pontiac Sunfire 35. Worst injury you have ever had? punching the front door window window with my fist 36. Favorite Season? Autumn 37. How many TV's do you have in your house? 5 38. Who is your loudest friend? Mandi... now if I just knew where she was 39. Do you have any pets? no 40. Does someone have a crush on you? wouldn't it be nice 41. What is your favorite book? To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee (her only novel... amazing) 42. Do you collect anything? Superman memorabilia, books, movies 43. Favorite sports team? New York Yankees 44. What song do you want played at your funeral? All the Small Things (whatever that is... Elizabeth's request)  
**justj**Here you go... 1. Do you like blue cheese? Don't know, never had it. 2. Have you ever smoked? Yes, a pipe 3. Do you own a gun? yes 4. What flavor of Kool Aid was your favorite? lemonade 5. Do you get nervous before doctor appointments? Depends on what the appointment is for. 6. What do you think of hot dogs ? Want them swimming in Chili sauce 7. Favorite Christmas movie? "A Muppet Christmas Carol" 8. Favorite thing to drink in the morning: Coffee 9. Can you do push ups? sure 10. Favorite piece of jewelry? none 12. Do you have A.D.D.? I don't think so. 13. What is one trait you hate about yourself? procrastination 14. Middle name ? Yes 15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment. These questions, It's cold out, what time do I have to pick up the youngest? 17. Current worry? What is the driving going to be like for Christmas 18. Current hate right now? Don't hate, isn't good for me. 19. Favorite place to be? home 20. How did you bring in the New Year? with tears 22. Name three people who might complete this. you're guess is a good as mine 23. Do you own slippers? Yes 24. What shirt are you wearing? a green/beige plaid 25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? Don't know, never slept on satin 26. Can you whistle? Sure 27. Favorite color? Royal Blue 28. Would you be a pirate? Arrrh! 29. What songs do you sing in the AM. I don't sing 30. Favorite girlâ€™s name? Sarah 31. Favorite boyâ€™s name? Paul 32. Whatâ€™s in your pocket right now? a cell phone 33. Last thing that made you laugh? A gift exchange at work 34. What vehicle do you drive? Crew Cab midsized truck 35. Worst injury you have ever had? Minibike accident, bad scrapes and burns, but could have been worse by inches. 36. Favorite Season? Fall 37. How many TVâ€™s do you have in your house? 1 that works, 1 that doesn't 38. Who is your loudest friend? I'm too much of a gentleman to say 39. Do you have any pets? 1 dog and a bunch of Chinchillas 40. Does someone have a crush on you? If I do, would someone tell me? I wouldn't know. 41. What is your favorite book? The Lord of the Rings series 42. Do you collect anything? Books, Indiana Jones stuff, computers and parts. 43. Favorite sports team? Detroit Tigers 44. What song do you want played at your funeral? I don't care.

# KidsSpeak

Kids say the darndest things, as we all know – they even made a tv show about it.Â  Here is a list of some of the cute mispronounciations my kids have made and their ages when they said them.

“ah-cro-poose” saidÂ by Sammie, age 3.Â  Translation: octopus

“Taylor lelled at me” said by Sammie, age 4.Â  Translation: lelled = yelled

“Beeber” said by Disney, age 2.Â  Translation: Christopher (her baby brother).Â  This has actuallyÂ led to Christopher having nicknames of Beeber and Beebs.

“Kipper” said by Disney, age 2.Â  Translation: Christopher.Â  She moved out of the Beeber phase and now calls him Kipper.

“may-sa-peer” said by Sammie, age 3.Â  Translation: disappear

“tormado” said by Sammie, age 4.Â  Translation: tornado.Â  Look closely at how I typed the word – she replaces the “n” with an “m” sound.

“ith ith” said by Taylor, age 1.Â  Translation: kitty.

“diaper call off!”Â said by Disney, age 2.Â  Translation: Help!Â  My diaper is falling off!

“gggg” said by Christopher, age 5 months.Â  Translation: various.Â  I just wanted to put his soundsÂ in this list too.

### Comments

**derek**:D  
**taylhis**yes, and Art Linkletter before Cosby, In the old reruns with Linkletter, you can see him mouthing the words that the kids are supposed to say. Kids Memorize The Darndest Things?  
**derek**Bill Cosby, wasn't it? Host of Kids Say...?

# Clap, Clap, Slap The Chest...

What IS this?Â  It’s something that is popular among tween girls lately.Â  They walk around doing some kind of ritual that involves clapping and slapping their chests, among other things.Â  I didn’t really think much of it, until my daughter’s 9th birthday party, and there were other kids here doing it.Â  When my 2-year-old picked it up, it became annoying andÂ I decided to take action by writing a blog post and looking it up on the internet.Â Â  I asked my daughter if it’s from a movie or a tv show or something, but she didn’t seem to know where it came from.Â  When I tried to look it up on the internet, I just got instructions for other games of this type and didn’t see anything about any sort of fad that’s sweeping our tweens.Â  So is anyone reading this whose kids do the same thing, or is this a NW Ohio thing?Â  I’d like to know where it came from so I can decide if it’s a behavior I want all of my kids duplicating.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**I haven't noticed it, either. And I have one teenage (NO) niece and one approaching. Local thing?  
**derek**Kids and weird fads... Sorry, I can't be of help here except to say I haven't noticed it myself, but then I am Mr. Unobservant sometimes.

# You Delivered My Pizza, But Please Don't Watch Me Eat It

We had a great weekend, even though the weather on Sunday was horrid – so cold my Christmas teddy bear got frozen to the window!Â  Friday night was an all-night work session to finish up the planning and organization of our community theater’s awards show, which isÂ where we wentÂ Saturday night.Â  But first on Saturday afternoon, it was a birthday celebration for our oldest who turned 9 on Sunday with a MUCH anticipated visit from family who live out of state.Â  We had a great time catching up and watching the kids open their birthday and Christmas presents, and the kids got to have a sleepover in the hotel with Grandma, Papa, and Uncle BudÂ while we went to the awards show.Â  The awards show was lots of fun, as always, and I got to watch 2 very good friends win much-deserved achievment awards.Â  Congratulations, guys!

It was lots of fun putting the show together, even if we didn’t have much time to do so due to last minute notice from the theater.Â  It was fun and also rewarding to watch the individual skits, shorts, songs, and awards presentations start as ideas on paper andÂ then watchÂ when they came together as a whole.Â  It’s also a fun excuse to get everyone together, and it’s always nice to see long-lost busy friends who are unable to get together but for this one night.Â  It might be fun to produce the awards show again next year, but then again, I’d love to have my best friend sitting beside me to watch them because I missed him this year – even though he did make an excellent host.Â  If there are a few individuals in the theater community who have a hard time because they don’t win awards, then let them have their hard time.Â  There is talk of cancelling this awards show, and I would be very sad if that happened.Â  It’s definitely a whole ton of fun for most of us, and I really don’t think we should let a few individuals ruin it for everyone.Â  That’s all I’m going to say on the subject for now, but expect to hear more from me once this very topic is discussed at the next production board meeting.

Sunday we had major Grandma-let-down, and because we didn’t want our oldest daughter to be depressed on her actual birthday, we let her have a friend sleep over.Â  During football season, we usually set aside Sundays for low-key stuff, like watching football, reading newspapers, and blogging, but we always end up with crazy kids so it’s never exactly low-key.Â  But I don’t usually cook dinner on Sundays, and today we ordered pizza.Â  Five minutes after the pizza was delivered, we noticed the delivery guy was still parked out front and that heÂ was standing outside ofÂ his car.Â  Turns out, he had locked himself out of the car, and so we offered him a warm place to wait for his ride.Â  Since the temperature outside has been hovering around 0Â° all day, with wind chills near -20Â°, he gratefully accepted.Â  And he stood in our front hall for almost 30 minutes!Â  If he were outside, he would have frozen to death.Â  But it did feel a little awkward eating the pizza he deliveredÂ while he stood there.Â  We offered him a seat in the living room, but he opted to stand in the entryway, and I’m kind of glad because at least we were then eating out of his view.Â  Our 2-year-old kept asking about “the pizza guy”, and thenÂ he became scary to her – “I scared pizza guy”Â – probably cuz he was just standing there, doing nothing, and she’s never seen anyone do that in our front hall before.Â  But finally his ride came, thank goodness, and he left.Â  I wonder if he gets paid for the time he was standing in our house?Â  I wonder who pays for the gas that was used in his running car while he was waiting for his ride?Â  Should we have offered him some pizza?Â  It was kind of a weird situation, but it does make for interesting blog fodder.Â  Of course it had to happen on the coldest day of the year – that guy has a new story to tell!

### Comments

**Megan**Well I guess it was a good thing that I went to go get our pizza that we ordered tonight. I would have had it delivered but I really wanted to get out of the house, where I stayed all day because of the bitter cold, and I didn't want to fork out the extra bucks for a tip. (Esp. if the delivery guy is cute, they get extra;) It was so nice of you for what you guys did. However, I can see the awkwardness.  
**derek**Speaking of, just imagine my sense of awkwardness when I, a 30something male, had to ask several parents for permission to call their 10/11yo kids for church ministry as a new way of keeping contact with the kids in our small groups. Most said yes, but one rescinded the permission after I actually talked to his son. Yeah, I would be a little uncomfortable too as the parent. I'm glad you invited Jesus in (for what you do to the least- I would presume this to mean all and not just the lowest of the low- of His people you do for Him). :) Blessings on you.  
**taylhis**Oops... maybe I should have erred on the side of nice. But then again, it's much different to invite a stranger into your home when you have kids.  
**justj**I would have offered the pizza if I bought it, but if I were the pizza guy, I would have declined the offer. I actually know I would do this, but our pizza guy didn't decline. I made a very good college friend by doing that. By offering him a few slices, when he had car trouble, we would get free pizzas on occasion. Pays to be nice.

# Toy Culling

A few weeks ago, our kids were chronically misbehaving.Â  Our oldest, a tween,Â was sassing back and saying “no” too much, her younger sister (the “spirited” one) was throwing lots of tantrums and trying to cause trouble with her sisters, and our youngest daughter was constantly upset and insecure about the continuous chaos in the house.Â  Desperate times call for desperate measures, so one day while the oldest kids were at school and the younger ones were sleeping, my husband took off work for anÂ afternoonÂ of “toy culling”.Â  This is a drastic discipline measure we only use in emergency situations.Â  It is time-consuming and intensiveÂ laborÂ for the parents, but well worth it, at least in our house.

ToyÂ culling consists of us goingÂ into the girls’Â room (the three oldest girls share one big room, and our baby boy isn’t yet old enough to cause trouble) and taking out every toy.Â  We leave the tv, computer with educational games, books, and the clothes and board games in the closet.Â  Everything else goes – dressup clothes, doll clothes, dolls, stuffed animals,Â all the little miscellaneous toys that can really junk up a child’s room quickly, etc.Â  If you have lots of time, you can sort it all by what you want to keep and organize the rest, but we are very busy people and so we just took all their junk and put it in our son’s room for now.Â  He’s a baby who wakes in the night so he’s still in our room.Â  When it’s time to move him into his room, we’ll have to clean it out obviously, but for now it was a means to an end of the horrible behavior of the girls.Â  We leave the board games, and they know that they take one out and put it away when they’re done, just like the books that are left.Â  If the rules aren’t followed, anything that’s left on the floor in subsequent daysÂ gets culled.Â  You need to check their room everyday, and it’sÂ **imperitive** that you follow through with rule-enforcing.Â  And for some reason, this process really works.Â  I don’t know what it is…Â  PerhapsÂ a feng shui effect where the much more pleasant ambience of the room and the *mucho* extra space is what leads to the kids being in better moods and hence,Â less trouble and more obedient.Â  It could be the fact that there are less toys over which to fight.Â  Maybe they’re happier not having it constantly hanging over their heads that they’re going to have to clean their room.Â  But I don’t care what the reason is, the toy culling has worked wonderfully the 3-5 times we’ve had to set aside a chunk of time to do it.Â  My kids are now putting their dirty laundry in the hampers that are provided, and their trash is going into garbage cans.Â  Also, their room is staying clean, and I don’t have to worry about it staying that way because they don’t have anything with which to mess it up!Â  And, as the behavior improves, they can earn their toys back – you don’t have to spend money to get them any special reward PLUS the kids feel senses of accomplishment = WIN/WIN.Â  Toy culling proves that less is more, and it helpsÂ put a damper onÂ the sense of entitlement that can cloud the good attitude of even a generally well-behaved child.

I think I first read about the method in a parenting column in the newspaper.Â  I’m not sure which expert gets the credit, but I do know that I highly recommend toy culling!Â  And oh yes, early December is a perfect time to do this – makes room for the burst of new things they might receive for the holidays!

### Comments

**derek**Culling- makes me think of one of the shows I watch, Stargate: Atlantis. Only it's not toys that get culled. Let me just leave it at that lest there be nightmares... Sounds like a good tool for the parental arsenal. I don't think I ever had toys culled, but I remember my aunt telling me how she would throw her kids' coats outside if they left them on the floor.  
**justj**I did toy culling too, but sometimes they never got them back. If they didn't miss it, it wasn't too important. Unless it was Barbie shoes on the floor (any other small toy) If I stepped on it, goodbye. I had to pull one of the Barbie earrings out of my foot once, so this was my way of handling small toys on the floor. For some reason, it never worked on the oldest. Her imagination was just too good, she didn't need any toys to have fun.  
**taylhis**Ah yes... it does seem to work on every kid. But your parents let themselves down on the follow-thru... not easy to make sure the kids stay out of the 'forbidden' zone, as you well know, especially when there's 4 of them! They tend to gang up on the parents!  
**jamiahsh**I remember a similar process in which a room full of baseball cards were put into large garbage bags (sometimes 5 heavy duty size). Not mine but those of my roommate growing up. It worked for a while, but within a wee or two, they would be right back where they were. Mom would go up while we were in school and spend the day shoveling.

# Please Come Home For Christmas

It’s my favorite contemporary classic Christmas tune, yet I can’t find the original version that made me fall in love with the song, “Please Come Home for Christmas”.Â  I spent much ofÂ yesterday evening downloading different samplesÂ of the song; it seems every famous recording artist from the past few decades covered it.Â  The musical acts that were sampled were very diverse: Aaron Neville, Sawyer Brown, Bon Jovi, Vonda Sheperd, Gary Allan, the Drifters, Lonestar, Toby Keith… Â Twenty renditions later and I still haven’t found the originalÂ version I heard – my favorite one to date.Â  I heard it in the 80’s or early 90’s, and it was the most popular version they would play all the time on the radio; country and easy listening / rock.Â  It’s sung by a male artist or group…Â  if anyone has any suggestions of who it might be, I might be up to fishing through a few more versions of the song.Â  That is, unless any of them are as bad as Toby Keith’s.Â  And this is coming from a country music fan!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Ah, yes... I know that phase. Thank goodness for the occasional visitors who come around..  
**Women and Their Nutrition.very Important to All of Us! | Diet and Weight loss Information**[...] Please Come Home For Christmas | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**taylhis**It's worse than running around - he wants to be held all the time and cries ant time he's put down.  
**jamiahsh**Christopher can run around already?! Or did you inherit another rambunctious kid to run around?  
**taylhis**Thanks everyone for your help - the Eagles version is very good, still not the one I was looking for, but definitely a favorite. I haven't had a chance to find Charles Brown's version yet though... today is a snow day, and it WAS going to be a catchup-on-work-clean-the-house-for-complany-tomorrow day, but now I have 4 rambunctious kids running around here - EEK!  
**Chrismas Sale Online » Blog Archive » Please Come Home For Christmas | My Food Chain Gang**[...] unknown wrote an interesting post today onPlease Come Home For Christmas | My Food Chain GangHere’s a quick excerptIt’s my favorite contemporary classic Christmas tune, yet I can’t find the original version that made me fall in love with the song, Please Come Home for. [...]  
**justj**Youtube Eagles version here http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiRgC3CA38g  
**justj**According to Wikipedia, it was originally recorded by blues singer Charles Brown in 1960. Found that here: http://www.artistdirect.com/nad/store/artist/album/0,,57692,00.html  
**jamiahsh**About the most popular version I can think of was The Eagles version, but Jon Bon Jovi also recorded it in the 80s.

# Road Kill Etiquette?

Saturday morning started off completely crazily of course – it was the morning of our oldest daughter’s ninth birthday party.Â  We were running around like lunatics, trying to take care of our own 4 kids and getting last minute details for the party worked out – we didn’t even know how many kids were going to show up since people refuse to RSVP, but that’s a separate post altoghter.Â  I had invited 25 kids – I know that sounds completely crazy, but my daughter’s school has a rule that you have to invite the entire class if you’re handing invitations out at school (understandable, don’tÂ wantÂ any kids’ feelings hurt)Â – so with the 17 in her class + Brownies + outside of school friends =Â meantÂ almost 30Â eight and nine-year-olds could have shown up at my house on Saturday.Â  But thank goodness, only about 6 or 7 showed up (theyÂ never stoodÂ still long enough for me to count them), which is another reason why I invite every kid my daughter knows – if we had only invited 5 kids, none of them would have been able to come probably.

So Saturday morning was hectic, to say the least.Â  Various kids were melting down in anticipation of the party, and adults were scrambling to decorate and plan games for somewhere between 5 and 25 kids.Â  My husband is brilliant and came up with an idea to do a craft, and luckily we have a pretty big supply of craft items.Â  So we threw a bunch of stuff together, and the kids made Christmas ornaments out of small red plastic cups and whatever else we found and had an awesome time doing so.Â  I was feeling much better after the craft idea was hatched, because it was almost time for kids to arrive and nowÂ everything was ready.Â  My dog started barking, so I went to the window to see what the barkingÂ was about this time.Â  Just as I got to the window, a squirrel ran out in front of a car and got hit – right in front of my house and my eyes – ugh.Â  What an awful way to start a birthday party – I’m really sensitive about those kind of things.Â  I wanted my husband to go out and move it – it was right in front of our house – but he refused.Â  I can’t say I blame him, I wasn’t going to go near it for anything, and I made him tie the party balloons out front.Â  But I knew at the very least, kids (especially boys) would be talking aboutÂ the dead squirrel for the entire party.Â  At least it wasn’t warm out, which would have increased the chances ofÂ the party spilling outside, further leading to more attentionÂ on the poor unlucky squirrel.Â  So I don’t know, what’s road kill / birthday party ettiquette?Â  Should we have removed the squirrel?Â  Never had to deal with THAT problem before.Â  And I hope I never have to again; it cast a terrible shadow over my day.Â  But as it happened,Â no need to worry about the squirrel – by party time he was flat as a pancake and no one noticed him.Â  By the end of the party, he had disappeared completely.Â  I’m just glad none of my kids had to see it happen; I think that would have been rough on them.Â  And I’m happy to report that the birthday party was a HUGE successÂ with several kids exclaiming that it was the best birthday party they had ever been to…Â  of course one of those comments came from a kid who was at his first birthday party ever.Â  ButÂ we did catch one kid lying aboutÂ calling her grandma to come pick her up.Â  She said grandma wasn’t home but it turns out that she hadÂ never dialed – I’m glad I’m well-informed of that trick now.Â  This same kid’s grandma didn’t show up last yearÂ until an hour after the party was over, hmmm…Â  As President George W. Bush would say – Fool me once, shame on…Â Â fool me twice….Â  if you get fooled, you’ll be fooled again.

Happy 9th Birthday Taylor!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Easy to see why it would be proclaimed as one of the best parties ever. Aside from the squirrel of course. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TAYLOR!!!!  
**derek**Be glad. That girl clearly likes to spend time with you (and T). :) We had a dead squirrel in fron of our house a couple of months ago. It really is sad to see animal life lost in unnatural ways. So why did the squirrel cross the road? I don't know, but not to play chicken with a car... :( Hmm. Did the chicken then play "squirrel" when it crossed the road...? :P

# Francis = MIA

It seems my new pet has gone missing.Â  Thank goodness I didn’t end up with something bigger, like a rat or a tortoise or something I wouldn’t really want crawling around the house unattended.Â  But I didn’t see this coming.Â  If anything, I thought my new ladybug friend would kick the bucket.Â  I wouldn’t have guessed that he’d vanish.Â  I don’t think the kids got to him; they wouldn’t have been able to keep something like that a secret for long.Â  But today when I went to check on Francis the ladybug he wasn’t in his cage.Â  And by the way, the name is after the ladybug inÂ A Bug’s Life, not my late GrandmotherÂ – that would be FrancEs and yes, I still want a daughter to have that name.

Yesterday at the thrift store I found a bug catcher for a quarter, so I bought it and put Francis in his new home last night.Â  Today when I went to check on him, he’s no where to be found in the bug catcher.Â  My husband and I both examined the lid, and we don’t think he escaped, so my guess is that he’s hiding in these little pockets in the bug catcher that hold the screws – people can’t see in them, but they’re ladybug-sized.Â  And I think ladybugs hibernate during the winter, so we might not be hearing from Francis for awhile if he crawled into one of those holes to hibernate…Â  Nuts, he had a bunch of visitors all lined up!

### Comments

**justj**Oh darn, I missed the newest pet. Francis, we will miss you, where ever you went.  
**jamiahsh**aww... :(

# Biological Treasure Trove

As a change of pace from the usual “the world is falling apart”-type articles about conservation, I decided to share the following article from CNN.com about an area of Asia called the Mekong Delta region.Â  Scientists are calling theÂ place a “biological treasure trove” because of its rich diversity of floraÂ and fauna.Â  1,068 species were discovered thereÂ between 1997 and 2007 alone; including 15 new species of mammals.Â  Fascinating stuff AND something to read that contains *promisingÂ*news about the statusÂ of the Earth, rather than the usual bad news and negativity.Â  Here is the article – I find the part about the hot pink cyanide-producing dragon millipede particularly interesting – there’s a picture of it on cnn.com, see the link at the bottom of this post.

***(CNN)*** *— A rat believed to be extinct for 11 million years, a spider with a foot-long legspan, and a hot pink cyanide-producing “dragon millipede” are among the thousand newly discovered species in the largely unexplored Mekong Delta region.   
The “dragon millipede” is among the 1,068 new species discovered in the Mekong Delta region.*

*more photos Â»Â  The region, including parts of Vietnam and five other countries, is home to 1,068 species found between 1997 and 2007, according to a World Wildlife Fund report released this week.*

*Some of the creatures were not lurking in fertile floodplains or tropical foliage.*

*A scientist visiting an outdoor restaurant was startled to see a Laotian rock rat among the nearby wildlife. The hairy, nocturnal, thick-tailed rat, which resembles a squirrel, had been thought for centuries to be extinct.*

*“There is a certain amount of shock because our scientists will sometimes see something that doesn’t fit anything they know,” said Dekila Chungyalpa, Director of the Fund’s Mekong Program. “They run through a catalogue of wildlife in their brain, asking themselves, ‘Have I seen this?'”*

*Perhaps a more startling discovery than the rat was a bright green pit viper scientists spotted slithering through the rafters of a restaurant in Khao Yai National Park in Thailand.*

*The Fund dubbed the Mekong a “biological treasure trove.” The organization’s report “First Contact in the Greater Mekong” says 519 plants, 279 fish, 88 frogs, 88 spiders, 46 lizards, 22 snakes, 15 mammals, four birds, four turtles, two salamanders and a toad were found.*

*Scientists are still trying to determine if they have uncovered thousands of new invertebrate species.*

*Scientists are discovering new species at a rate of two per week, said Chungyalpa, who said the reason for publishing the report now was twofold.  
  
“We realized that we should highlight these discoveries in part because of the legacy of war and conflict in the region,” she said. “There’s an urgency with the threat of development in the Mekong countries.”*

*A horned bovine found in 1991 living in the evergreen forests of the Annamite Mountains of Laos and Vietnam has not been found in recent years, she said.*

*Timber development and mining industries are encroaching. There are 150 large hydropower dams that have been constructed along the Mekong river, and another 150 are slated to be built, according to the Fund. Dams that can trap and kill fish are at different stages of planning in the Greater Mekong.*

*High variation in geography and climate zones that enabled species to flourish are now jeopardized by climate change, said Chungyalpa.*

*War is always a threat in countries touched by the Mekong River, particularly Burma. Also known as Myanmar, the largest country by geographical area in mainland Southeast Asia has been ravaged over the years by conflict, political instability and natural disaster.*

*This summer, for example, the United Nations reported that as many as 100,000 people were killed by a cyclone that hit Myanmar. The country’s ruling military junta blocked the outside world for weeks before allowing aid to flow into the region.*

*There are cultural obstacles to protecting rare species, too. Many restaurants serve them as food. Restaurants often have rickety bamboo floors that one can look through to see cages filled with exotic animals, Chungyalpa says. The more exotic the animal, the more status it often bestows on the person who consumes it.*

*“Reports [like the WWF’s] are important because these regions can be educated,” said Maureen Aung-Thwin, the director of The Burma Project, which is funded by the George Soros Foundation and supports local Indonesian organizations working toward an open society.   
“People are taking climate change more seriously and even the ruling junta have a forestry NGO. There are glimpses of hope,” said Aung-Thwin. “But it’s also a situation where someone could step forward and say ‘We don’t need this’ and cut it all down.”*

*WWF said it is working with governments and industry to plan the conservation of more than 231,000 square miles of forest and freshwater habitats that cross borders with all countries in the Greater Mekong.*

The preceding article was published on CNN.com.Â  To read the entire original article, [click here](http://www.cnn.com/2008/TECH/science/12/16/rat.mekong/index.html?iref=mpstoryview).

### Comments

**taylhis**oopsie! Thanks for drawing it to my attention - fixed!  
**jamiahsh**In your prologue, you stated the years being between 1997 and 2997... that's a long time ;)

# My New Pet

I’ve wanted a new pet for awhile, mostly since my cat passed away almost a year ago now.Â  What I want most is another cat – I love cats, and it would be the perfect type of pet for our household.Â  But unfortunately, I’m allergic to cats.Â  When I had my cat, it was a constant struggle to decide if I should pet her or not.Â  I always wanted to of course, but then I would itch for hours, my eyes would water, and sometimes I’d get hives.Â Â And, my allergy symptoms wereÂ worseÂ during my 4 pregnancies.Â  I just don’t want to go through that again – so no cat for us.Â  We have a Jack Russell Terrier mix, so any type of animal she’ll want to chase and bark at is out also – which means no rats, ferrets, small birds, etc.Â  So that leaves me with reptiles or bugs, I guess.Â  And the only reptile I’m interested in owningÂ is a tortoise.Â  Those can be kind of costly and I’m not entirely sure that my Jerk Russell Terrier mix won’t want to hunt it, so I’m going to hold off on the tortoise for a little bit.Â  Also complicating the situation is that I really don’t have any extra time to spend with a pet, so that limits my options even further.Â  So lately I’ve been in limbo, trying to decide what to get.Â  But the other day, a new pet sort of fell into my lap.

It’s a ladybug I found in the house – normally I’d let any bugs go outside that I find in the house, but it’s way too cold out for a ladybug, and IÂ don’tÂ want him toÂ suffer while he froze to death.Â  So I looked up what ladybugs eat, and I found out that their favorite food is aphids, which are an even smaller group of insects.Â  Knowing I couldn’t get any of those easily, I put a drop of honey in a little container with the ladybug.Â  He went over to it and started eating it!Â  So I put a little drop of water in there too, and he must have smelled that or something, because he left the honey and went over to the water – it was really interesting to watch.Â  He’sÂ survived in captivityÂ about a week now, and I have to say I’m getting a little attached to him as a pet.Â  It started out as just a fun little project,Â and I didn’t expect it to live more than a few days.Â  But he did, and I’ve named him Francis (like the ladybug from A Bug’s Life), and he is my secret pet – the kids don’t know about him.Â  If they did, he’d be dead already because my 4-year-oldÂ adores bugs and often smothers them with love – literally.Â  I think today I’ll go out and get Francis some grass for his container, because earlier when I fed him, he REFUSED to go back into his container!Â  I’m not kidding; he was sticking to my finger and just doing everything possible to not get locked back in there.Â  Finally, I put him on a Q-tip and cut it to fit in the container and locked him in.Â  I feel a little badly that I’ve kidnapped this ladybug, but I think I’m his only chance at life.Â  Outside, he’d freeze, and if I let him go into my house, I don’t think he’d be able to find food and water and he’d either die or go into hibernation until a kid or a dog got him.

So anyway, I guess I have my new pet.Â  I still don’t expect him to last very long, but for now it’s fun just taking care of an animal, especially since he’s my little secret.Â  If he’s still around in another week or so, I’ll take his picture and post it.Â  Say hi to Francis!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Hi Francis :)  
**derek**A fill-in pet then until Santa hopefully gets you something special for that Dec. 25 holiday. :)

# Indiana Jones-ette

Remember thatÂ CNN.com articleÂ I wrote about the unusual names?Â  The article spotlighted a little girl namedÂ Indiana Elizabeth Jones and her brother, Dow.Â  Well, this post is not going to be about them.

Rather, it’s an excuse to post a cute photo of my 4-year-old daughter wearing an Indiana Jones-like costume.Â  For the real buffs out there, I know it’s not exact, but it’s still cute…

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/december-kids-009.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Okay, I'll say it then- **Ohio** Jones... :mrgreen:  
**justj**Ok, just too cute. :)  
**jamiahsh**I've seen that outfit before if I'm not mistaken. I believe we found it in the forbidden room your daughters convinced me that it was ok to go into... oops. I think they had me try on the hat, but the jacket was a bit small.

# Now THAT Is One HORRIBLE Stage Manager

Wow – what happened here?Â  Due to a props department mix-up, an actor was doing a suicide scene with a real knife instead of a fake one.Â  Luckily, he wasn’t killed, but this qualifies as a bit more than a simple mistake, wouldn’t you say?Â  Perhaps I’ll think twice about offering to stage manage anything in the future – apparently there’s a lot at stake.Â  And for you actors who read this, how much trust do you have in your props people?Â  And how much will you trust them after reading something like this?

*From Time.com  
by Adam Smith  
Try this for an Agatha Christie plotline: performing on stage inside Vienna’s Burgtheater, one of Europe’s oldest and grandest, an actor takes a knife to his throat in his character’s desperate attempt at suicide. As audience applause fills the opulent theater, blood pours from the actor’s neck. But something’s not right. Buckling and staggering his way off stage, the actor collapses to the floor. That’s because the knife, and the harm that it’s done, are both tragically real.   
Unfortunately for Daniel Hoevels, a 30-year-old actor from Hamburg, those pages from a murder-mystery came to life last Saturday night during a performance at the Burgtheater of Mary Stuart, Friedrich Schiller’s play about the wretched life of Mary Queen of Scots. Rushed to the nearby Lorenz Bohler hospital having sliced through skin and fat tissue but thankfully not his main artery, Hoevels was fortunate to survive. “Just a little deeper,” said Wolfgang Lenz, a doctor who treated him, “and he would have been drowning in his own blood.”  
The police investigation into the calamity points more to a foul-up than foul play. Viennese police say they’re not probing the possibility of attempted murder; press reports had speculated a “jealous rival” could have had a hand in Hoevels’ injury. Instead, investigators are focusing on possible negligence within the props department of Hoevels’ Thalia Theater ensemble. According to local media, the company picked up the knife in Vienna to replace one brought from their Hamburg base that was then found to be defective. One possibility: that props staff forgot to blunt that new blade, which, police say, still had the price tag on it.  
Hoevels himself seems to have put the snafu behind him. “I am now absolutely fine again,” he told local media, “but I will always for the rest of my working life have a strange feeling about this scene.” After reprising the role Sunday, albeit with neck bandaged, Hoevels headed back to Hamburg Monday in preparation for his role in Goethe’s The Sorrows of Young Werther. In that play, the long-suffering title character winds up shooting himself in the head. Someone might want to double-check the gun.*

### Comments

**derek**What a mistake to make. At least this one didn't have a tragic ending. Speaking of tragic, I hope those roles he takes don't ever extend to his own life. How depressing to go from a role involving suicide by knife to one with suicide by gun.  
**justj**taylhis I'm always up front. If it is my prop, as an actor, I want to make sure it is there. I only take care of me, and then sometimes I mess up. Only me to blame.  
**taylhis**I see your point, I would probably do the same, but looking at it from a stage manager's POV, it's beyond annoying when the actors do that. My first stage managing job had me dealing with that, and the actor checked EVERY one of the numerous props, not just his own. No, I'm not mentioning any names - at least not on the blog. But it gave me a complex as a stage manager - I thought I wasn't needed, so when our babysitter cancelled on us for the Mother's Day performance of that show, I thought, no problem, I'm not needed anyway since (the actor) will do my jobs. WRONG! He missed something, but technically it was my fault because my job was not done, and everyone suffered. If checking your own props is something you must do as an actor, I suggest that you be up front about it with your stage manager. Just lay it out for them from the beginning, and instead of feeling useless, they might appreciate the help.  
**justj**Call me superstitious, but I've almost always checked my own props. Guns, knives, drinks, and sometimes even food. Drinking some stale tea for whiskey, or flat cola for coffee just doesn't do it for me. If I'm called to drink coffee onstage, I'll have a pot backstage. Whiskey, I make my own tea for each performance. Clean glasses, yep, I check them too. I don't think it has anything to do with the stage manager, that is just me.  
**jamiahsh**Indeed... better check that gun. I assume none of the food from The Nerd gave any ill effects... apart from maybe a pseudo-deviled egg. This sure gives new meaning to the term "Verisimilitude."  
**adam smith | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Now THAT Is One HORRIBLE Stage Manager [...]

# These Are A Few Of My Favorite Things...

animals.Â  Animals are my favorite things.Â  If I’m bored – yeah, right, with 4 kids, when does that happen?Â  Ok, if I were ever bored, my activity of choice would be to visit a zoo, wildlife park, pet store, or anyplace I could see animals.Â  Without leaving the house, I can also research animals on the internet.Â  One of my favorite animal sites is the [University of Michigan’s Animal Diversity Web](http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/index.html).Â  It’s amazing how much they’ve changed the taxonomy (classification of animals) from when I first started doing research on the subject not more than 10 years ago, but it’s true – this field is one that’s ever-changing.

Every now and then, I think I’ll choose an animal to share on my blog.Â  Today’s animal is the pangolin.Â  What is a pangolin, you ask?Â  Well, it’s a mammal, and it’s not a marsupial, a group which contains some ofÂ the lesser known species.Â  See, in the classification of mammals, you begin by separating them into placental mammals (live birth)Â and marsupials (young live in the mother’s pouch – all but oneÂ type live in Australia).Â  Of course, there is also a third category – egg-laying mammals, but we won’t go there because I don’t want to lose people’s interest by getting too complicated.

So anyway, the pangolin is a placental mammal, yet it’s scaly.Â  The scales are actually made of a hair-like material, thereby preserving its status as mammal.Â  Check this out – does this thing look prehistoric or what?

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/pangolin.jpg)

ButÂ they’reÂ not prehistoric; they still exist todayÂ – I wonder how come I’ve never seen one at a zoo?Â  I guess it’s because some animals do better in captivity than others, and I applaud the zoo community for recognizing this.

Interesting tidbits about pangolins, as stated on the Animal Diversity Web:

*Pangolins are a small group (seven living species placed in one genus and one family, Manidae) of mammals that feed mostly on ants. They are found in the tropical regions of Africa and Asia.Â  Pangolins are conspicuous and remarkable because their backs are covered with large, overlapping scales made up of agglutinated hairs. But they are strange in other ways as well. Their tongue is extraordinarily long and muscular, arising from the pelvis and the last pair of ribs deep in the animal’s chest. As a result, the tongue and associated muscles are longer than the animal’s head and body, allowing the tongue to be extruded to an astonishing degree. Pangolins lack teeth. Instead, the the pyloric part of their stomach is thickened and muscular, with odd keratinous spines projecting into its interior. It usually contains pebbles and seems to be used for “chewing” in much the same way as a bird’s gizzard. Pangolins have the ability to close their ears and nostrils as well as eyes, presumably to keep ants out.*

In short, pangolins are fascinating animals thatÂ are closer to you and me on the taxonomy tree than most people would guess – they are mammals, after all.Â  Yet they are a mammal that most people have not heard of, and surprisingly, there are more than a few mammalian species that have this in common – I will try to share little known facts about little known mammals in my blog.

And oh yeah, since there was a complaint in the comments of another tangents.org blog about this – the song I quoted in my title is “My Favorite Things” from The Sound of Music.

### Comments

**A Living Breathing Hoax | My Food Chain Gang**[...] in my Interesting Animals series.Â  To read chapter one about a scaly mammal called the pangolin, click here. For chapter two, I chose to focus on the duck-billed platypus; an animal who is so strange [...]  
**derek**+1 to the never heard of before category. But then animals have never really been my thing. A scaly mammal really is strange, no matter what the scales are made of.  
**justj**I almost always read the comments on things I post to. You may reply to me. Ego strokes are always good. ;)  
**jamiahsh**Raindrops on roses, pangolins on kittens... fascinating creatures that you have introduced us to.  
**taylhis**oops. Justj - hope you read the comments after you post one because you didn't learn something new from the post. Apparently, pangolins ARE endangered! Sorry for the misinfo!  
**justj**Always liked those animals. I did think they were endangered, since they were never at a zoo. Learned something new.

# Frumpy or Stylish?

What follows is an insignificant blog post about nothing of particular importance – pure fluff!Â  And this post is for Office fans only!Â  Have you noticed that Pam Beesly has changed her look?Â Â When you watch episodes ofÂ The Office from Seasons 1, 2 or even 3, you’ll notice that Pam used to be frumpy.Â Â Her hair was blah, and she wore the ugliest shirts, sometimes two at a time!Â  But nowadays, she has a nice chic hairdo andÂ dresses less like a 60-year-old libarian and more like a young woman in her late 20’s or early 30’s.Â  At first, I was wondering if the popularity of the show and the character was theÂ inspiration for the change in her character – you know, make her more appealling to her adoringÂ fans.Â  But The Office is my favorite show, and I don’t like to think that it’s sinking to that level – I prefer to attribute the change in Pam to her finally being happily in true love.Â Â In the first fewÂ seasons, she wasn’t yet in love with Jim (that she was consciously aware of, anyway), and she wasÂ unhappy being a receptionist because that’s a far cry from her callingÂ in life – art andÂ illustration.Â  Now she is truly happy, she is in love, and her looks-update reflects this.Â Â Ironic that as the characterÂ Pam Beesly finds love,Â the actress who plays her, Jenna Fischer, Â is in the process of a real-life divorce from her husband, JamesÂ Gunn.Â  I don’t know, what do you think?

All I know for sure is that I amÂ happy to see Pam’s oldÂ wardrobe go by the wayside.Â  It was truly hideous and sometimes evenÂ difficult to watch –Â as you can see by watching some of the older episodes!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Yes... now that you elaborated on it, she has changed her look. I just rewatched the first Christmas episode... the Secret Santa game and Michael buying booze with his bonus. I like the new look, too. Intentional to show the transition?

# How To Pack For A Family Of 6

We’ve travelled (road trips only!) as a family a bunch, and now that there are 6 of us, the job of packing suitcases for everybody hasÂ become more difficultÂ than ever!Â  None of the kids are old enough to be trusted to do the task themselves (sucessfully, anyway), so it falls to mom or dad to do it.Â  With all the experience, I’ve discovered some things that work better than others to help the family stay organized throughout the trip.Â  I’ve decided to share my pointers for big-family-road-trip packingÂ in case any other parents reading this could use some tips that’ll make this daunting chore seem easier.

I find it works best to pack one of two ways – either 1 suitcase for everyone or 1 suitcase per person.Â  To figure out which of theseÂ would be best for your situation, think about how many daysÂ your trip will last (including travel time) and how many times you will be loading and unloading the luggage from the car.Â  Depending upon the ages of your kids, it might be easier to have a duffel bag per kid of which they are to keep track.

First, I start with a checklist in a grid format.Â  Down the side you list each person’s name, and across the top, you list types of clothing – socks, pants, shirts, underwear, etc.Â  You determine how many of each you will need for each person, and when it’s packed

1.

### Comments

# Technology And Santa

Due to the many technological advances that have been made in the worldÂ since we were kids, I think today’s youth have somewhat of a different perspective on Santa.

First of all, on Christmas Eve, they can trackÂ Santa’s travelsÂ on the internet.Â  When we were young, it was “get to bed, and if you’re not sleeping by the time Santa gets here, he’s going toÂ skip our house!”Â  And in 2008, you can forget about needing the zip code for the North Pole so that your kids can use the post office to snail-mail their lists to Santa.Â  In today’s world, kids communicate with Santa via email.Â  Also, the lines “He sees you when you’re sleeping; he knows when you’re awake… etc.”Â  have a whole new meaning with the modern-day concept ofÂ Big Brother.Â  I reminded my 4-year-old daughter the other day that Santa is always watching her and can see when she’sÂ not behaving.Â Â Her reply is what led me to wonder about the perception kids in 2008 have of Santa:Â  “Mom, do you have blue lights on the Christmas tree cuz they have cameras and Santa can see.”Â  So somewhere my daughter had gotten the idea that Santa uses cameras to watch kids, and the cameras are inside theÂ blue Christmas lights!Â  I wonder, if I invest in some blue Christmas lights, will that make her behavior impove any?

### Comments

**justj**I have a Santa cam in my eyeglass frame!!!  
**tracking santa on christmas eve | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Technology And Santa [...]  
**jamiahsh**I remember the radio's annual tracking of Santa's ride that ended at midnight on Christmas morning. Christmas Eve Mass was at 11... so never got to hear his arrival, but we would always crawl up to bed and quietly turn on the radio to listen. A few years, the big guy had already arrived before we got back from church. I've warned the young ones a few times this year... none of their responses were as creative as your four year old's.

# Speaking Of Blagojevich...

In my previous post about Governor Rod Blagojevich of Illinois, I forgot to include a [funny clip from the Daily Show](http://www.thedailyshow.com/video/index.jhtml?videoId=115852&title=pill-of-rights" \t "_blank) featuring Mr. Blag….Â  Mr. Blavo, um Governor Smith.

And if you have trouble pronouncing his Serbian surname, here is a pronounciation guide from wikipedia.com:  
Milorad “Rod” R. Blagojevich (pronounced /blÉ™ËˆÉ¡É”ÉªÉ™vÉªtÊƒ, born December 10, 1956) is an American politician from the state of Illinois.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Front page of at least 2 papers... our local hometown rag and one from another larger city paper... oddly not the one closest to Illinois  
**jamiahsh**Gov. Blagowhosits?  
**jamiahsh**RON STEVENS!!! OOPS... wrong spelling. Hilarious.

# A Stricken State

I took the tv away from the kids todayÂ (not that they watch it that much anyway) so I can watch the events in Illinois unfold as their governor Rod Blagojevich is arrested on corruption charges.Â  No surprise there, just an interesting story being followed by a former resident of that state.Â  In fact, we left Illinois for good in 2003Â just months after Blago assumed office, which was mostly a coincidence, but I would say that his being elected to the governor’s officeÂ did addÂ to the feeling we had that the state was falling apart.Â  It was that obvious from the beginning that Blago was no good.Â  Over the years, I’ve been following news stories in Illinois by reading dailyherald.com, an online version of a suburban newspaper.Â  Every time there was anything in the paper related to Blago, there was no shortage of comments from readers about the purported corruption of the governor.Â  In October of this year, the governor’s approval rating was a measly 4%.Â  And today, the you-know-what has hit the fan.Â  The governor of Illinois is in prison – the secondÂ gov in a row from that stateÂ to serve time, as a matter of fact.Â  As we speak, err,Â as you read this,Â former IllinoisÂ Governor George Ryan is probably watching the Blagojevich coverage from the federal prison he currently calls home. Â I’m just curious if it makes anyoneÂ nervous that our new President-elect is from a state that can’t seem to keep its leaders out of the slammer.Â  Hopefully, Barack Obama can set a new standard for politicians from Illinois – that would be refreshing.

But in the meantime, watching Blago’s saga unfold is compelling – the reporters on CNN are saying that the breadth of the corruption isÂ unimaginable.Â  They’re saying Blago engaged in a ‘crime spree’ while in office and the details areÂ troubling – including allegations of $8 million inÂ fundingÂ beingÂ pulled from a children’s hospital becauseÂ its CEOÂ did not contribute $50,000 to Blago’s campaign.Â  And I’m not writing this to pick on Blago or make any sort of political statement – it’s not that I’m the type of person who smiles at the misfortune of others either, but hey, he did this to himself.Â  I just feel badly for the residents of Illinois who trusted this man to be their leader and their representative, and now they’re forced to watch with the rest of the world while he is exposed for what he truly is, giving their state aÂ horrible reputation in the process.Â  The main victims in this situation are the Blagojevich family, and it’s sad thatÂ Rod’s two young children will probably have to grow up now without a father in their lives.Â  And unfortunately, Blagojevich is just the latest in a long line of corrupt officials fromÂ the Land of Lincoln.Â  Since the early 1970’s, 3 former Illinois governors have served time in prison, not including Blagojevich who is a current governor.Â  Here’s to hoping the politicians of Illinois can get their act together amidstÂ their growingÂ tradition ofÂ disreputableness.

### Comments

**taylhis**That's a good question jamiahsh - I don't know who will be Blagojevich's successor; I haven't seen it reported anywhere. Will they have a special election like they did in CA when Schwarzenegger took over for Davis? And justj - I always thought that's just how politics are. And Blago was born and raised on the northwest side of Chicago.  
**jamiahsh**So... what corrupt leader do the Illioni (is that the proper term) have to look foward to?  
**justj**I always thought Chicago politics was a bit corrupt. Is Blagojevich from Chicago, or is it just politics in general?

# Number Quest

One thing I was excited about doing in my blog was writing board game reviews.Â  Since my husband and IÂ have a game collecting hobby and thereby an extensiveÂ amassment of games, we can find a new game to play on any given night.Â  But the kids keepÂ us really busy, and so I forgot all about reviewing board games on my blog, not to mention that it’s difficult for us to find the time to play them.Â  But last night amidst the chaos of our house, we found time to haul out a new game and learn it.Â  It was such a fun game that it inspired me to write a review – anyone heard of the gameÂ *Number Quest* (or sometimes known as *Nubble*) by DK Publishing Inc.?

The game board consists ofÂ aÂ color-coded grid with numbers on it.Â  The game is simple to learn, yet complex to play.Â Â *Number Quest*Â combines chance (dice), stratagy, and traditional board game elements such asÂ paper money and tokens.Â  To begin, a player rolls 4 dice which each display the numbers 1-6.Â  The player then uses these numbers to create any whole number 1-100 with any combination of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.Â  The player then placesÂ their color chip on the corresponding number on the game board.Â  The color of the number’s space on the board determines how much money a player receives for creating that number.Â  There are also Nubble Bonuses and Double-Nubbles, but if you want to find out what those are you should play the game.Â  Even with the Nubbles (double-nubbles involve prime numbers – but don’t worry, you don’t have to know anything about prime numbers), it’s a very easy game to learn.Â  Also, you don’t have to be great at math since there are ‘cheat charts’ provided.

*Number Quest* is like a two-player strategy game combined with favorite elements of other types of board games,Â except the best thing is, you can have up toÂ four players.

Here is a picture of the game board; evidently the game used to be called Nubble.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/12/number-quest.jpg)

And another fun thing about Number Quest isÂ how the game ends: it is over when there are tokens on numbers connecting the 1 and the 100 all the way across the board, and the player with the most money at that time wins.Â  Also, there are LOTS of variations to the game; there’s a kid-friendly version, you can try playing with a timer, or you can even try ending the game based upon a previously agreed upon time limit or money amountÂ instead of when the tokens stretch across the board.Â  The game is educational for kids, and a great way for adults to exercise their brains, especially if you don’t use the cheat chart.Â  Upon first playing, I would give it a 9/10, but keep in mind that we didn’t even get in a full game due to time constraints.Â  But it seems like a really fun game and I’m looking forward to trying it with 4 players!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Kid friendly version, YEAH! BUT DOES SOUND LIKE FUN.  
**justj**Sounds like a fun game.  
**The Economy » Blog Archive » Ibm Resource Center Â» Blog Archive Â» Broadbad, Green Tech Get Love …**[...] Number Quest | My Food Chain Gang [...]

# Not Even A Snow Day!

Our first ground-sticking, hill-sledding, angel-making, sidewalk-shoveling snow of the year is here.Â  And why not – it’s already December 6th!

I slept in this morning, which is more than I can say for my poor husband.Â  Ironically, last night, he was all gung-ho about staying up late.Â  He’s like, “And we can stay up late because the kids have been sleeping in lately – nothing to do tomorrow until later…”Â  And he was right – the two littlest ones *have* been sleeping in lately –Â until today, of course.Â  We stayed up really late last night thinking the kids would sleep in, but WRONG!Â  They woke my poor husband at 7:20 in the morning today!Â  Myself, I didn’t stir until 9:30ish, and I was lolling out of bed when WHOOSH!Â  The door to our walk-in bedroom closet flies open, and it is **snowing** into the closet!Â  Turns out, the closet window was not locked, and so the winter storm had pushed it open, which pushed open the door to the bedroom, and all of a sudden, we had a winter storm *in our house*!Â  ‘I guess we’re getting some snow,”Â  I thought as I pushed the window shut, closed the door, noticed the baby was still sleepingÂ and climbed back into bed.Â  A few minutes later, and WHOOSH!Â  It happened again.Â  “Wow, we’re *really* getting snow!”Â  I said to myself as I noticed the ground was already blanketed when I shut the window the second time.Â  This time, I manipulated the frozen lock until it was shut so we wouldn’t have to experience the WHOOSH effect again.Â  Well, that’s a heck of a way to wake up, especially twice.Â  Besides, it was late enough and time for me to contribute to the daily household stuff.Â  Once downstairs, I checked weather.com, which informed me that we were forecasted to get 1-2 inches of snow during the day, and another possible inch at night.Â  Immediately we began making plans to go sledding, especially since our 4-year-old had been waiting for this all year.Â  Well, it took us all over an *hour* to get ready.Â  And that didn’t even include lunch.Â  We dressed everyone in 2-3 layers, and then we realized we should probably have lunch before we tackled the sled hill.Â  Seeing how difficult it was to unravel everyone from their winter clothes enough to find mouths to insert the lunch, we munched on a few pieces of lunchmeat before heading to the sled hill.

Well, the baby wasn’t happy on the sled hill – and before I get all kinds of nasty comments, YES he was bundled intensely!Â  2-3 layers, then a snowsuit, then a fleece bag-like thingie, then a few blankets, and my husband and I built a little tent-like thing around his carrier…Â  But he IS a July baby, and I have a theory that people are best suited for the season in which they were born, so…Â  no sledding for the little guy.Â  Or for mom, for that matter.Â  I got down the hill once though, and it was lots of fun – much easier climbing the hill this time than last year being a few months pregnant!Â  Although I was disappointed about only getting to go down the hill once, after that I got to sit in the warm car and catch up on my newspaper reading in peace and quiet after the baby fell asleep, so that was nice.Â  And after sledding, since we had kind of cheated on lunch, we treated the kids to Pizza Hut because for some reason, they like to eat there.Â  And every time we’re set to go, I realize I don’t like it, but I think I’ll be able to find something – but I was wrong again!Â  I just don’t like Pizza Hut!Â  Well, their iced tea is pretty good…Â  but their buffet sucks, and so now I’m headed home with 4 exhausted kids and I’m all hepped up on iced tea…Â  But the rest of the afternoon went surprisingly smoothly and we even let our daughter have a friend over – providing her mom drove her here so we wouldn’t have to venture out in the snow again.Â  When the friend’s mom got here, we were chatting about the snow, and we were all dumbfounded about how much we were supposed to get.Â  Usually, the weather channel will over-forecast us.Â  If they say 1-3 inches, we usually get a ground dusting.Â  Today, they say 1-3 inches, and for most of us, it snowed from the time we woke until well after the sun set.Â  WeÂ waited until it was finished to go out and shovel, and by then it was dark and we had gotten a few inches.Â  Now I see on the news that we could get a few more inches…

But anyway,Â lots of fun today, and all without calling an officialÂ Snow Day!Â Â Can’t all major snow falls be on Saturdays?!?

### Comments

**Not Even A Snow Day! | catveranda.com**[...] View post [...]  
**jamiahsh**No... I don't think they all can be on Saturday. I remember wishing and hoping for snow days and now... not so much. Wish we had a decent snow hill around here. Pizza Hut IS no good. BLAH! At least you could find a shovel and it is STILL snowing. Don't hold your breath, but keep your fingers crossed for Monday ;)

# 4 Christmases

I shouldn’t have liked it.Â  It’s an 82 minute comedy farce co-starring Reese Witherspoon – what’s to like?Â  But I actually enjoyed the movie [4 Christmases](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0369436/) more than I thought.

So why did I see if I thought I’d hate it?Â  For one, it was the only thing playing at the matinee price and for two, I had a sort of curiosity about the acting abilities of two country music super-stars:Â  Dwight Yoakam and Tim McGraw.Â  Actually, having seenÂ DwightÂ YoakamÂ in [Sling Blade](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117666/), I’m well aware of hisÂ acting skills.Â Â It was such a great performance in Sling Blade thatÂ I thought it was Oscar-worthy.Â  He’s not given much to work with in this movie however, and his role as one of those [Leap of Faith](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104695/)-type preachers is not very well developed.Â  I don’t think it’s any fault of Yoakam, though, but moreÂ a testament to the lazy script.

Vince Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon star as a freewheeling couple who don’t see the need to marry since they’re already happy, and they don’t want kids.Â  The first scenes of the movie really emphasize how perfect this couple’s lives are, and it’s almost sickeningly sweet how well they get along.Â  Enter their extended families, and they become miserable people.Â  It begins when their flight to Fiji is cancelled on Christmas and they are featured on the news.Â  The couple (their names were not memorable) is now busted in their annual lieÂ about travelling to some exotic location for charity work.Â  They fib about this every year to their families so they can avoid seeing all 4 families (each set of parents is divorcd) for Christmas.Â  So now that they can’t go toÂ Fiji,Â they have to visit 4 sets of crazy relatives on one day and yada, yada, anticipated baby jokes and predictable chaos ensues, you get the picture.

For some reason, a lot of Hollywood stars agreed to be in this movie.Â  And just as I expected, Vince Vaughn was the same in this movie as the characters he always plays.Â  He can be funny, but he’s not very versatile.Â  I was surprised that Reese Witherspoon did not get under my skin because for some reason, she annoys the heck out of me, and it’s distracting when watching her in movies.Â  As far as the country music super-stars are concerned, I consider this movie a waste of Dwight Yoakam’s acting talent, and Tim McGraw was barely in the movie at all.Â  I read somewhere that he beefed up for the role, andÂ he *was* hard to recognize,Â although I don’t really know why he bothered gaining all the weight for a part that hardly has himÂ on camera and with barely any lines.Â  Other big name actors making cameos were Mary Steenburgen, Jon Voight, Robert Duvall, and Sissy Spacek – maybe it’s just me, but even though she’s almostÂ 60, I still look at her and see [Carrie](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0074285/) the fire-starting teen from the famous Stephen King horror movie of the ’70’s.

Overall, there was only one scene where I couldn’t even watch because of its ludicrousness, so instead IÂ turned to my husband andÂ whispered, “This is unbelievably dumb”.Â  Other than that, I was entertained, and mostly because it was a holiday movie, it was fun to sit, watch, and eat popcorn.Â  I wonder how [Christmas With The Kranks](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0388419/) will compare.Â  I’ve heard that one is just awful, yet I want to see it since I read the John Grisham novel upon which it was based.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**You forgot to mention Kevin's (from the Office) blink and you'll miss him cameo at the beginning in the bar. And NO WAY, the ticket agent at the airport was none other than Peter Billingsley, Ralphie from A Christmas Story... how cool.  
**Time In A Bottle, Time On My Hands, Time After Time | Morat's Blog**[...] and I went to seeÂ Four Christmases which was kind of cute.Â  You can read taylhis’ indepth review.Â  Some laughs, not the best movie ever made but it was worth seeing with a friend.Â  We then went [...]  
**Big Family Christmas » Blog Archive » 4 Christmases | My Food Chain Gang**[...] unknown wrote an interesting post today on4 Christmases | My Food Chain GangHere’s a quick excerptI wonder how Christmas With The Kranks will compare. Iâ€™ve heard that one is just awful, yet I want to see it since I read the John Grisham novel upon which it was based. Share and Enjoy: These icons link to social bookmarking sites … [...]  
**jamiahsh**My sister says she liked Christmas with the Kranks, but I've never had the pleasure.

# A-Z's of Me

I received another ‘getting to know you’ email forward, and this one promises to be ‘different’ so here goes…

*Here’s a new one & it’s much better than previous versions. Cut and paste and fill in the answers. Then, send to all your friends!*\*A – Age:Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â  30  
\*B – Bed size:Â Â Â Â Â  Queen  
\*C – Chore you hate:Â Â  drying dishes  
\* DÂ Â Â  Dessert you love:Â Â  depends upon my mood  
\*E – Essential start of your day item:Â Â Â  yogurt  
\*F – Favorite actor(s):Â Â Â Â Â  Steve Carell, Tom Hanks  
\*G – Gold or Silver:Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â  Gold  
\*H – Height:Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â  5 ft. 8 in.  
\*I – Instruments you play:Â Â  little bit of piano, various percussion instruments  
\*J – Job title:Â Â Â  Homemaker  
\*K – Kid(s):Â Â  3 girls and a boy  
\*L – Living arrangements:Â  Husband, 4 kids, 2 dogs, and a parrot  
\*M – Mom’s name:Â Â Â  Phyllis  
\*N – Nicknames:Â Â Â Â  Mom, Lis  
\*O – Overnight hospital stay other than birth:Â  other than MY birth or any birth?Â  Cuz I’ve had 4 kids…Â  Also some ear infections when I was a baby.  
\*P – Phobia or fear:Â Â  frogs  
\*Q – Favorite quote: Until I can think of a better one – “Abraham Lincoln said, if you are a racist, I will attack you with the North.”Â  – Michael ScottÂ   
\*R – Right or left handed:Â Â Â  Right  
\*S – Siblings:Â Â Â  1 older sister  
\*T-Â  Talent:Â  multi-tasking  
\*U – Unique skill:Â Â Â  I can hang a spoon off the end of my nose  
\*V – Vegetable you hate:Â Â Â  peas  
Â \*WÂ Â  Worst habit:Â Â  procrastination  
\*X – X ray:Â Â Â  dental  
\*Y – Yummy food you make:Â  I just made a California blend soup yesterday out of leftovers that everyone loved  
\*Z – Zodiac Sign:Â Â Â Â Â  Cancer, the crab!

### Comments

**derek**Hmm. A possible idea for a school activity, though some would have to be changed to make it more kid-friendly.  
**jamiahsh**i don't that the zodialogical (spell check is flawed... "zodialogical" is a correctly spelled word) sign of crab is very descriptive to either of us.

# Review Debut!

As you may know, we are heavily involved in our local community theater.Â  For each play in which we were involved, part of the fun was to see what the newspaperÂ critic would publish about it.Â  Well, the newspaper reviewer has been canned, and so my husband was asked to take over.Â  Not wanting the responsibility of the fallout that one might incur when writing about specific individuals in a small town (not to mention his extremely busy work schedule), he agreed to only do the review about the most recent play because he and I produced it.Â  The following is my husband’s review debut that was (supposed to be) published in the newspaper, and I’ll go ahead and give myself a secondary byline for editing.Â  I must note however, that those of you who have seen this particular edition of the paper might notice more than a few differences between the two reviews.Â  And my husband did not write the paragraph about his credentials that appears at the end of the print version – the newspaper wrote it with info my husband supplied when asked how he was qualified to do the review.Â  It’s just funny that for the past few years, we’ve been assuming the quirks of our play reviews were the fault of the reviewer when in actuality, the newspaper changes much and does lots of editing!

***Don’t Hug Me* is a Winter Treat**

This past Wednesday evening my wife and I had the privilege of attending a preview of *Donâ€™t Hug Me*, a comedy by Paul Olson.

As we took our seats, my eyes were immediately drawn to the brilliantly detailed set.Â  Just a quick glance at the rustic wood paneling, Paul Bunyan style restroom sign, and moose head beer tap and I was instantly transported to a northern Minnesota bar.

Â The show opens with owners of â€œThe Bunyanâ€ bar Gunner Johnson (played to near perfection by Mike Roberts) and his wife and co-owner Clara (played byÂ stage veteran Mary Beth Snider) caught outside in the cold.Â  We see Clara fumbling through her purse for the keys as a freezing Gunner becomes increasingly impatient, declaring he will break down the door if they cannot get in soon.Â  This first little scene sets the stage for the show perfectly.Â  Minnesota gets cold in the winter, and Gunner is tired of it.Â  He wants to escape the frigid temperatures and move to Florida, but Claraâ€™s heart is in Minnesota .Â  This conflict is the basic central plot throughout *Donâ€™t Hug Me* and Roberts and Snider deliver it with a very nice chemistry together.Â  Their bantering back-and-forth comes across as genuine and is also very funny.

Â Ms. Snider does an excellent job portraying Clara with a wonderful balance between loving wife and strong-willed independent woman while Roberts is very effective in making the audience feel Gunnerâ€™s frustration, as well as the cold outside air.Â  In fact, even under the heat of the stage lights, the entire cast of *Donâ€™t Hug Me* does a great job of selling the cold wintery theme. Whenever one of *Don’t Hug Me*‘s colorful characters enters or exits the bar, you can almost feel the chilly Minnesota draft coming in from outside.

Â

Shelley Scantlen portrays Bernice Lundstrom, a waitress at â€œThe Bunyanâ€ and fiancÃ© of Kanute Gunderson, played by Keith Robinson.Â Â  Anyone who has seen Scantlen on stage before expects an outstanding performance, and she delivers.Â  Her accent is pure northern Minnesota, and she brings a naivety to Bernice that is delightful.Â  The sincerity in which she sings â€œI Wanna go to the Mall of Americaâ€ is downright hilarious.Â  Shelleyâ€™s voice is amazing as always, and her duets with Clara and Aarvid are a riot.Â  Opposite Scantlen, Robinson is very strong as Kanute, a man whose world unravels with astonishing speed, although heâ€™s quick to remind everyone â€œI played Nathan Detroit in Guys and Dollsâ€.Â  Robinson takes us through Kanuteâ€™s transformation from, egotistical jerk who has it all, to loveable loser who lost it all (*give or take five stores*) masterfully.Â  When he teamed up with Roberts (Gunner) for the duet â€œYou Dirty Piece ofâ€¦â€ it was difficult to hear parts of the song over the sound of my own laughter.Â

Enter Denver Henderson as traveling karaoke, err, â€œLife Style Systemâ€ salesman Aarvid Gisselsen and trouble starts to brew (pardon the pun).Â  Aarvid wants to sell the LSS-562, a state-of-the-art karaoke system, to the Johnsons and claims it will save their bar which has been suffering in the customer department.Â  From the moment he enters, Henderson takes command of the stage.Â  He does an exceptional job, playing the role of a modern day â€œMusic Manâ€ with charm and panache.Â Â  Henderson is able to make Aarvid very likeable without compromising the characterâ€™s door-to-door salesman savvy.Â  He also gives a tenderness to the character that makes you root for him to get the girl; the girl being Bernice.Â  The moment Aarvid first meets Bernice is very well staged.Â  One look at each other and the ice begins to melt and the sparks start to fly.Â  Like Roberts and Snider, Scantlen and Henderson have great chemistry, and their duet, the Sven Yorgensen classic â€œTake a Chanceâ€, is a hoot thanks in part to some hilarious choreography by co-director Crystal Bowers.

Â

Complete with witty one-liners like â€œOh, for spankinâ€™ the neighborâ€™s babyâ€, hilarious songs like â€œVictim of My Y Chromosomeâ€, and even a love triangle, *Donâ€™t Hug Me* is fun from start to finish.Â  My wife and I had a great time, and so will you. Bravo to directors Zach McAfee and Crystal Bowers along with the cast and crew of *Donâ€™t Hug Me* for putting together a real gem.Â  They take to you to Minnesota in the dead of winter and warm your heart.Â

*Donâ€™t Hug Me* is performing at the Little Theatre December 5 â€“ 14.Â  Tickets are $12 for adults with a discount for students and seniors.Â  Reservations are recommended.

### Comments

**derek**Congrats to C on being wanted as a reviewer even if he didn't take the job. Nice review, BTW.  
**jamiahsh**And to think that the signature line at the bottom past reviews was provided by the author solely. Excellent review. They will have a hard time finding someone to follow that up. ;)

# Baby Diary

The first year of life for children is full of constant development and changes – babies do new things every single day.Â  Realizing this, I decided to make a diary for each of my kids about their first year.Â  I would write in it from time to time to summarize all of their many changes, hoping some dayÂ they’ll enjoy reading them.Â  I was writing in my son’s Baby Diary the other day when it occurred to me that I should share it on my blog; especially since he’s been very crabby lately and it’s been really difficult for me to writeÂ blog posts with him in my arms.Â Â He was born on July 11, 2008.

Christopher’s Diary:

7/16/08 – went to dr. checkupÂ for yourÂ slight jaundice.Â  dr. said everything looked good and you weigh 7 lbs. 11 oz.  
7/17/08 – Actually, since it was the 12:01 showing, it’s actually the 18th…Â  but yourÂ  first movie in the theater was the Dark Knight.Â  You barely stirred and did drink a bottle during the movie.Â  You didn’t make a peep.  
7/19/08 – You attended your first stage play, the Music Man.Â  You were very good, except you pooped early in the show and were crabby and had to be taken out, but only for a few mins. so you could get your diaper changed  
7/20/08 – umbilical cord stump falls off – you are 9 days old.  
8/11/08 – You had your one month check-up today!Â  Everything looks good; you weigh 9 lbs. 14 oz. and are 22 in. long.Â  Your head circumference is 38.3 cm.Â  You didn’t cry at all while getting weighed and measured.  
8/13/08 – You smiled at Mommy!  
9/3/08 – In the past week, you’ve started “talking” back to me!Â  You smile really big when I smile at you and give you a big HI, and you smile at me every time you see me when you wake up.Â  When you were born, you could hardly see any lashes, but now your eyelashes are getting long and beautiful!Â  Your eyes are still a bright beautiful blue!  
9/5/08 – You laughed for the first time – long and loud.Â  And it was during Daddy’s funny play, The Nerd.Â  You laughed at the part where they’re playing the ‘I’m going on a trip’ game.Â  I don’t know if you heard the other people laughing or it was just a coincidence, but it was SO cute!  
9/12/08 – Today you had your 2 month dr appt.Â  You are 12 lbs 9 oz and 23.25 inches long.Â  Your head circumference is 44.5 cm.Â  You fussed a little as they were examining you, but you didn’t cry.Â  The dr said you have dry skin and we have to watch your ears to make sure formula isn’t going in there.  
9/22/08 – For about a week now, you seem to recognize your bottle.Â  You’ll get extra excited when you see it and open your mouth.Â  Your big sister Disney calls you “Beeber”.Â  Your big sister Sammie loves to hold you and is always asking questions about newborn babies.Â  She calls them “born” babies.  
10/16/08 – You are 3 months old, and you are starting to play with toys.Â  The other day I saw you “discovering” your hands, and ever since you’ve been grabbing things.Â  You know how to put your fist in your mouth.Â  You’re still spitting up a lot.Â  Not as much at a time as Disney did when she was a baby, but many times throughout the day.  
11/5/08 – You’ve been playing with toys for awhile now; you can grab things and you try to draw them into your mouth.Â  You love making g sounds – ga, goo, ggg.Â  You are still a very happy little guy and smile at everyone, making their days!  
12/4/08 – Time flies and you are almost 5 months old!Â  Disney used to call you Beeber, and the name stuck, so we call you that sometimes.Â  Disney now calls you Kipper.Â  You’ve had some crabby days, but most of the time, you’re still very smiley.Â  You’ve been experimenting with vocalizations and you LOVE to stand!Â  You do not bend at the waist!Â  We tried the tot wheels (walker)Â for the first time the other day, and you like it for short periods of time since you just hang in there – your feet don’t touch the floor yet.Â  Most of the time, you’re pretty good about sleeping at night, usually waking up only once.Â  But you also have bad nights where you won’t let Daddy sleep!Â  You like baths, and you’re really starting to like toys.Â  You play with the busybox on your crib, and try to eat EVERYTHING!Â  You might be teething because you try to knaw on everything.Â  You’ve been trying cereal and if your gums seem really sore, Mommy and Daddy have been giving you a treat – a dab of peanut butter on your pacifier.Â  You LOVE it!Â  You found your feet a few weeks ago, and you were trying to get your toes in your mouth.Â  We are excited to take you to see Santa pretty soon!

### Comments

**Blog-weary | Sub-sistence**[...] a story a little bit at a time.Â  Maybe write a choose-your-own-adventure like I brought up in Taylhis’s blog .Â  For now, just an idea.Â  We’ll see if it goes anywhere. Share and Enjoy: These icons [...]  
**derek**This could make for an interesting "choose your own adventure" book: "It is 12:15 AM. You are in a dark place but there is a light flickering. You hear something about a 'dark night.' Suddenly you feel scared. Do you: Start screaming? Turn to page 10 Poop your diapers and hope the big person holding you notices and takes you away? Turn to page 18 Show your fear on your face in hopes of being noticed and taken away? Turn to page 22 Fall asleep? Turn to page 93  
**taylhis**I wish. The diaries for the older two were done on a comp I had previously, so they're backed up to a disc somewhere. I won't find them until years from now when I do the major re-organizing I'm planning when I'm bored cuz they're all off at school.  
**justj**Very nice indeed. Are there going to be editions of the older children?  
**jamiahsh**Very cool. Not only will he love it later on; your readers will know the joy (mainly) of raising a sweet baby boy :)

# Here We Go Again!

Everyone who hasÂ been reading my blog since I started it in the beginning of 2008 knows my disdain for the 2-hour delay so frequently used at my daughter’s school.Â  Well, it’s that time of year again –Â Tuesday was our first 2-hour delay of the school year.Â  It’s not like I want the buses to go out on the slippery country roads and endanger kids and drivers; it’s just that the delay throws off the entire family for the whole day!Â  If there was some way to effectively implement the delay for those who would have trouble getting to the school in poor weather conditions, I think that would be a good solution.Â  However, it’s obvious that would lead to kids falling behind other kids and such, so it’s obvious why they don’t do that.Â  But 2-hour delays frustrate me nonetheless.

My 2-year-old gets frightened or crabby if we do things differently from our normal routine.Â  So when there’s a 2-hour-delay, she sleeps in until after 10 and wakes up disoriented, hungryÂ and crabby.Â  I guess I could wake her, but I figure if she’s sleeping in then she needs the sleep – and it will pay off for me later in the day because her daily pre-naptime intensity won’t be quite as demanding as usual.Â  So Tuesday’s delay was caused byÂ snow, which meant that my 4-year-old wanted to play in it all day (no preschool today).Â  But of course she wants someone to play with, and I’m not comfortable letting my 2 and 4-year-olds play outside by themselves of course.Â  And on Tuesday it was too cold to take the baby out with us…Â  So we wereÂ all stuck inside and my middle two have a rivalry going on, which means that they fight over everything and constantly; Tuesday being no exception because why would it be?Â  Hopefully the salt shortage there is for the roads this winter won’t lead to more school delays – our first one did not go smoothly!

### Comments

**jamiahsh**Mom does a bus route. The morning "wasn't the greatest." Last Monday I believe we had some weather move in AFTER the buses were already out and when they got back in it was worse than yesterday. But I feel your pain when it comes to schedules. Mom prays that there are not delays Thursdays and Fridays since she works in the beauty shop those days and has to totally rearrange her schedule whenever that happens.  
**justj**Well since I was on the roads early in the day, I think the delay had more to do with the bit of ice under the snow. The back roads were nasty first thing in the morning. 34 into Bryan wasn't much better.

# Call Of Cthulu, The Post-Script

Since it’s something I had never before tried, I’ve been dabbling in role playing games for a few months.Â  We’ve met with a small group twice to play “Call of Cthulu”, and it was a fun experience.Â  [Here is a link to my blog postÂ](http://taylhis.tangents.org/2008/11/19/call-of-cthulu/)about the game – it reads like a novel, but keep in mind that all the action took place during two afternoons.Â  You begin a game by deciding characteristics you will attribute to your character, and rolling the dice to determine others.Â  There was a host, and he guided us through the game; telling us when to roll what dice andÂ what events were occurring as a result of our decisions.Â  We are going to meet another time this Saturday for another scenario in this same game – hopefully we’ll get to keep our same characters since I got a lot of lucky rolls – so my character had lots of strong areas.Â  Here is the post-game wrap-up for the two sessions we already played.Â  My character is named Grace O’Conner, and she is a zookeeper at The Franklin ParkÂ Zoo in Boston.Â  The year is 1925.

*(Wrap up from the original Call of Câ€™thulhu scenario “Haunter in the Hills.”)*

*Within days of returning to Boston, Jason Carthage and Grace Oâ€™Conner had contacted each other and Ms. Dorothy Morgan and borrowed the diary theyâ€™d found in the Adams place. Each of the two had read it and both later wished they hadnâ€™t.*

*The very meticulous diary had very little written in it towards the beginning and the earliest dates were from 1910. Most were about mundane things such as Dr. Adamsâ€™ move to the home in the Vermont Mountains and dealing with the folk in the area, including Dr. Haylett. There were some entries about Dr. Adamsâ€™ research but little until 1919, when he noted that he had suddenly found more and more proof that there are things in the hills that simply SHOULD NOT BE.*

*He made some notes about the research he was doing, including mentioning a certain book in the Moretown Memorial Library called â€œLegends of New Englandâ€ by Eli Davenport and noting â€œsome of the answers are there.â€ The journal alleged that he kept the main bulk of his research elsewhere.*

*Entries continued to get more disturbing and weird until May of 1922 when they took a change for the macabre. Without going into detail, Adams noted that he purchased several large dogs and hastily had a kennel constructed for them. He wrote â€œThe dogs seem to hate the things. I hope they can warn me of their approach. I fear that they will not be able to protect me.â€*

*He wrote more and more that the â€œthingsâ€ were watching all the time and he feared he may have unintentionally gotten their notice with his investigations. He noted that they could easily conquer the earth but had not tried so far because he felt they had not needed to. They didnâ€™t want to bother and could get what they wanted without it.*

*He also wrote that the town of Moretown was within the thingsâ€™ grip and noted that he learned that some of the people in the town, and even elsewhere in Washington County, worked with these things, these â€œfungi,â€ either willfully or against their will.*

*By June, he noted that the house was now constantly watched and the that things were growing more bold, though they seemed to prefer the darkest of nights: those that were overcast or without a large moon. By the end of that month, he wrote that he saw the thingsâ€™ prints around the house nightly and that he must often replace the dogs that were killed fighting them.*

*In July, he wrote that an attempt to stop him on his way to Moretown almost worked. A sign on Moretown Mountain Road detoured him to a dead end and the barking of the large dogs he had with him alerted him to the presence of the things. He noted on the 10th of July that the dogs again alerted him to something near the road as he drove.*

*In August, others seemed to have joined the mix. Adams noted continually getting new dogs and wrote that on Aug. 3, a bullet crashed through a window of his house, narrowly missing him.*

*The following week, there were more shots outside of the house on darkened nights and he found several of the dogs dead the following morning. He noted that he found more of the claw prints in the road as well as the footprints of men. He wrote that the phone lines had been cut and were dead.*

*The following day, he reported going to Montpelier and purchasing several more large dogs and a large-caliber rifle as well as supplies.*

*The next several entries noted the numerous cloudy nights and the exchange of gunfire that happened nightly. He wrote that there were at least three men in the group against him along with the numerous claw prints. He feared that he was trapped in the house and wrote that he is loathe to leave his home to the things.*

*On Aug. 20, he noted that the things called to him the night before in horrible buzzing voices, telling him things he dared not put down and making promises he feared they would keep. He mentions that the things want to take him to Yuggoth and beyond, something he dreaded. He wrote that he recognized one of the men that who was with the things: Erik Bartlett was among them.*

*The entries continued with the horrors of the night, of buzzing noises that made him feel lethargic, and sparks of light that burst against the house when he looked out the windows and left blackened burned marks.*

*The last entry, dated Sept. 6, noted:*

*â€œI will try to leave this place tomorrow. With the full moon, perhaps I can get as far as Northfield or even Montpelier, where I might take a train east to Boston or even Dover though I wish to leave these haunted hills. I only hope they let me go. I will leave this journal hidden here in the event of my demise. I fear that if the fungi do not get me, their human servants will.*

*â€œThe thingsâ€™ lair must be on the west face of Chase Mountain. There is a large cave there, covered with a great boulder too heavy for anyone to move. However, erosion has left a place where a man might wiggle though. That must be where they are.â€*

*Both of them remembered the Montpelier newspaper article from the next day. Dr. Adams had attacked a man in Montpelier but had been stopped by police and returned home.*

### Comments

**A different type of game | Random Thoughts**[...] of my friends and blogging buddy posted some notes on a game we played (click to read). These were written by they guy running the game, so they were an overall view, as if someone was [...]

# My Thanksgiving Curse :)

I think I wasÂ somehow cursedÂ last Thanksgiving.Â  I fell ill the day after Thanksgiving, and just as I was starting to feel better a few days later, I felt another virus coming on.Â  This cycle continued until just before Christmas, and because I was pregnant and exhausted, I tried to rest a lot and get well during that time, but it was stressful because I had a 1Â½-year-old to chase after.Â Â And while I was sick, I was unable to eat any Thanksgiving leftovers.Â  So then all during the year, foods like turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and even creamed onions (which I used to love) just haven’t seemed very appealing to me.Â  I think I subconsciously associate the Thanksgiving fare with being sick, but I thought I’d be over it by now – wrong.Â  Thanksgiving dinner was great and everything, but I’m just not as enthused about those leftovers as I want to be.Â  On Thanksgiving day, the turkey was delicious.Â  That leftover sandwich I had on Friday was pretty good.Â  The cold turkey snack on Friday night was ok.Â  I didn’t finish the turkey snack on Saturday night, and today for dinner, I will have *anything* but turkey or Thanksgiving leftovers.Â  And I am blue in the face from reassuring my husband that it was ***absolutely nothing*** he did wrong with the cooking or the fault of any of the guests who brought delicious side dishes.Â  It’s just my Thanksgiving curse, and I hope it’s gone by next year.Â  But even if it’s not, no biggie because my Thanksgiving will be made moreÂ special than foodÂ by the wonderful people in my life.Â  Maybe I should “train” my body to accept the Thanksgiving food by making turkey and creamed onions more often…

At any rate, the helpers in the kitchen on Thanksgiving day were adorable – check them out:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/making-thanksgiving-dinner-11-27-08-0013.jpg)

And below are my two oldest daughters waving to Santa atÂ the Welcome Santa Parade from the day after Thanksgiving:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/welcome-santa-parade-11-28-08-007.jpg)

And if their names were numbers that ordered them by birth, below is a cute picture of #2 and #4:

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/christopher-1st-totwheels-11-26-08-002.jpg)

### Comments

**justj**Very cute. Hope you're feeling better.  
**jamiahsh**Cute.

# Sleep With The Angels

The title of this blog post is based on a book called *To Sleep With the Angels*, which details the horrible tragedy of the Our Lady of Angels school fire in Chicago, Illinois.Â  Ninety-two children andÂ three nuns perished on December 1, 1958 – 50 years ago tomorrow.Â  The incident became theÂ precedent and the inspiration for sweeping changes inÂ laws and regulations regarding fire safety; such as the installment of sprinkler systems in public buildings, automatic fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire drills, and the end of grandfather clauses which eliminated older buildings from having to comply to fire regulations.Â Â Our Lady of the Angels had undergone a fire inspection just a few weeks before the fire, but because it was an older building, it did not have to comply toÂ all the fire codes because ofÂ grandfather clauses.Â  I came across [this website](http://www.olafire.com/Home.asp) about the tragedy, and it’s full of fascinating info related to the inferno – photos, news articles, maps, models, survivor lists and stories, and more.Â  Here is a little excerpt from the website olafire.com about the cause of the fire:

|  |
| --- |
| **Was It Arson?** |
| Although the cause has never been *officially* determined, all indications point to arson. A boy (age 10 at the time, and a fifth grader in room 206) later confessed to setting the blaze, but subsequently recanted his confession. He was more afraid of confessing to his mother and step-father than to the police.The boy confessed to setting numerous other fires in the neighborhood, mostly in apartment buildings. In his confession, he related details of the fire’s origin that had not been made public and that he should therefore not have known. While there was strong evidence that he was indeed the culprit, neither he nor anyone else was ever prosecuted, at least in part because the catholic judge in the case felt he should protect the Church.Officially, the cause of the fire remains unknown. |

I’m curious if the boy who confessed is listed in the survivor lists.Â  Somewhere else I read that another reason the judge didn’t convict the boy is because it would have meant a sure death sentence for him.Â  One thing remains true – this was a tragedy of great proportion, and the damage is still being felt by those who witnessed the atrocity and those whoÂ survived and their families.Â  This is evident when you read some of the survivors’ stories on the website listed above.Â  Many of them have not spoken much about that day, and it seems that almost all of them remember it like it was yesterday.Â  My husband and I both grew up in the Chicago area, and we agree thatÂ most people we knewÂ were associated with the tragedy inÂ one way or another – whether they witnessed it, survived it, or watched it unfold on television.Â  It’s been 50 long years, and there are still raw wounds.Â  It was agreed upon by all those that knew Michele McBride, a survivor of the Our Lady of Angels fire, that she died of her wounds sustained in the fire, and that was as recent as 2001.Â  From olafire.com:

*Michele was burned over 60% of her body and hospitalized for four and a half months. She underwent numerous operations which continued for years afterwards. The fire that ravaged her body left her in continuous, lifelong pain. Her pain finally ended in July 2001 when she died of multiple organ failure, no doubt a result of damage inflicted by fire so many years before. In 1979 Michele wrote a book (“The Fire That Will Not Die”) about her experience the day of the fire, and her life thereafter. Michele’s sister, Dae Hanna: “Michele died on July 4th 2001, from long term physical problems suffered from the fire many years ago. May she rest in peace. She never had a day without pain in her legs and joints. May she rest in peace. She disagreed vehemently with many of the theories in the ‘To sleep with the angels book’. Her book THE FIRE THAT WILL NOT DIE was certainly well titled, and the only first hand account of that day. May she rest in peace.”*

I was reminded of the 50th anniversary of the Our Lady of Angels school fire by an article in the dailyherald.com, prompting me to do some research into the tragedy and to share with others the olafire.com website which contains so much helpful information.Â  My thoughts and prayers are with all of the families involved in this horrible chapter of Chicago’s history.

[](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/olafire.jpg)

### Comments

**history of television news | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Sleep With The Angels [...]  
**derek**I must have missed this article, unless it is today's news which I haven't gotten to yet. Definitely a tragedy. The devastation in those photos- incredible. 95 lives lost, many more lives changed...  
**» Sleep With The Angels | My Food Chain Gang**[...] The title of this blog post is based on a book called To Sleep With the Angels, which details the horrible tragedy of the Our Lady of Angels school fire in. Original post [...]  
**The Economy » Blog Archive » Aldis Robertsâ€™S Homepage Â» Blog Archive Â» Hoover Dam**[...] Sleep With The Angels | My Food Chain Gang [...]  
**jamiahsh**WOW... to live that long with that extent of damage sustained must have taken a great deal of strength and support.

# Walmart Saves The Day

What?!? Believe it or not, the title of my post does not have the slightest hint of sarcasm!Â  Walmart really DID save the day for us yesterday!Â  It almost makes me sorry for my many rants against Walmart and their shady practices designed to put small companies out of business…Â  almost sorry, but not quite there.

It all started when we decided to take the kids over to Fort Wayne, Indiana, which is about an hour away.Â  We pulled into a stall at the Sonic drive-thru for a light lunch and some slushies (Sonic has awesome slushies and drinks), when we realized we had forgotten my husband’s wallet, which left us without money orÂ credit cards.Â  Luckily, we had picked up the mail before we left the house and brought it in the car with us.Â  And luckilyÂ², we had gotten a commission check in the mail.Â  So we braved the ‘big city’ Walmart customer service line onÂ the Saturday after Thanksgiving to see ifÂ they would take pity on us and cash the check even without my husband’s ID.Â  We wereÂ gifted with even more luck when they accepted my driver’s license to cash my husband’s check, and we were able to eat lunch.Â  Except now it had gotten really late and we were all really hungry, so we decided to skip Sonic and go to the Golden Corral that was in the Walmart outlot instead.Â  If you braved my posts about our vacation diary, then you knowÂ how much we like Golden Corral.Â  And I’d say that the one in Fort Wayne isÂ of the best quality out of any of the others we’ve been to.Â  After lunch, we took the kids to a McDonald’sÂ Playland,Â but it had only one little tunnel and one small slide; prompting our 4-year-old to proclaim, “Dad, this is *boring*!”Â  But our 2-year-old loved it, and soon there were more kids to play with and everybody had lots of fun – including mom and dad since there was also a foosball table.Â  When we left the McDonald’s, we noticed there was a Burger King across the street (when isn’t there?), and that Burger King had a 3-story play area!Â  Oh, well, we had fun where we went and we can remember the BK for next time.Â  We quenched our thirst with drinks from Sonic, and there was a cool looking car wash next door, so we treated the kids to a car wash also -they love watching the soap, brushes, and water cascading off the car.Â  The second we pulled out of the wash –*ding ding* – our low fuel bell rang – uhoh.Â  My husband and I just looked at each other because it wasn’t like we had unlimited money with us.Â  In fact, we had spent the last of the check money at the car wash.Â  Thank goodness gas prices are decent these days because with theÂ change we were ableÂ to scrape together from my wallet and the car, we had enough to get us gas to get home…Â  whew!Â  Perhaps it can even be considered a blessing in disguise.Â  When you compareÂ the variety of shopping Fort Wayne offers to our hometown choice of Super Walmart and…Â  well, just the Super Walmart, unleashing us in a larger city with all those shoppingÂ varieties could have been disasterous to our bank account!

And by the way, the Walmart customer service line wasn’t too bad, all things considered.Â  Most of the line consisted of a family who had 6 kids and one on the way -wow.Â  And I thought I had a lot of kids!

### Comments

**worldofwarcraft org | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Walmart Saves The Day [...]  
**worldofwarcraft accounts | Digg hot tags**[...] Vote Walmart Saves The Day [...]  
**jamiahsh**I always liked the local Wash n Fill's Car Wash with the long straps that look like spaghetti strands that engulf your vehicle, smothering you... always got a thrill out of the little sister. AND NO... the wallet was not in my car HA!!

# Happy Thanksgiving!

Another Thanksgiving weekend is upon us, and so far it’s been wonderful for us.Â  Thanksgiving dinner was deliciously cooked by my husband and our guests who were kind enough to bring yummy dishes to share.Â  We played some games afterwards and watched the movie “21” -not very Thanksgiving-y, but a good movie nonetheless.Â  The night before Thanksgiving, my husband and I watched some Thanksgiving episodes of Friends – I think I had forgotten how funny that show was.Â  It’s strange because now when we watch Friends episodes, we are older than the Friends, whereas when the show was still running new in prime time, the friends were older than us…Â  oh well, yet another example of how time flies.Â  Over the turkey last night, we also did our tradition where we go around the table and say what we’re thankful for – and my ever-generic answerÂ was the same asÂ some of my friends, “I am most thankful for my family and friends.”Â  It may be a generic response, but it’s very true, and I am very blessed to have such a wonderful family (my husband and kids and our relatives who live far away – we hope everyone had a wonderful day) and such great friends.

SoÂ now, Black Friday is upon us, and I was able to convince my husband to not go shopping.Â  Every year, he wants to get up at the crack of dawn, if not before, and go wait in the lines to see the best sales stores have to offer.Â  But I’m never very enthused, mostly because we have 4 children under the age of 9.Â  I keep telling him to put it on his “when our kids aren’t so little” list, although I haveÂ one that’s lengthy enough for the both of us.Â  It’d be nice if one year we could get a babysitter for Black FridayÂ so we wouldn’t have to wake all the kids up, but until that happens, I’m not willing to lose the sleep myself or have the kids lose it either.Â  So today for Black Friday, I’ve already had my first turkey-and-leftover sandwich, and we’re going to take the kids toÂ see Bolt (ourÂ two oldest girls are excited to hear the voicework of Miley Cyrus)Â at the movie theaterÂ with a friend and her grandkids.Â  We haven’t been to a movieÂ in forever.Â  I just hope our 2-year-old can behave.Â  After the movie, we’ll walk across the street for dinner, and then we’ll go see if Santa’s reindeer have arrived on the square before we get our spotsÂ to watchÂ the parade.Â  Every year on the day after Thanksgiving, our town has a parade celebrating Santa’s arrival.Â  They bring real reindeer to the square, and everyone lines the streets in anticipation of seeing Santa Claus come to town.Â  His sleigh is pulled by huge beautiful horses, and last year, Santa called out hello to us and knew us by name!Â  When Santa reaches the town square, a few lucky children get to push the big button that turns on the Christmas lights on the square, and everyone cheers as they sip their complimentary cups ofÂ hot chocolate.Â  It’s like something out of a cheesy holiday movie, and I relish every minute of it.Â  I don’t know who is more excited today -me or the kids!Â  I love small town life!Â  And right now, as I’m writing this, I just saw Santa’s sleigh (covered of course) get pulled down our street with a golf cart!Â  I excitedly yelled out, but thank goodness the kids didn’t come down here in time to see it – I think it’d be better for them to see it for the first timeÂ in the parade.Â  It was exciting for me to see though!

I’m not sure what the rest of the weekend holds, but I do know that I get twice as much time with my husband and kids as a normal weekend, and for that I’m also very thankful.Â  I hope everyone else had a wonderful holiday!

### Comments

**Who Wants To Open The Door On Black Friday? | Morat's Blog**[...] who was knocked down and taken to be examined; however, she and the baby were uninjured.Â  Perhaps taylhis was right in not venturing out into the battlefield? Share and Enjoy: These icons link to social [...]  
**derek**Ah, you get your own parade over there I see. No need to see the Macy's thing then, though you probably did anyway. :)  
**justj**The Bargain Hunter didn't go shopping??? What is happening in the world? ;) I'm very glad you had a good Thanksgiving. I forgot about the reindeer. Missed them again.

# Rides Jamiahsh Broke

This is the long-awaited post (by some anyway) that details the uncanny coincidencesÂ of ride break-downsÂ we encountered while in Orlando, Florida.Â  Here is a list of the following rides that stalled or broke down while fellow blogger jamiahsh was along.Â  Not to blame him, but…Â Â  ðŸ˜‰

Epcot:Â  Spaceship Earth, the boat ride in Mexico, the boat ride in Norway – not only did the boat stall during the ride, but also, after we exited the boat, the doors at the end of the ride failed to open, trapping us and the 4-5 boat-fulls afterÂ us!

Universal Studios – The Mummy – got stuck where the ride gets “hot”, the Simpsons ride, Cat in the Hat ride

Magic Kingdom – Carousel of Progress glitched, Peter Pan’s Flight, Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean (multiple times), Snow White

Â We’ve been to Disney World lots of times, and although we’ve been involved in rides stalling and getting backed up, it’s never happened with the frequency of this year when jamiahsh was with us.Â  Therefore,Â the phenomonon of him “breaking the rides”Â is a running joke of sorts, and that’s why I had to make a post of it.Â  Break-downs aside, a fun trip was had by all, and the uncanny ride luck jamiahsh had is now merely blog fodder – and that’s always fun.

### Comments

**derek**As posted on [this Youtube link](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKz6qdexetY)? :D It looks like someone on the ride recorded the whole Carousel of Progress and posted it for our enjoyment. There was also a frightening video of some people's legs moving up and down to their singing of the song as they lay in bed, but let's keep that one in the nether regions of that site...  
**jamiahsh**It's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow  
**derek**So... Any songs torturing your minds now? I remember the It's a Small World ride in CA. I didn't experience a breakdown there, but some of my group did one year...  
**jamiahsh**No fair... You DID NOT ride Peter Pan :) Yes, getting stuck in the "hot" room was a bit uncomfortable. The Norway experience was hilarious. You will have to elaborate on Jungle Cruise... Yo, Ho, Yo, Ho... A Pirate's Life For Me!

# Seinfeld And The Man Of Steel

Here’s a fun game for the holidays, providing you like Superman and the show Seinfeld, for that matter.Â  I read an interesting little blurb in the paper the other day about how Jerry Seinfeld is a huge fan of Superman.Â  So much so that there is a reference or an image of the “Man of Steel” in *every* episode of Seinfeld.Â  So this holiday season, while your turkey is cooking, digesting, or being cleaned up for youÂ by your guests (how do you think I found the time to write this post on Thanksgiving Day?), pop in a few old episodes of Seinfeld and try toÂ pinpoint the Superman allusion.

### Comments

**jamiahsh**YEP... now please don't quiz me on them. I do remember the commercials with Jerry and the Big Blue Boy Scout.

# Vacation Diary - Chapter Six

*NOTE:Â  This is the final part of a 6 part series about a family vacation to Florida*

Friday, October 24, 2008 – We slept in (at least I did – my husband got up with the kids) and packed up and decided to depart early.Â  We were toying with the idea of renting an air boat to take into the swamp, but it was overcast again, and we weren’t sure how the kids would fare in the swamp.Â  So we headed out of the Orlando area, and we stopped at two beaches.Â  The first one was not memorable, and I don’t remember where it was – somewhere south of Flagler beach because we stopped there next after heading north up the coast.Â  The first beach had crushed shells for sand and it was still overcast and windy which made it a little chilly.Â  It was really cool to see two different moods of the ocean this trip; especially since we’re used to landlocked Ohio.Â  Well, we have Lake Erie, but that’s not the same as the ocean.Â  On the way there, it was a beautiful blue/green with soft, rolling waves.Â  On the way home, it was gray, and the waves had white caps and sometimes a large one would sneak up and catch us off guard and soak us.Â  At Flagler Beach, we found a coconut and a log, which we took with us – only after asking the park ranger on duty, of course.Â  He was friendly, and he said that coconut must have come a long way – and now it calls Ohio home!Â  Flagler Beach is a Florida State Park, and it was very nice.Â  There was a ramp leading down to the beach for the wheelchair-bound or strollers.Â  And the bathrooms were very nice for being outdoor state park bathrooms – they should have been a step away from port-a-potties, but these were really nice and clean too.

Since we were ahead of schedule, we decided to spend the night in a hotel, so we stopped outside of Savannah, Georgia at a Comfort Suites in Pooler.Â  It was a nice place, and we went swimming in the morning.Â  I think their chlorine content in the pool was way high because my husband’s eyes were burning and for weeks my girls and I had problems with our hair.Â  It was getting tangled really easily, and it wasn’t smooth or soft anymore.Â  My husband held my ponytail up to the hair closer to my head and there was a huge color difference – the ends of my hair were shades lighter than the top!Â  I have long hair, so I think the bottom part of my hairÂ which was in the pool the longest got bleached by the chlorine.Â  I actually haven’t had the time to go and get it chopped off, but it seems to be getting back to normal now, thank goodness.

Saturday, October 25, 2008 – The hotel had a breakfast, which was actually kind of crowded, but we enjoyed bagels and cereal before our morning swim.Â  Got on the road about noon, stopped around 1:30 for lunch in the car.Â  I had an avocado sandwich (good!) from Atlanta Bread, and the kids had Bojangles Chicken, which has really good fries.Â  Chicken is pretty good too.Â  Stopped at a Shell gas station around Spartanburg, South Carolina, where we were approached by a man who had “run out of gas”.Â  Luckily, he had plenty of jewelry on display inside his coat to sell, so hopefully he wouldn’t be stuck at the gas station for long.Â  Traffic got a little backed up near Asheville, and it was bumper-to-bumper, but for only about 10Â or 15 mins.Â  We decided to get off of I-40 to enjoy the mountainous scenery since we’re not usually in the mountains when there’s daylight on our trips down south.Â  In the peak of autumn color-changing season at sunset, the mountains were nothing short of gorgeous, and we pulled over at a fewÂ scenic overlooks for observation and picture-taking.Â  We stopped at a wonderful little restaurant in the mountains of Eastern Tennessee called “BBQ Garden Cafe”,Â and I can’t say enough great things about the place.Â  The ribs and corn were the best of each that both my husband and I have ***ever had****.Â* And that’s really saying a lot because we are tough critics when it comes to food at restaurants.Â  Unfortunately, as we chatted with the owner we learned that they were days away from closing – just not enough business in the mountains.Â  It’s a real shame too – best food I’ve had in a long time.Â  And it was a family owned place, so the owner got your order and went to grill it himself, and he even had his kids helping – a really nice family, and a really nice family atmosphere also.Â  I really hope that by some miracle the place doesn’t close – I was going to make sure we go back there every time we’re in Tennessee.Â  Here is the address, just in case you’re in the area; I can’t say enough how much I recommend the place.Â  You might want to call first though, since they did say they were closing down!Â  It’s located at: 3323 Cosby Hwy, Cosby, TN 37722

After the delicious dinner, we headed for home in Ohio, and we arrived at about 5 in the morning, a little early compared to usual.Â  But that’s ok, we needed the day for catch-up on sleep, laundry, unpacking, etc.Â  As you can see, I’ve been busy ever since which is why it took me a month to finish the trip diary.Â  But now I have, and all I have to do is cut and pasteÂ all 6 partsÂ into one diary for our family to read for years to come.Â  Thanks for letting me share it with you; here is a picture of the autumn Smokies at sunset:

Â [](http://taylhis.tangents.org/files/2008/11/10-25-08-mountains-of-nc-and-tenn-007.jpg)

### Comments

**derek**Sounds like you had a good time. I'm glad you were able to take your family out on vacation. I'm also glad you returned so we could get together a few weeks ago. :)  
**jamiahsh**And I do believe that there is one more vacation related entry that I am on pins and needles to read.  
**jamiahsh**And you were worried that you would not be able to see the leaves change (locally, anyway). There are way too few family owned small businesses around. Way too much focus on the bigger and better, quicker, etc while sacrificing for atmosphere.

# Down And Out In The Magic Kingdom

I wasÂ doing a searchÂ in the library’s database, and I came across the title *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* by Cory Doctorow.Â  Further investigation showed it to beÂ a science fiction book about Walt Disney World in the future.Â  Not usually my type of novel (and I strongly prefer to read non-fiction anyway), but since we’re Disney affectionados, I couldn’t resist the read.Â  It took me over a month to read it, and that’s not even soley because I’m so busy.Â  The book is difficult to read – author Doctorow does a nice job at placing the reader in the characters’ futuristic universe, but it’s almost too much – he neglects to provide an explanation of certain things.Â  For instance, the characters all have “Whuffie” and “HUDs”, and theseÂ concepts are constantly revisited throughout the story, but it’s never explained exactly what these things are!Â  My interpretation is that Whuffie refers to a meter in one’sÂ body that measures a person’s positive characteristics, experiences, and emotions – and others can see your Whuffie level.Â  A person with low Whuffie is shunned in society, and sometimes even denied entrance to Disney World.Â  HUDs seem to be a person’s computer – it almost seems to be a part of their brain.Â  They can look up stuff and send things to each other instantly with their HUDs like directions to places.Â  It seems to be kind of like today’s internet, yet it’s built right into people’s brains.Â  So, yeah, you can see why it was slow reading as the reader had to get around all of these unfamiliar concepts.Â  But onto the story itself…

In the future when *Down and Out…*Â  is set – and I don’t know what year that is, he never specifically says – Disney World is now a retro-park; something that is preserved only because it’s an example of the great works of our current time.Â  The main character, Julius and his girlfriend Lil (who was raised in the Magic Kingdom) are on a mission to save the Magic Kingdom and keep theÂ attractions as they are: old-fashioned rides through vintage dioramas.Â  There is a group of people trying to “rehab” all the rides and give them a futuristic makeover, and they do get ahold of the Hall of Presidents – they make it so that the guests can actually see what it *feels* like to be Abraham Lincoln and the rest of the former Presidents.Â  It is the goal of Julius, Lil, and their friend Dan to keepÂ the rest of Liberty Square (a section of the Magic Kingdom), especially the Haunted Mansion,Â away from the “ad-hocs” as the rehabbing group isÂ called.Â  Throw in Julius’ murder (don’t worry, he’s been “backed up” and can reclaim his life in a clone)Â and the fact that he now has to find out who killed him and keep it from happening again, and that’s how the plot thickens.

Overall, it was a very interesting read, but probably not something I’d re-read.Â  It was worth stepping out of my usual non-fiction genreÂ for the experience to read a science-fiction tale, but it wasn’t anything stupendous.Â  The story was interesting, and the author did a great job of detailing life in the future, even if it was at times confusing to the reader.Â  I kept feeling like I was coming in onÂ a sequel having missed the first part.Â  I thought there’d be more details about the Magic Kingdom, and in that respect, I was disappointed.Â  But if you like sci-fi books and you’ve been to Disney World, I recommend this book only if you read a lot and have lots of spare time.Â  On a grading scale, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom* gets a C- from me.Â  Up next for me is *My Lobotomy* by Howard Dully- a non-fiction book about a guy who was involuntarily given an “ice-pick” lobotomy as a 12-year old.

### Comments

**Heart Necklace**reading science fiction books is the stuff that i am always into. science fiction really widens my imagination `:~  
**taylhis**He IS a charming fellow ;) Stay tuned to my blog - I will write a review once I finish the book! It is a fascinating read so far (I'm on the "Lou" chapter), but it will take me a little bit to read it as I am very busy. I only read at bedtime and can only fit in a few pages before I fall asleep. It has NOTHING to do with how interesting or boring the book may be. I have 4 kids, and running after them all day requires all my energy. I WISH I had more time to read books like this!  
**Howard**Hey I kinda like that book "My Lobotomy" charming fellow and all that :)  
**derek**HUD is actually a real term. It stands for **H**ead **U**p **D**isplay. See [this Wikipedia link](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head-up_display). Sounds like a possibly interesting book as I am a sci-fi reader. I'll have to see if my library has it.

# The Scary Clown Sucessfully Sold Burgers

On another tangents.org blog, justj has been talking about cheeseburgers, namely White Castles and Burger Buddies (aka Burger Bundles), an ’80’s Burger King product.Â  I found an old Burger Bundles commercial on youtube and posted the link on his blog in the comments section of the [cheeseburger post](http://justj.tangents.org/archives/238).Â  While I was looking around on youtube, I foundÂ this old vintage McDonald’s commercial where Ronald looks like something out of a horror movie.Â  Regardless of what his early incarnation looked like, the clown worked for them in helping to create one of the most successful companies of all time.

If you can see this, then you might need a Flash Player upgrade or you need to install Flash Player if it's missing. Get [Flash Player](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/" \t "_blank) from Adobe.

### Comments

**derek**Looks like you forgot a few: [WIKIPEDIA LINK](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McDonaldland) I don't remember most of them, but Uncle O'Grimacey sounds pretty funny. Officer Big Mac had to be a counter to the Hamburglar. I vaguely remember him.  
**jamiahsh**Now... that IS ONE SCARY CLOWN!. Did I hear correctly that Mayor McCheese was ejected from McDonald's cast of characters for some outrageous reason. I remember Grimace, Hamburglar, the Fry Guys, and Birdie the Early Bird. Am I forgetting any?

# Rectal Gas Policy

We’re all adults here, right?Â Â Then you’d think the following sign spotted in the band room at a local high school would be less amusing:

**Rectal Gas Policy**– Any student who releases audible rectal gas will receive one after school detention.  
– Any student who “reacts” to audible or inaudible rectal gas will also receiveÂ  one after school detention.  
*If you feel the need to relieve yourself of rectal gas you must stand in the hallway to pass it.*

Where do I start?Â  First, it must be said that I was visiting the school while attending a wonderful show choir performance starring (as far as I’m concerned) a good friend and my favorite teenager.Â  She did an awesome job!

After the concert, another friend gave us a brief tour of the new school where she works.Â  It’s a really nice school, but we were surprised to find that they apparently have an entire policy about a specific bodily function.Â  I wonder if students actually go into the hallway to abide by the policy.Â  And it really makes one wonder about the incident(s) that caused the policy to be drafted in the first place.Â  Asking my friend to make copies of the policy so I can post it on my blog is juvenile, I’ll admit…Â  but funny is funny, and I find it amusing.Â  I wonder if the teacher realizes that strangers come through her band room sometimes and read her rectal gas policy?Â  Did she have to submit it to the principalÂ for approval before posting it?Â  Hey, Derek, do any of the schools you sub at have a body function policy?

### Comments

**taylhis**Well, ok, probably not funny if you work with kids who aren't yours all day - that's probably where the teacher who wrote this was coming from. And I feel badly for the FL boy - he was obviously causing a disturbance but there really wasn't anything else to do with him than to give him a criminal record? Understandable that some don't appreciate the humor in silly slapstick comedy, but sometimes for some people, it's a fun way to lighten a mood. With all the talk about Blazing Saddles lately, I'll have to see that one again as I don't remember much. I just read yesterday about how Mel Brooks wanted John Wayne to play the part of the Waco Kid, but Wayne said, "I can't be in this picture; it's too dirty. But I'll be the first one in line to see it."  
**derek**I find these jokes in movies kind of sad actually- appealing to the lowest common denominator and all that. I have never seen such a policy myself, and rest assured if I did and was subbing in that room, the kids would get a free day from it as I have better things to do than waste my time taking the names of kids who pass gas. Those who fake it, however... I hate to top you on this Taylhis, but I just read about a student ***arrested*** for doing this in class. Okay, maybe it's not a topper as there was a little more to it, but here it is nonetheless: [Florida Boy Arrested For Gas Attack](http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/years/2008/1121083gas1.html)  
**jamiahsh**Juvenile or not... how many people of any age would not get a chuckle out of the rule. I definitely would fall victim to the second part of the rule. No matter what age you are... exaggerated flatulence is funny... How many of us have seen Blazing Saddles?

# Thanks To The Paper Fairy

It began yesterday – my daily newspaper arrived on my doorstep by 3:30 pm.Â  Were the kids off school today?Â  That was my first thought since our paper is never at our house before 4:30, even when the paper boy doesn’t have school.Â  But I’ve talked to some friends, and whenever their paper kids are off school, they get their paper much earlier than usual.Â  So once I determined the kids were not off school, I was excited to think that we might have a new paper kid, especially when today’s paper was here by **2:00pm** – unheard of.Â  So what is going on?

I’ve come to the conclusion that there must be a ‘paper fairy’ – someone who is delivering me a paper other than my regular delivery boy.Â  IÂ made this deductionÂ when I returned home this evening to find another newspaper on the doorstep, in addition to the one that arrived before 2 when I went out and discovered it.Â  So who is the kind soul who is doing this?Â  Where are they getting the extra paper?Â  Is the newspaper office making a mistake and they have me down for double delivery?Â  Are they charging me for two?Â  Did my delivery kid go off the deep end?Â  I have been extra vocal in my complaints about the delivery kid lately – maybe someone just wanted to shut me up.Â  The last straw was when the kid delivered my paper in a plastic bag on a rainy day last week, and the paper still got soaked somehow.Â  I hate to call the office and complain since he’s just a kid, but that day I thought about it.

So anyway, I thought if the paper fairy is reading my blog, at least I’d thank him or her – I do appreciate your efforts.Â  It’s been nice to participate in conversations about the paper since for the past two days, I’ve had time to glance at the headlines before I go out for the evening.Â  And if the double deliveryÂ continues, chances are between my *two* daily papers, on rainy days at least one will be dry!

### Comments

**justj**Paper, what is a paper? I'd like to say save a tree, read it online, but I'm not sure the local paper is on line.  
**jamiahsh**It seems strange that you got the paper at 2PM... is that not before school lets out? Kid's parents dropping them off when the kid has after school activity or is sick? But our delivery times can be sporadic also.