

Good Riddance To Lost And Celebrating...

...the end of my desire to re-watch the run of the show on dvd. Here I thought the finale would be so ground-breaking, so explanatory, and so intriguing that it would make me want to re-watch the entire show again, just to see how it looked after it was pulled all together. But I was wrong. I don't want to watch it again, and they didn't pull it together. In fact, my feelings couldn't be further from what I had hoped – I want to forget that I was ever hooked on a show called Lost, and I want to forget that a show called Lost ever existed.

The tv show Lost premiered in 2004. The premise always seemed intriguing – a group of people survive a plane crash only to be faced with unforeseen mysterious challenges that await them on a mystical island. I meant to watch it during its inaugural season, but I had a new baby in 2004, and tv was not one of my top priorities. After Lost's first season ended, however, the water cooler buzz just became too intriguing for me to resist, so my husband and I began to catch ourselves up on the first season, thinking we could always drop the show if we didn't like it. But like millions of others, we were hooked – Lost was great. WAS. Somewhere along the line, the show **lost** (haha) quality and many viewers at the same time – I'm thinking this was around the time of the infamous Hollywood Writers' Guild strike of 2007-8. Many tv shows went on an indefinite hiatus at that time, some did not return, and some, like Lost, were never the same. Lost became famous for throwing out a ton of loose ends, new characters and questions each new episode – without ever offering answers or resolutions. Many viewers **lost** (ahem) the ability or desire to follow the show, and Lost **lost** (cough cough) much of its fan following. And that's when Darlton (the collective name of the show's production / writing team Carlton Cuse and Damon

Lindelof) announced an end date to Lost – all of our many questions and loose ends would be concluded at the end of the 2010 season. And my husband and I, like many other almost-lost Lost fans decided to stick around. After all, we reasoned, we had invested all this time already, why not a few more seasons, especially if we were going to get our answers? We were anxiously awaiting the finale tonight, but unlike the anticipation of true Lost fans, we were just excited that we could have our Tuesday nights back. Much of the buzz compared Lost to reading a good book – when you get near the end, you think, what am I going to do when this book is over? It's so good! I can certainly identify with the good book analogy, but I would not apply it to Lost – we were just happy it was ending. So I guess disappointing isn't really the word I would use to describe the finale. I was half-expecting no real answers, considering the original bait and switch, but I couldn't really believe that they could get away with such a thing. And I am disappointed that I wasted a whopping **four and a half hours** (count 'em) on this tonight!

The first 2 hours were a re-cap special, which was less helpful than I thought. The first half of it was the actors reflecting on the show and giving inside info about filming techniques, etc. I'm thinking, why would they show this before the final episode airs? It didn't make sense to me. Now I'm thinking it was just another way to grease the wheels of Lost fans to overwhelm their tiny minds and brainwash them into being happy with the craptastic finale. There were also these "Lost Transmissions" – letters from audience members incorporated into scenes of Lost. They used footage from old episodes of Lost to make it look like Lost characters are actually reading fans' letters – for example, a scene with computers had a fan's letter written on a computer screen and the characters reacting to the "letter". It was really stupid, and no, I'm not just upset that my letter wasn't chosen. I didn't care enough to write a letter, just as I don't care enough to stay up really late, pointing out every

one of the clues I found that the cast and crew of Lost KNEW their finale would be incredibly awful and disappointing.

So anyway, then the finale episode itself was TWO and a half hours, and NONE of the questions were answered. NONE. All of the “true lovers” were paired up, and that provided enough fluff to keep Lost fans preoccupied and happy with the end, or so the producers hoped. Not the case in this household. In fact, if you ask me, in many of the interviews with the actors, you can catch hidden statements that they were not happy with the ending and didn’t think the fans would be satisfied. In fact, Darleton themselves made a series of disclaimers during the re-cap special. I’m not going to waste more time on Lost by pointing everything out though. I stayed up until 11:30 to watch this garbage and another 30 minutes writing this, and that’s long enough. Goodbye Lost – and GOOD RIDDANCE!

Oh yeah, a quick list of the few of **many** Lost loose ends they failed to tie up, just off the top of my head there are plenty more:

The temple and the guy who was in charge of it.

Sayid and Claire changing, having something dark inside them.

Drug smuggling with the Mary statues on the small plane that crashed – a man named Echo and his brother appearing to Lost survivors – for example, Hurley in the mental hospital.

The Numbers

Walt

Walt’s Comic Books

Whidmore’s connection to the island

Polar Bears

Miles' father – Dharma guy on Dharma Initiative training videos

The whole show in general – the ending didn't make sense to me at all

And I have one last thing to say – the 10 seconds of the water-skiing squirrel on the news after Lost was more entertaining than the Lost finale. At least my night was redeemed – thank you, water-skiing squirrel!

*An addendum – it was too late last night for me to write about the extremely entertaining Jimmy Kimmel Lost special, so I'll just share the alternate Lost endings he had on his show – they are very funny and although meant as jokes, any one of them would have been better than the REAL series finale. Sigh.

Look What They've Started...

If you're a fan of Wicked, stop reading because the following post might offend you, by no means am I pulling any punches. I had kind of a stressful day that I can't post about, and then I read this article, so that was the icing on the cake. Think I'll take out my frustrations on pop culture – things that don't really matter in real life.

I just read an offensive (to me) article detailing the no fewer than SIX Wizard of Oz spinoffs currently being developed in Hollywood. Luckily for the world and movie fans abound, most of them won't see the light of day, but unfortunately at least one or even a few will make it through production and be released into mainstream society, poisoning the legacy of Baum's characters and the 1939 MGM cinematic masterpiece we true fans hold dear. Before you think I'm overreacting, read the synopses I included below. If you're still not offended, do a google image search to dredge up the action figures from the Twisted Oz series, but make sure your kids aren't in the room first. What is this world coming to?

I bring Wicked into this because I blame the franchise – once someone decided to write a book imagining their own version of Baum's characters, the door was blown wide open. Sure, there have been uncountable Wizard of Oz spinoffs. The Muppets had one, the Veggie Tales had one, and countless sitcoms from the last 7 decades had their shots at putting their main characters in versions of Munchkinland. But not until Wicked took off in popularity have people really started abusing the integrity of Baum's original characters and, more importantly to me, massacring the sweet and innocent 1939 MGM movie – my favorite movie for many reasons, the main one being how advanced in many ways it truly was for its day. Sure, 1985's

debacle Return to Oz was no picnic, but did it really do any significant damage? Not really, it was never really liked nor taken seriously. I like to make this comparison: take another movie classic, say, Gone With The Wind. Now take an “author” (really just some who is literate enough to be able to put words together to make a story) and imagine them creating a “backstory” for the Civil War characters Rhett Butler and Scarlett O’Hara. Let’s make Rhett, oh, let’s say he was an astronaut before he met Scarlett and let’s make her an ER doctor – that’s why she has trouble attaching to people; it’s because she loses them in the ER. Doesn’t make much sense, does it? Probably because Gone With the Wind is what it is – an epic story set during the 1800’s when those professions did not exist as we know them today. Do you see my point? Wicked has the witches going to school and other ridiculous scenarios – I’m not going to falsely claim to be an expert as I’ve never read the book nor seen the show. Perhaps if I saw the show, I would like it – everyone seems to rave about it, and the costumes are supposed to be amazing. Maybe so, but they should have left my favorite movie alone! They could have started from scratch, wrote their own stories with their own characters, and I would have been perfectly happy to check out Wicked the show. But they had to steal Baum’s ideas and MGM’s visions just to put a brand-name on a product to sell, and this my friends, is called “selling out”.

And as a result, we might be faced with the following junk polluting our theaters in the future (taken from [this article](#) from moviefone):

- *‘Surrender Dorothy’*

Who’s behind it? Drew Barrymore’s production company, Flower Films

What’s it about? According to Pajiba, the latest version of the script, by Zach Helm (‘Stranger Than Fiction’) is an ‘Enchanted’-like story that sees the Wicked Witch of the West still alive and threatening to take over our world as well as

Oz. It's up to Dorothy's great-great-granddaughter to figure out how to use the ruby slippers to defeat her.

Status: Barrymore's been developing this project since way back in 1999, when she was still a fresh-faced ingenue who'd just played Cinderella in 'Ever After.' Today, Pajiba says, the 35-year-old is unlikely to star in it, but she would direct it as her follow-up to her directing debut in last year's 'Whip It.' Pajiba imagines she might cast 'Whip It' star Ellen Page, who would indeed make a fine Dorothy. Still, with 11 years having gone by, it doesn't seem like Barrymore's exactly in a hurry to get this off the ground.

• 'Oz the Great and Powerful'

Who's behind it? Disney and 'Alice in Wonderland' producer Joe Roth

What's it about? The script by Mitchell Kapner ('The Whole Nine Yards') tells the backstory of how the wizard went from earthbound carnival mountebank to becoming the fearsome and mysterious sorcerer of the Emerald City.

Status: Given the success of the Roth-produced 'Alice,' Disney is likely to fast-track this movie, which was formerly titled 'Brick' (as in "yellow"?), according to the Los Angeles Times. Now that the next James Bond movie has been postponed and his schedule freed up, Sam Mendes has been approached to direct and Robert Downey Jr. to star, reports FirstShowing. Neither has yet said yes.

• 'Oz'

Who's behind it? Temple Hill, the production company behind the 'Twilight' movies

What's it about? According to the Los Angeles Times, the script by Darren Lemke ('Shrek Forever After') is a faithful retelling of L. Frank Baum's first novel in the saga, 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.' Imagine the Judy Garland movie, but with more action and no music.

Status: Coming from the New Line division of Warner Bros., this has the potential to launch a vast franchise based on

the 22 'Oz' books. Which is why it's the most likely of the three competing 'Oz' projects at Warners (see below) to see the light of day.

- 'The Twisted Land of Oz'

Who's behind it? Comic book gorehound and toymaker Todd McFarlane ('Spawn')

What's it about? Based on McFarlane's own decidedly R-rated 'Twisted Land of Oz' line of figurines, his Oz includes a Scarecrow who's torn apart by ravenous birds, a Tin Man who's a junkpile of Edward Scissorhands-like limbs, a flesh-eating Lion who's not at all cowardly, a Wizard who's a gas-mask-wearing mad scientist, a carnivorous creature dubbed Toto after it eats Dorothy's dog, and a nubile Dorothy who's bound and molested by depraved Munchkins.

Status: There was confusion in the trade press (including some strewn by McFarlane himself) between this project and Josh Olson's, (see below) since both were pitched to production company Thunder Road, with an eye toward distribution by Warner Bros. Last we heard from McFarlane (via MTV), back in September, he was grumbling over Thunder Road's apparent decision to go with Olsen's more family-friendly script instead of his own. McFarlane also claimed at one point that Michael Bay was interested in directing, but we imagine he's a little too busy making movies based on another line of toys.

- 'Oz: Return to the Emerald City'

Who's behind it? Screenwriter Josh Olson ('A History of Violence')

What's it about? In a plot that sounds a lot like 'Surrender Dorothy,' a descendant of Dorothy Gale (this time, her granddaughter) living in contemporary America (she's a young associate at a top Chicago law firm) is called upon to defeat a new witch making trouble in Oz. Aiding the young woman are the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion that she's been hearing her grandmother talk about for years.

Status: Olsen has denied ever being affiliated with the McFarlane 'Oz,' telling MTV in January that the script he delivered to Thunder Road and Warner Bros. was based on his own original pitch. Dakota Fanning was rumored at one time to be up for the younger Dorothy, but that rumor proved false (makes sense, since Olsen's granddaughter character is an adult). Of course, both Olsen's and McFarlane's projects have to compete with Temple Hill's for Warners' favor.

- *'Wicked'*

Who's behind it? Universal

What's it about? It's a film version of the Broadway smash about what Glinda the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch of the West were like when they were schoolmates, well before Dorothy showed up. (Think 'Mean Girls' with green face paint.) Winnie Holzman, who wrote the book for the musical, has also written the screenplay.

Status: Universal is a co-producer of the stage show and has owned the film rights since the play opened seven years ago. Despite an IMDB listing that cites a 2012 release date, there's been no sign of progress beyond script stage. No one has been cast, though let's hope this gets rolling before original stars (and recurring 'Glee' guest players) Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel are too old to reprise their stage roles.

Creativity With Spam

If you're looking for recipes for that gross canned meat, you've come to the wrong place... This post is about the internet spam variety since the blogs here have been getting a ton of spam comments recently. I just mark them as spam and

delete them, but some are so amusing that they deserve recognition.

Come on people. Some of these are so obviously written by someone who doesn't even speak English – am I really supposed to believe that they read my English blog and understood enough to appreciate it? Some are just general comments, and I'm not (that) stupid, so they're obviously such generic comments that they barely apply to the blog post for which they are written. Some just don't make sense at all as you'll see below; I've dug up the best 5... and I wonder how much spam I will get on this spam post?

– The following is a response I got to a post I wrote about local murders:

Me and my brother eat with a fork too, but that doesnt' change or mean anything, does it?

What?

– I received the following comment on a blog post I wrote about a man and his eagle:

Definitely trust that which you stated. Your explanation was certainly the easiest to recognise. I tell you, I usually get irked when folks discuss problems that they plainly have no idea about. You managed to hit the nail at the head and explained out everything without complication. Maybe, people usually takes a signal. Will likely return to obtain more. Thanks.

Mhmm...

– Here is a comment on a blog I wrote about everyday life:

Martin you beed to sort out the awful display after this weekend. Too many tired wasters.

Makes no sense whatsoever.

– Another one from the same everyday life post:

Intimately, the post is really the best on this precious topic. I concur with your conclusions and will eagerly look

forward to your coming updates. Just saying thanks will not just be sufficient, for the exceptional lucidity in your writing. I will instantly grab your rss feed to stay abreast of any updates. Gratifying work and much success in your business endeavors!

Wonderful use of the English language there. Get a thesaurus for your birthday, didja?

– And finally, this one had Europe (or Australia as it turned out to be) written all over it – my first clue was the use of the word ‘keen’. One thing I’d like to know is, why are these spambots so enthusiastic about telling their brother?

Yes, I was very keen on that. So was my brother. He said he will check it out tomorrow. We will be back before you know it.

Great. Is that a threat or a promise?

Talking To The Animals

Do a search on youtube.com for talking animals, and you’ll see birds, dogs, and cats that say human words. Not all of them know what they’re saying, but some of them do. I came across an article on cnn.com about 4 animals that could REALLY talk – these include a seal, a cat, a parrot, and a chimpanzee.

In 1971, George and Alice Swallow found a baby seal just off the coast of Maine. The little guy appeared to be orphaned, so they took him home and kept him in their bathtub.

For the first few days, they tried to feed him ground mackerel, but he refused to eat. Once he trusted his new parents, though, he began eating so voraciously they compared him to a Hoover vacuum cleaner and the name stuck.

When he got too big for the tub, Hoover was moved to a small pond behind the Swallows' house. After only a few months, Hoover was eating more fish than his human caretakers were able to provide, so they contacted the New England Aquarium in Boston, hoping the facility had room for him.

When introducing the seal to the aquarium, George mentioned that Hoover could talk. Of course no one believed him at the time. A few years later, though, researchers at the aquarium noticed that Hoover's guttural sounds really did seem to be forming words and phrases. He was often telling people to "Get outta here!" or asking, "How are ya?" He could say his name and a few other phrases, all with a thick Bostonian accent.

Once the word got out that the Aquarium had a talking seal, he became a media sensation, making appearances in Reader's Digest, The New Yorker, National Public Radio, and even on Good Morning America.

Sadly, Hoover died of natural causes in July 1985 at the ripe old age of 14. He was so admired that he received his own obituary in the Boston Globe. He left behind several offspring, but none possessed his unique gift for gab.

I did a google search for Hoover the Seal, and I did find one piece of audio, but my husband says the words are not Hoover's. I'm not sure what to think – my husband has a point: if there was a talking seal, and he died in 1985, why aren't there more video clips of him out there? I can be kind of gullible, but then again, thousands of people claim to have seen this seal talk, so I don't know. Here is the youtube video I found which is audio only. What do you think? If anyone has visited Hoover and seen him talk, I'd love to hear from you!

Then there was Blackie, the talking cat.

When Carl Miles of Augusta, Georgia, trained his cat Blackie to say, "I love you" and "I want my mama," they took their act on the road. Throughout the early 1980s, Blackie made paid appearances on local TV and radio programs, and even hit the big time with a spot on the network TV show That's Incredible.

However, as the novelty wore off, Carl and Blackie ended up performing on street corners, asking for donations from passersby. After some complaints from locals, police informed Carl that he would need to get a business license in order to keep up Blackie's street show. Carl paid the \$50 fee for a license, but something about it rubbed him the wrong way.

So Carl sued the city of Augusta, under the pretense that the city's business license code mentions many types of occupations that require a license, but a talking cat show was not one of them. But that wasn't the only issue Carl had—he also claimed the city was infringing on Blackie's First Amendment Right to Free Speech.

Carl lost his case, but he appealed the ruling until it came before a federal court. The argument was finally closed when three presiding judges declared that the business license ordinance allowed for other, unspecified types of businesses to require a license, which would encompass a talking cat performer.

As for the First Amendment violation, the courts said the law did not apply because Blackie was not human, and therefore not protected under the Bill of Rights. Furthermore, there seemed no good cause for Carl Miles to be the one to bring the suit in the first place. If Blackie felt his rights were being violated, as a talking cat, he should have been the one to say something.

Next comes Alex the African Grey parrot. I've always wanted an African Grey parrot (ever since as a kid I enjoyed the book Harry's Mad by Dick King-Smith), and so I took special notice of Alex when he would make media appearances. He died suddenly and unexpectedly in 2007, most likely from some sort of heart problem, but not before his accomplishments amazed millions.

According to Dr. Pepperberg's research, this avian Einstein could identify 50 different objects, knew seven colors and shapes, and many different kinds of materials like wool, paper, and wood. For example, hold up a blue block of wood and Alex could tell you the shape, the color, and even what it was made of.

However, he also grasped more complex concepts that required a higher level of thought and understanding. Put a handful of red and yellow blocks on a tray and ask him how many were yellow, he could tell you the correct answer. If you then asked him how many of those same blocks were green, he would say "none."

Furthermore, hold up two blocks of different colors and different sizes and he could tell you which was bigger.

And finally, Lucy, the chimpanzee who was raised like a child by humans:

When she was only two days old, Lucy, a chimpanzee, was purchased by the University of Oklahoma and sent to live with Dr. Maurice Temerlin, a noted psychologist, who, along with his wife, raised the little chimp as if she were their own human child.

Lucy was taught how to eat normal meals at the table using silverware. She could dress herself, often choosing to wear skirts just like her "mother" did. She could even make tea for her "parents" and the team of researchers who trained and

cared for her.

Dr. Robert Fouts, one of the groundbreaking psychologists who taught American Sign Language (ASL) to Washoe the chimp in 1967, helped Lucy learn to communicate using around 250 ASL signs. Lucy could not only give the signs for objects like airplane, ball, and food, but she could also express her emotions with her hands, often “saying” when she was hungry, happy, or sad.

Lucy had become so close to human in most every way that she only found human men, not male chimpanzees, sexually attractive. It was pretty clear that, in her mind anyway, she was the same as her parents.

It's a sad fact that once a captive chimp has reached about four or five years old, their immense strength can become a danger to their human caretakers. Often they need to be placed in a zoo, a lab, or some other facility better equipped to handle primates. In this case, the Temerlins raised Lucy as their daughter until 1977, when she was almost 12 years old, before they finally felt like they had to find her a new home.

After much deliberation, they decided upon a nature preserve in Gambia on the west coast of Africa. They, along with research assistant Janis Carter, flew with Lucy to her new home to help ease the chimp into the wild. However, it was not going to be as simple as they'd hoped.

At the preserve, Lucy was put in a cage at night to protect her from predators. She had only ever slept in a bed inside a nice, quiet, suburban home, so the jungle was a completely new and frightening environment for her.

She was also scared of the other chimps, strange creatures she had only encountered a few times before in her life, preferring to stay close to her parents and Janis whenever she could.

She wasn't eating because her food had always been delivered to her on a plate; she didn't even understand the concept of foraging.

When her parents suddenly became distant and weren't providing her with the life she had always known, Lucy became confused and sad. She would often use the sign for "hurt." And she lost much of her hair due to the stress of her new situation.

Realizing that Lucy would never move on if they stayed, her parents left her behind after three weeks. Janis agreed to stay for a few weeks longer, but it was soon clear that Lucy couldn't change who she was. And so, Janis never left.

Janis helped found a chimpanzee sanctuary on an abandoned island in the middle of the Gambia River. She took Lucy and other chimps that had been raised in captivity and lived with them on the island, teaching them skills they would need in the wild, like finding food and climbing trees.

For most, the new lifestyle quickly became second nature. But for nearly eight years, Lucy refused to give up her human ways. She wanted human food, human interaction, and to be loved by, what she considered, one of her own kind. It wasn't until Janis stopped living on the island that Lucy was finally able to accept her new life and joined a troupe of chimps.

Whenever Janis visited the island, Lucy was still affectionate, still used sign language, but thankfully, she always went back with the chimps into the forest.

Sadly, Lucy's decomposed body was discovered in 1987. Her exact cause of death is unknown, though some believe she was killed by poachers. Others say it was probably something less spectacular, like an attack by a dominant male or an illness.

There's one thing that no one who knew her wonders about,

though, and that's the fact that Lucy never really believed she was anything less than human.

Ok, so the part about Lucy being sexually attracted to male humans is a bit disturbing and TMI. Nonetheless, the article provided a fascinating look at animals who act closer to humans than we can imagine. Just a friendly reminder that all animals can be dangerous, however, so as they say, don't try this at home!

And I'm somewhat surprised that [Koko the gorilla](#) who uses sign language was kept off the list – Lucy the chimp could use sign language, so what about Koko?

To read the article in its entirety, [click here](#).

Some Might Have Called It A Disaster...

... but not me. I'm talking about my hugely busy, albeit super-fun weekend. It began Friday night when we took the kids to the Fort Wayne Tin Caps (minor league baseball) game. We decided to go mainly because we needed to get to a Ticketmaster outlet to buy tickets for an upcoming arena football game. Since we live in a rural area, the nearest Ticketmaster is an hour away, but the drive to the city to get tickets was still cheaper than all of the service fees Ticketmaster wanted to tack on for phone or internet orders. So we decided while we were in the city, why not take the kids somewhere fun, so we decided upon the baseball game. The only problem is that we found out just as we were leaving (at 4:10) that Ticketmaster closed at 5 – we live more than an hour

away, especially at rush hour on a Friday evening. It was a big deal because we had already bought our baseball tickets, and the only reason we decided to go to the baseball game with such a busy weekend ahead was because we were going to use the money that we were going to save buying the football tickets at Ticketmaster – except now we weren't going to make it by 5 (did I mention that Ticketmaster's website said they were open until 6? So this really wasn't our fault...) Long story short, we arrived there at 5:20, and the people at the Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne were very accommodating. We got our arena football tickets at the original price without the crazy sur-charges – YAY! So on to the baseball game... It was fun, though we had barely sat down on our lawn seats when my almost 2-year-old son took a tumble and was one dad-catching-his-shirttail away from falling from a 3-foot-high ledge onto cement and cracking his head open. We promptly moved seats, and after my son ran around for a bit, we were actually able to watch some of the game, even though our team lost.

Saturday was my daughter's birthday party, and we ended up with about 10 kids (this is a guesstimate – they were never still enough to count them all!). Thankfully, the weather was nice, so we decided to keep all the kids outside for the entire party. The kids started to get rambunctious, and it was difficult to keep so many kids entertained and out of trouble for so long (note to self – next year, an hour is plenty long for a kids' birthday party) – we had the parents coming 2½ hours after the party started on Saturday, which was WAY TOO LONG! Everything was going ok though, until one of the party guests opened the gate while playing hide n' go seek. Suddenly, we had 2 dogs loose and roaming the neighborhood. 2 of the adults fanned out to go catch the dogs, and I was left to control the 10 kids (AND my son and his cousin who are around 2 years old). Some of the kids were scared for the dogs, some were bored by being outside, some were whining for cake, and others just stood there, looking as

shell-shocked as I felt. Then the phone rang, and it was a neighbor on the next street over (whom I've never met) saying that they have our dogs. Thinking my husband was still around, I followed my mom and oldest daughter with some leashes to capture the dogs. Somewhere in the melee, it became apparent that my husband was just on his way back from looking for the dogs, and he comes back to the entire birthday party which he thought was unattended (though I was leaving as he was coming), but in the meantime, my daughter had decided to lead her guests into the house, like some sort of catastrophic parade. We got to the neighbors house, but they only had one dog by this time, so my mom and my daughter went to find the other one while I returned the puppy to the house. When I got back, we were still missing a few adults who were out looking for the dogs, and my daughter the birthday girl is begging for her cake. Eventually, my mom and my daughter returned with the dog, everyone was fine, but we were still missing some adults who were still out looking for the lost-now-found dogs. We found everyone, and tried to relax, even though there was still an entire hour left of the party – WHEW! For the most part, the kids were good, but there was one little girl who was not a very good listener. She seemed to rub off on the other kids too. Is it a coincidence that this is the same little girl who had opened the gate in the first place? For the rest of the party, she was obsessed with the puppy. She wanted to hug him, squeeze him, and hold him every second. After his romp around the neighborhood, he was quite tired and made an easy mark to catch, but he was still a good sport – good thing he's great with kids. I asked her to leave the puppy alone at least 4 times, and I heard my mom doing the same, and later my husband said he also tried, especially when he saw her dragging the puppy by his collar. She reminded me of the character Elmyra from the cartoon Tiny Toon Adventures. For those of you who aren't familiar, I had fun finding the following clip – picture this little girl at our birthday party leading the pack of 10 kids, and you'll wonder how we survived. Starting

at the 35 second mark, this could have been a scene from our house on Saturday:

After the fiasco of a party (the kids had fun, so I wouldn't call it a disaster, even if it was stressful at times), my family took the kids to their hotel for a party, and Hubby and I got some alone time. The problem was, after the busy week we'd had, we were too tired to do much of anything. We hastily chose a Redbox movie, and it was terrible. To my husband's credit, he wanted to just forget it after seeing the small selection, but I pushed for [Meadowoods](#) since it was the only horror movie available and it was just \$1 and we had already waited in line at the Redbox – I didn't want it to be for nothing. But it was a complete waste of time (movie-wise I mean, for any time with Hubby is well-spent); we would have been better off watching someone's youtube videos for 88 minutes instead, that would have been far more interesting. If only Redbox had an imdb link at the Redbox units – perhaps Meadowoods' 3.1 rating would have made me just want to forget it too...

Sunday our church service ran late (of all days), and so we were running late for the entire day... But we had a nice brunch with our family before seeing them off back to Illinois. We then picked up my daughter's friend for a playdate, and I was off to my MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) group get-together a little late because I had to finish up my thank-you notes and my appetizer. I had decided upon little smokies in the crock pot instead of picking up a 7-layer dip as I had originally planned because I didn't want to be even later after having to stop at the store to get the dip. Everything was well-planned, and the appetizer actually tasted good... but I forgot to drive gently on the way there – I was already late and in a hurry. I wasn't even out of town before I had to hit the brakes and make a hard stop, sending the crock pot flying, leaving me with a huge pool of barbeque sauce on the front passenger-side floor. I pulled over and cleaned it up best I could – I am so thankful I had a roll of paper towels and extra plastic bags in the car! But when I got to my friend's house, my smokie appetizer in my crock pot

had NO sauce left... oh well, what could I do? There was plenty of other great food, and I ate too much. I think I was the only one to take the food they brought home with them, but I can't really blame anyone for not wanting seconds on the sauceless smokies. To add injury to insult, the crock pot tipped again on the way home (what is WITH my driving?), and I had smokies on the floor of my car this time. Did I mention that Hubby and I spent an hour cleaning out the car last week? But I guess it worked out since if we hadn't cleaned out the car, the BBQ sauce would have spilled all over the junk that was in the car – this way I just ruined the floor of the car and the floor mat – and luckily for me, I have 4 kids and therefore don't put too much stock into the car's appearance or condition. Besides, talk about built-in air freshener... if anyone accuses our car of stinking like anything but BBQ sauce for a long time, I will certainly be surprised!

After everything that went wrong this weekend, some might classify it as a disaster, but we call it FUN!! ☐

Stopping For A Breath In May

The month of May for our family has been booked solid for months. Now that we are in the midst of this wonderful month, there is literally ONE day on our calender for the whole month that remains empty. But I have to say, when busyness such as this used to stress me out just a few years ago, I have since learned to embrace it and enjoy these good times. I've been able to find a healthy balance between planning ahead and making myself crazy worrying about every little detail; a compromise between taking one day at a time and also being organized enough to think ahead (but not too much to be

stressed).

This coming weekend is just an example of the busyness of every weekend in May: Friday night we are going to Fort Wayne to see a minor league baseball game, Saturday we are double-booked with an event for our youth group (which we will unfortunately have to skip) and my daughter's 6th birthday party. We are expecting family from Illinois and almost 10 kids to attend; my kids are so excited! The kids (mine, not all the party guests!) will spend the night at Grandma's hotel, and Hubby and I have been tempted to go to the drive-in, which is SO much more relaxing without kids. The problem is, the drive-ins are about an hour away from our house, and since they show double-features that don't begin until sundown, we can't expect to get home until after 2am Saturday night – not sure if that's doable in the middle of this busy weekend on top of me being already extremely tired. I haven't gotten a good night's sleep in about a week since our 3-year-old has been coming into our room in the middle of the night and also waking up early in the morning. But the drive-in sounds like too much fun to pass up, so we'll see.

We have to rest up for Sunday, another big day. We will begin by going to early church, then brunch with family, and then our oldest daughter has a playdate, our almost-6-year-old has a birthday party to attend, and I have a get-together for my mom's group. I'm looking forward to it, but somewhere in all of this I have to find time to prepare an appetizer, write thank-you notes, and get and wrap a birthday present for my daughter's friend. Plus I have to figure out how to do the play date and get my daughter to the birthday party when I am going to take the car to a neighboring town all day, leaving my husband with errands, all the kids and no car. Sounds stressful, but amazingly, I am relaxed and ready for FUN!! I just wish I wasn't so tired...

Fool Me Once, Strike One

My kids have been totally crazy lately. End of school year I guess? Great, let's take a look at the irony in that... end of school year makes kids act crazy, which makes me dread the end of the school year when I will have 4 crazy, bored, unstimulated kids 24/7. Nice irony, that. But anyway, today it's been one thing after another. So much so, that I've decided to use my spare minute to blog it instead of doing one of the other many and more productive things that I had planned for today.

I guess it began when my son pooped and smeared it all over the bathtub. He somehow managed this while his sister was watching him so I could run to the kitchen for a minute to stir lunch which was on the stove. I had to turn down the stove and delay lunch while I cleaned up the mess. Don't worry, I washed my hands (many times), but lunch was late, giving my daughter less time than usual to eat it before school. I took extra time today to make their favorite mac n' cheese, but no one ate anything. So that also cancels my make-your-own pizza sandwiches I was planning for dinner. Like I'm going to allow the extra mess and time it will take for the kids to make their pizza sandwiches when they wouldn't even eat lunch. Besides, I have my end-of-the-year MOPs meeting to get to, and I'm not taking 4 hungry kids into MOPs childcare if they don't have time or refuse to eat. Let's take bets on whether or not I will actually make it into the shower before my meeting... I could go now, but then I'd have the company of my 3-year-old, who's been wanting to take showers with me lately. It's nice to have a buddy, but my showers used to be my downtime, especially needed on a day like today... By the way, did anyone see the [nice article about MOPs](#) in the latest

American Profile magazine? I enjoyed the few paragraphs I've had time to read...

Back to today – I finally got my 3-year-old to eat her lunch (had to drop what I was doing to chugga-chugga-choo-choo into her mouth), so she was rewarded with Cheetos. Next thing I know, she and her brother had stomped the entire bag into the floor.



While I was cleaning that up, they were playing in the bathroom sink and flooded the floor. In the words of Michael Scott from my favorite tv show The Office – “Fool me once, strike one. Fool me twice, strike three.” So rather than leave them unattended, even for just long enough to clean up yet another mess, I put the little guy down for his nap before I cleaned up the latest mess. Thought that little Office quote would make me smile, so at least I was right there ☐

And if you think that my 3 and 1-year-old kids were actually helping with the cleanup, you must not have kids because they only succeeded in spreading the Cheeto crumbs around further. But at least they thought they were helping, and they had fun while doing so. Plus, note my gorgeous Mother's Day bouquet in the background of the one pic – It's from the kids (yeah right). I ♥ Hubby!

I'm just extra stressed since I'm trying to keep the house nice since we're having a birthday party this weekend. Don't

ask me why I'm trying to keep a nice house while waiting for 22 five-and-six-year-olds to run wild around my house celebrating my daughter's birthday... that doesn't make much sense, does it? Maybe I *have* finally lost it...

I Am Published!

It doesn't take much to amuse me, I guess, because today I'm happy that my local newspaper printed a picture I sent in of the baby doves that resided in our tree. You have to subscribe to the paper to see the picture, so if you're local, pick up a copy to see my picture; it's on page 5 ☐

For the rest of you, [follow this link](#) and you can read my post about the baby doves – the photo that was printed in the newspaper is the middle picture.

Zoo Snoozin' – Part 2 – And Then Some

Bright and early at 7am last Friday at the Toledo Zoo, we were gently awakened by one of our guides (or not-so-gently awakened at 5am by the screaming parrots if you were in the Michigan group sleeping in Nature's Neighborhood) after hitting the pillows at 1am just hours earlier. No problem, what better motivation could I have to get out of bed than already being IN the zoo? We got dressed and packed up our gear and headed to the Carnivore Cafe for a generous breakfast

of bagels, cereal, yogurt, applesauce, juice, and coffee (thank goodness for that, and I chugged two cups for fuel). Oh yeah, if you're not a regular reader and happened upon this post unintentionally, then you probably don't know that I'm talking about the Zoo Snooze my daughters and I went to last week – [see installment one here](#).

After breakfast, we headed over to the gorilla exhibit, but we got stopped halfway there because there was mis-communication – we were supposed to be at the primate exhibit instead. So we did an about-face, and headed over to the primates to watch them play with our tubes we had made the night before. THEN we headed over to the gorilla exhibit, and we had to take the long way since they were re-doing the sidewalk between the primate and gorilla exhibits. For those of you who aren't familiar with the Toledo Zoo, there is A LOT of walking. Not as much walking between exhibits as other zoos, such as Brookfield Zoo near Chicago, but still a lot of walking. As frequent visitors to the Toledo Zoo, we've found ways of cutting down the mileage, especially when pushing the double stroller. But on the second day of the Zoo Snooze, we were all over the place. And I loved it. It was a nice day. My kids were tired, but I was rarin' to go, so I didn't even mind any of the detours. So we watched the gorillas play and tussle over their enrichment treats, and we listened to the gorilla keeper tell us about their personalities. The gorilla troupe of Toledo holds a special place in my heart – their silverback (male gorilla leader) Kwisha, was born at Brookfield Zoo in 1988 – right about the time when I was a frequent visitor there as a child. I remember ogling the gorillas and especially the babies in the (then) new Tropic World exhibit, and it's quite probable that I admired Kwisha (who is the youngest and last son of Samson, a famous Brookfield silverback) way back when he was a gorilla tot.

After the gorillas, we had to walk across the zoo to the elephant exhibit (the long way, remember, because of the

construction) to watch Louie play with our enrichment treats. Louie is the zoo's baby elephant – well, not so much anymore... he was celebrating his 7th birthday last week when we were there. I have a video of Louie popping our treat bags into his mouth – whole thing, bag and all without even opening it – but I put that in my previous post, so refer to the link above if you'd like to see it. And then it was time for the Zoo Snooze to end, and the gates to open and let the real visitors come into the zoo.

So we hiked back to the car, and we got many a strange look from regular zoo-goers who were wondering why we were carrying sleeping bags and backpacks and pillows. We stashed our stuff and spent some time in the gift shop, which is not normally something I do on zoo trips, but it was a nice change of pace. Besides, I was missing my little ones so much, and I had that zoo membership card burning a hole in my pocket – I just had to buy them something. At this point, it was starting to get rather warm outside, and my kids were exhausted. The rest of the group was going quite well, but my kids kept asking if we had to go back into the zoo. Keep in mind that we come often, so they were old hats at the zoo who were extremely tired. I patiently explained that we were going to do whatever the people who we were riding with were going to do, and that was that. As it was though, everyone was exhausted and the people we rode with seemed to be asking us for permission to **not** go back into the zoo. FINE with us! I explained – not because I had had enough of the zoo – that would never happen, no matter how little sleep I'd had... but I wanted to be on their schedule, plus I had the potential for two very tired and crabby kids on my hands AND a trip to Illinois scheduled for the next day. We ended up staying on the side of the zoo where our car was parked (Toledo Zoo straddles the Anthony Wayne Trail – a major thoroughfare, and the zoo has a walkway above it. But it requires a lot of walking to get from side to side, and most of the exhibits are located on the opposite side of the parking lot), so stayed on

the one side and still got to see the Polar Bears, Wolves (who were passed out because of the heat), giraffes, and zebras. And then it was time to go.

During the entire Zoo Snooze, I had planned on napping the whole way home, but I found myself having an intriguing conversation with our drivers instead. We arrived home about 5pm, and I unpacked and then I re-packed for the trip to Illinois the next day and made up some lost time with my little ones. By the end of the night, I was seeing things and not making much sense because I was so tired, but it was well worth it!

We awoke bright and early Saturday morning and left at 8am headed for Chicago, and wouldn't you know it – a traffic snarl. It was too early for the kids to nap, and they were awesome in the car – at least until we hit stop and go traffic just outside the Loop. An hour and 4 miles later (yes, you read that right – it took us an **hour** to go **four** miles!), we discovered the reason for our delay – a bridge had begun to crumble, so they had to close down 2 lanes to repair it, which left all the traffic to merge into ONE lane. Ah, Chicago traffic, don't you love it? NOT!!!

The kids were pretty great during all of this, as was I for running on fumes – I think I was still high off my Zoo Snooze. They did start to lose it a little, but luckily I had some powdered donuts packed, so between those and the Veggie Tales dvds I put into the car's player, we managed to not kill each other. We arrived at my mother-in-law's house 55 minutes late, even after Jill the GPS had predicted us getting there an hour early all morning. This would have been fine, except that my mother-in-law had previous plans, so we got to see her for a whopping 15-minute-hi-goodbye-here's-this-here's-that-I-love-you-hug-kiss-goodbye session while my husband's sister and brother-in-law managed to avoid us completely... long story, there's bad blood there, but I thought we were over it by now. Guess not. Whatever. We moved on to a local Chicago

beef place (NOTE to non-Chicagoans – just because you call it Chicago Beef, **a French Dip IS NOT CHICAGO BEEF** no matter how hard you try!!) where we shared great food and even better conversation with a friend from way back, Derek – SO glad he called us and that the traffic jam didn't ruin this part of our trip!

Our next stop was my Grandpa's nursing home, and that was awesome. It's pretty much on the way from my husband's family's house to my family's house, and I wouldn't dream of going to Illinois without seeing him, especially since my grandparents do not travel and have never been to our home in Ohio. Going to ~~Hellinois~~ Illinois is the only way I can see them and so every time I'm in the area, I make sure to stop by and let our kids have a visit with their great-grandparents. My little boy, who will be 2 in July, had a special buddy in my grandmother; it was really sweet, and I don't even know why. But we were there for over an hour, and the whole time, he kept saying "Grandma! Grandma!" making sure that she was doing everything right along side him. My grandpa made me a bet – will the Chicago Cubs (my team – he is a St. Louis Cardinals fan) or the Chicago Bears (a football team, also a favorite of his and my husband's, for that matter) win their respective championship first – World Series or Superbowl? Stay tuned to find out... ☐

Next it was on to my sister's house, where there was a birthday party for my nephews who both have April birthdays - they turned 2 and 7 this year. It was a great party; a wonderful chance to see family; immediate and also my sister's in-laws who are very nice and interesting people to chat with. My sister's nephew is my oldest daughter's age (10), and he has been interested in the weather since he was about 3 years old. His hero is Tom Skilling, a local Chicago WGN weatherman, one whom I've always liked also. Tom always teaches about the weather and its systems and patterns rather than just simply forecasting it. But anyway, my sister's

nephew has his own weekly weather newsletter that he writes and send electronically himself, so I put myself on his mailing list. When I got the newsletter this week, I was impressed – just as I was when talking to the little guy and being dwarfed by his weather knowledge. As is usual, my kids had such a wonderful time with their cousins that they hid when it was time to leave, and we had to dig them out, this time out from under my sister's bed. I'm done with being embarrassed about this; especially since my sister dug up some memories of us hiding from our parents while playing with our cousins! I don't remember this, but I'll take her word for it...

Anyway, time got away from us, and we left my sister's house at 9pm – which was 10pm Ohio time. Arrived home at 2:30 in the morning and had two crazy dogs and some kids to put to bed, and we begrudgingly gave up our church dreams for Sunday. But lo and behold, we were all up and ready for church on Sunday, so we went, and almost one busy week later, I'm still catching up on sleep as I write this, no surprise there. But thanks for reading my rambling, and may this Mother's Day find you blessed, happy, and healthy – hope you have a good one!!

Zoo Snoozin!

Last week I got an email from my friend Carol – she had planned a field trip to the zoo for a 'Zoo Snooze' and a few of her students backed out at the last minute. Since the trip was pre-paid, the spots were paid for, and Carol wanted to fill them – so she thought of me, her friend, the zoo lover, and I of course JUMPED at the opportunity!

I took my two oldest daughters since the age requirements for the trip excluded my 3-year-old Disney and of course my almost 2-year-old, who I wouldn't have wanted along anyway. Poor Hubby had to stay home with the little ones, and how I missed him! (and the little ones) But other than that – Best. Zoo. Trip. EVER!!!

Because of legality reasons, my daughters and I were not allowed to ride the school bus with the rest of the group. So my friend Carol graciously arranged for us to ride with one of her student's parents who were chaperoning – they were the nicest people! They were actually going to take their pickup truck, but upon learning that they'd have 3 hitchhikers, they switched vehicles to their SUV without complaint – how accommodating! We followed the bus to the zoo, and we hiked across the zoo carting our sleeping bags, pillows and backpacks, and I was EXCITED beyond belief!! We set down our stuff in Nature's Neighborhood (where the birds were screaming) and walked over to the primate building where we got to watch the primates after zoo hours and listen to a zookeeper talk about her interactions with the primate families. We then went into the Museum of Science building (this is at the Toledo Zoo, don't know if I mentioned which zoo it was...) into a classroom in the basement to listen to a worker tell about 3 animals – a box turtle, a salamander, and a rat (my girls were more than happy to volunteer the info that they had FOUR pet rats at home!). After listening to facts about the animals, we got to touch them, and I had already promised myself I would touch it no matter what – not a big deal, I love animals, so I don't have a problem touching regardless of species... except for my fear of frogs, but had there been a frog, I was going to touch it! We switched classrooms and did the same thing with 3 more animals: a cockroach, an agama (type of lizard – cute!), and a fox snake. Because the group sizes for Zoo Snoozes are supposed to be 25-50 people, they had actually paired our group of 11 with a rather large school group from Northern Michigan. When

we were in the classrooms doing the animal activities, they separated our groups, and I was so glad because it would have been difficult for our kids to see and touch the animals if we were still combined with the huge Michigan group.

Next we went to the Carnivore Cafe (used to be an exhibit building that housed animals and they left some of the cages up for kids to eat in – they get a big kick out of this) for our snack of pizza, raisins, juice, and animal cookies.



the kids eating in an
animal cage at the
Carnivore Cafe

We then went for a night hike, and walking around the zoo in the dark under the full moon was amazing. We could hear the lions roaring, the snow leopards making cat noises, and when we walked past the cheetah exhibit, they were quite active. One sprayed a tree, and then he began stalking us, slowly walking toward us and then running at us and jumping on the fence! I didn't have my camera out when he jumped at the fence, but here he is stalking us – listen for the little cheetah "meow" at the end:

The zookeeper said that the cheetahs like to stalk toddlers who can barely walk, and they especially have fun with this during the zoo's Halloween celebration when parents bring their kids who dress up like cute and cuddly things – like little bunnies or other tasty cheetah snacks.

So we took a night hike to the aquarium, and it was neat to see the keepers turn on the lights for us. Even the fish were acting differently at night – some fish appeared that we don't normally see during the day when we come, and others were swimming in schools when they don't usually do that during the day.

After the night hike, we made enrichment treats for the animals – there were four to choose from: melon bombs for the elephants (you make holes in watermelons and stick carrot sticks in there), pumpkin cookies and paper towel tubes for the primates, and snack bags for the elephants. My oldest daughter made primate tubes, and Sammie and I made elephant snack bags – you put an apple, a pear, and a handful each of peanuts and popcorn in the bags and roll them shut and decorate them. We were incredibly surprised the next morning when we watched Louie the elephant (and it was his 7th birthday!) take our treat bags and pop the whole things into his mouth (bags and all!) without even opening them first! Here is a video of Louie eating our bags – too bad I couldn't get out from behind the girl with the ponytail:

After making the enrichments, we went back to a classroom and played an animal training games using a training clicker – I have to get myself one of those and follow the puppy around for a day or two to housebreak him! Wonder when I'll find the time for that? After the game, it was finally time for bed, and we got to choose if we wanted to separate from the Michigan group. We chose yes, leaving them to sleep with the screaming parrots – I get enough of that at home! And sure enough, they reported to us the next day that the birds were up and screaming at 5am. I would not have been too happy about that, especially since we didn't get to bed until 1am! So we took our stuff and slept in one of the classrooms in the basement of the Museum of Science which was pretty neat – it's a well-kept 1930's Works Progress Association building, and we got to wander the winding basement hallways back and forth to the bathroom. Never mind that the building is home to hundreds of frogs and toads – they were upstairs, and I didn't give them any thought.

I think I will end it here and save day 2 of the Zoo Snooze for another post – this turned out to be a rather long post, and even though it's difficult for me to understand, not everyone loves zoos as much as I do. I don't want to bore the heck out of anyone!