

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. 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. But he has some really good songs, and I thought it'd be great to hear some of them again. Realizing I've tortured enough unwitting souls with my love of country music, I looked through the regular music. 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. 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. What was Elvis' favorite sandwich? Peanut butter, banana, and *bacon*. 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](#), I think. 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. I, for one, found them tasty, but not great. I'm not a big cookie person anyway, and I found the combination of bacon and banana quite interesting, though in a good way. 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. 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. 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. Enjoy and let me know any alterations and feedback you have! From the article where I read about it:

“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!

Poult's

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! He has recently learned where his tongue is, and if you ask to see it, he will stick it out – awww! 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. Of course, she is still 2, so occasionally she gets loud, whiny, and insistent. But she is a very thoughtful little girl, and a very unselfish 2-year-old. Case in point: the other day, the girls made macaroni necklaces at our church carnival, and a piece broke off of Sammie's after we got home. 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." I can't imagine any other 2-year-old capable of such sweetness! Add that to her little pageboy Buster Brown – as Carol calls it ☐ – back-to-school haircut, and she is a living doll! 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! 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. I really need to work on Disney's potty-training. She has her little potty and likes to go in it, but it's not always a priority for her... One of the secrets to harmony in a family with more than a couple of small children is *divide and conquer*. My children are so much better behaved when they are broken into groups of two or sometimes even three. It's really neat to give each sister the chance to 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. Back to school time is so fun, and my oldest daughter is really excited about attending her first football game Friday night! 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! More on that later; I'm still grasping the um, entirety of the situation). 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](#)** 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). 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! 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. 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. At least that's what I'm hoping...

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

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. 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. 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". Not really her fault – like I said, I should have been supervising her more carefully. 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. I'll take my chances at Walmart.

Back To School!

Well, summer is officially over – school starts **tomorrow!** 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. We were so busy; though it was good-busy; not like so-much-work-to-do-busy. But much fun was had and I enjoyed every minute! 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. That was an interesting evening – it began with us volunteers breaking off into groups of about 15 and making lines. We were given a spoon tied to a string which was wound around a “spool” ie, an empty tube of toilet paper. 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. Kind of strange, I thought, but what’s going to happen once we’re all “wearing” the string??? 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. 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. 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!!!** 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. My daughter has a homeroom, but then she switches for language arts and math and perhaps other subjects as well. 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. That sounds pretty cool to me! I would have LOVED it if I only had to worry about gym for 9 weeks of the year! 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. 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!” But my daughter IS ready for middle school, and she seems to be making her way from tween to teen in no time – UGH! 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. It’s not like we’re publishing it on the internet for the entire world to read or anything... But what are moms for? 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. This is our “difficult” child; our strong-willed one. 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. It seems that Samantha has the same Kindergarten 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. We are wondering how many years it will take for word to spread amongst the teachers in town about how much of a... well, *difference* there is between Samantha and her big sister... 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 über-post!

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. 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. Their kids, although quite a bit older than my kids, were nonetheless kept entertained by my kids, especially their pet rats. Overall, it was a great visit with a nice family – 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. 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!

Kid Currency

Sometimes Dr. Phil *does* give good advice. Among my favorite Dr. Phil advice lines is: "every kid has his (or her) currency". 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 girly things her parents despise most: makeup. 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'... It's hard to be the little sister and to get left behind – I know because I was there!

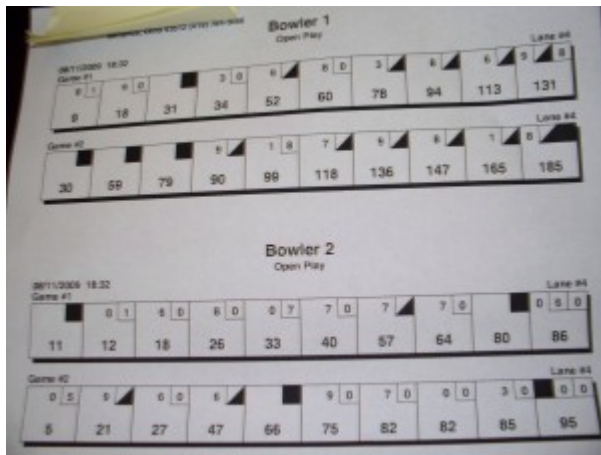
So anyway, the other day, our oldest daughter left for the pool, and Sammie was really upset she couldn't go with – but I knew just the cure: makeup! I had bought a few makeup kits on clearance just after the Christmas season, and since I don't wear makeup, what better use for it than to cheer up a sad little girl? 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! 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!

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. 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. 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. Later in high school, I took bowling in gym class and joined intramural bowling after school where I was crowned, "Female Bowler of the Year" for the two years I was in it – 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. I do enjoy the occasional bowling game, though, and rarely do I top my previous bowling average from back-in-the-day: 132. 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! 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!



And about the title I chose for my post... 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. 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. 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. But, *Bowling for Columbine* is a catchy title nonetheless, which is why I borrowed it, not because I'm a Michael Moore fan. 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". Stay Tuned!

Full Moon = Mini Golf?

Earlier this month, I got a whim on date night for us to go mini-golfing. 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! 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. 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. Among the topics were the strange occurrences befalling the behavior of our golf balls. 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. 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! Unintentionally, of course ☐ 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. 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? Friends in the fields have shared with me that hospitals and law enforcement agencies are extra busy on the nights of full moons – interesting. How about you guys? Did any of you have a sudden golfing urge last Wednesday night / early Thursday morning?

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. Again, we had a blast! Following is a

summary of both parks. To abbreviate, I'm going to call Splash Universe in Indiana "IN" and Splash Bay in Ohio "OH".

Water Slides: **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. I personally prefer very tame water slides, so my favorites are the tube slides. 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. 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. **MEDIUM SLIDES:** IN had many more smaller water slides – kind of like playground slides in water. OH had a few, but more on those in the kids' play area section. **SMALL SLIDES:** IN had 2 tiny slides in a small baby area, perfect for my 2-5 year olds. OH did not have any baby slides.

Swimming Area: There was not much room for swimming in the IN water park. 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. 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! Neither place has a pool exclusively for swimming, however, nor my favorite water park element – the wave pool.

Kids' Area: Both parks have a large water playground for kids where they can squirt each other with various contraptions and go down slides and stuff. 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. Both parks also 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. OH also has a really cool “shark” – a piece of playground equipment that is bolted to the floor of a 3-foot pool. 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. 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. 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: In an indoor water park, lazy rivers are basically moats that carry an inner tube rider around the room. I really enjoy these, even though indoor ones are slightly less cool than outdoor ones, just because they can’t get very long nor travel very fast. 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. 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. That reminds me, the temperature in the IN water park was always very warm – TOO warm when entering while wearing street clothes. 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. My kids were often cold in the regular water at OH. But the OH hot tub was my favorite part of the entire park. It was incredibly relaxing, and there was even a waterfall you could sit under. AND, you could swim outside! 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. 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 travel 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: For me personally, I preferred the OH 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! 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. 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. 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. 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!

I Can't Get Enough Of The Cute Animals

I received a few more of the email forwards with pictures of

cute animals, so I thought I'd combine them into one post. So here are some cute animals – enough said.



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



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