

# A New Favorite

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

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

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## It's STILL Scary!

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

went missing and the time I watched the movie *Poltergeist*.

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

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

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



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## Why Did The Chicken Cross The Road?

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

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

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

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

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

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## Budgeted Birthday Blast

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

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

As we waited for the girls to arrive, they played a video game on the tv where there are floating balloons they get to break using their bodies instead of controllers. Next, Dad led the girls in about 5 rounds of the [party game Mafia](#) – they loved it! Then, we made English muffin pizzas – I set out the English muffins, pizza sauce, cheese, pepperoni, and mushrooms, and the girls made their own pizzas and then I put them in the oven for 5 or 10 minutes. The entire activity cost about \$6, and the kids loved it! Then we had cake, but I had realized ahead of time that with 4 kids, we spend about \$80 on birthday cake per year! Wow, does that add up! So I

had a talk with my oldest, and she really had no problem with me getting mini cupcakes instead of a personalized birthday cake and numbered candles. This decision saved us about \$15! I got two 2 liters of pop, and a few cheap bags of snacks for the sleepover, and the entire party cost us under \$20! Most importantly, my daughter and her friends had an awesome time and made some great memories! Happy birthday Taylor!!



*(No, the party wasn't so boring everyone fell asleep! This what a group of kids playing the party card game Mafia look like!)*

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## **My Stage Debut, Sort of...**

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

But somewhere along the line, I developed a severe stage fright, and I haven't come close to the front of a stage since I auditioned (and wasn't chosen) for the part of Thor in *The Nerd* in 1990. I've worked in many various capacities behind the scenes and on the members' boards for a few of our local community theater groups in recent years, and if ever someone was brave enough to inquire, I would always reject and

adamantly refuse the offers of roles to be portrayed onstage in front of an audience – just way too nervous, and I've actually had many a nightmare about having to get onstage!

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

And I think this experience helped me for what was to come last night... because of the weather, the two other small group leaders for the 7th grade girls at youth group were unable to

make it, so I was in charge of ALL the 7th grade girls last night! It went better than I thought, even though I really don't like to be the one in charge of a group. But, such is life, and I'm just happy I didn't know about it until we arrived last night otherwise I would have been a nervous wreck all day. And the youth pastor's face when he told me I was the only teacher who could make it was just priceless, haha!

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

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## Feeling Short And Old

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

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

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

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# I'm Still Here, Somewhere...

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

More later – I'm hoping! STAY WARM!!!

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## Favorite Christmas Movies

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

[poll id="11"]

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# Miracle Squared

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

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

situation the best way I knew how, and I'm going to pray that the other person can find peace as well.

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

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## That's IT!

I've **had** it with my sleep problems! I don't usually have trouble falling asleep, but that's probably because I don't even start trying until midnight or later. Sometimes I do have trouble falling asleep, and even if I can fall asleep easily, I usually do not stay asleep all night. Not that I remember any of the several or many times I wake up each night; I'm usually in a stupor where I'll say things that don't make sense or say not-so-nice things to the dog or anyone else who happens to be in my way. The main problem is that I wake up in the morning feeling terribly under-rested, never ready to start the day, and the problem has been getting steadily worse in recent weeks. I rarely get headaches, but because of the stress of my horrible week compounded by the not sleeping, my head has been throbbing all week (the extremely loud live band at youth group did NOT help!). I've tried going to bed earlier, I've tried limiting my food and drink intake at night, I've tried taking naps when time allows (which is rare), and I've tried taking melatonin (an herb found naturally in the body that helps promote sleep), but nothing is helping. I just can't take it anymore; it's impossible to make my long busy days of caring for 4 small children enjoyable when I feel so tired all the time. My

husband stayed awake for a little bit and listened to me sleep last night, and he said that there were times when I stopped breathing, which is a symptom of sleep apnea. So, as much as I hate to do it and don't even really have the time for it, I've made an appointment with the local sleep specialist who just happens to be our childrens' pediatrician. We'll see what he says next week, but chances are that I'll get sent over to the sleep center for a sleep study – YUCK. Just what I want to be: a lab rat; the subject of a study who has to find a way to fall asleep in a room with a bunch of people watching and while hooked up to all kinds of machines. This is just about one of the last things I want to do, but it shows how incredibly desperate I am to finally get a good night's rest. If they can actually help me, feeling well-rested is going to be an amazing yet totally foreign feeling! If it doesn't help me, I'm back where I started but with one less option AND having missed out on a fun night with my family ☐