

Cool Summer

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

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

The Safari Park is great – you drive around the animals' huge enclosure, and herds of all types of different animals approach your car looking for food! There are alpacas, llamas, white-tailed deer, elk, elands, bison, reindeer (I never found this one in the guidebook, but it looked like a reindeer to me!), even giraffes and zebras at the end (while you can still feed them, the giraffes and zebras are behind a fence whereas the other animals are not). It's so cool to feed all these guys! Some are dainty, skittish eaters (the smaller deer), while the huge animals like the bison will fill your car with this hot, half-digested hay breath. It's

delightfully disgusting, and only animal lovers should attempt to stomach this! Here is the best video I could record while getting accosted by a thousand-pound bison (the kids were frustrating us adults since they would freak out and drop the carrot before the bison could grab it – we felt bad for the hungry fella!)

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



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

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

Highlights From A Beth Moore Bible Study

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

Before I do that, however, I will recap in a nutshell what the study itself is all about: Jesus. We began our discussions

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

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

Seasons of intense temptation are not indications of God's displeasure.

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

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

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

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

The good news Christ may want to preach to you today is that you don't have to subsist. You were meant to thrive.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Evil Animals



Every once in awhile, time.com has interesting countdown-style articles. The other day, this one caught my eye:

[Top 10 Evil Animals](#)

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

Still Here... Somewhere

Realizing I haven't blogged in awhile, I've been trying to think of something to write about. I have plenty of material; I just don't feel like writing for some reason. Plenty of material, not plenty of time is part of the reason. I've even started a few drafts, but at least one ended up being a laundry list of complaint about my dogs' behavior and other things that have been stressing me lately, and I don't feel like publishing it. After all, Walmart complaints are fun,

tongue-in-cheek ways to vent about how I feel ripped off after shopping at Walmart, but when I write huge rants of real life complaints I annoy *myself*, so I can't imagine my readers' feelings. Plus all the complaining doesn't ease the stress, nor does it help me fulfil the main purpose of my blog – which is giving my family a virtual diary of our lives while the kids are growing up. Sure, it shares the information, but I want their reading experience of our family blog when I'm gone to be a good one, not something like, "Hey – I DO remember when mom was stressed all the time!!"

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

The Return of the Commodore 64?

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



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

So what's got me thinking back to the 80's days of the Commodore today? I came across an article on cnn.com about how advance orders are being taken for the resurrection of the Commodore here in 2011. It's being made to look just like the Commodores of the 80's, but it will have today's computer capacities since the '64' in Commodore 64 referred to the unit having 64 Kilobytes of memory – about the equivalent of one long email, according to the article. If you'd like to read the article, [click here](#).

Easter 2011

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

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

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

Also, Friend #1 has been coming to church every week since! God is amazing!

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

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



After dinner, our family sat down in a circle to do another one of our favorite Easter traditions: [Resurrection Eggs](#). It’s a set that was given to us by my sister last year, and I have to remember to tell her how much we enjoy doing this every year. We even lent our set to some friends this year for them to enjoy! It comes with a booklet, and we take turns reading the little paragraphs that

tell the story of Jesus' death. The booklet asks questions and gives you places to pause, and you open each of the 12 eggs when prompted. Each of the different colored eggs contains a little something that represents the part of the story that was just read, and we have kids take turns opening eggs. It's a wonderful way to combine the eggs aspect and the spiritual meaning of Easter into a fun-filled educational family activity, and we love it!

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



After the egg hunting , we attended a fun Easter event at the community theater up the street, and the weather actually cooperated. There were Easter egg hunts, games, lunch, and plenty of prizes for everyone, and the kids had a blast. We returned home and made a last minute decision to check out another Easter drama at a friends' church.

It seems that the Easter Bunny made another visit to our house on Saturday night since Sunday morning the kids woke up to a laundry basket for each of them full of surprises. We went to church, and I enjoyed a whopping class size of 13 first-graders to teach! Problem was, all of their jacked-up-on-

candy brains could only think about the other aspects of Easter, and we had difficulty doing some of our planned activities. It's often difficult to accomplish much when I have a class of that size anyhow, so I took it in stride and we went to the gym early to run around and burn off some of that sugar! At adult worship, we were blessed to see enough friends join us so that our group filled up an entire row! It's not about quantity, but it was amazing to see some friends there who don't regularly go to church and some whom we've been inviting for years and haven't come until now. I am so excited to see what God is doing in the lives of those I care about!!!

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

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

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

Now What Do I Do?

The title of this blog post makes me think of the movie Forrest Gump – remember the part where Forrest runs and runs;

pretty soon he has a pack of people following him, running with him, and then suddenly he stops and says, "I think I'll go home now." The pack of followers is suddenly lost and without purpose. "NOW what do we do!"

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

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



Florida 2011 – Trip Diary – Part 3

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



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

Wednesday January 19 – Breakfast at Sizzler (did you think I was exaggerating about eating there every day?), then on to the Magic Kingdom where we spent a fun-filled day. We learned that there is an expansion planned and under construction to double the size of Fantasyland, so we are looking forward to seeing that on a future visit. Splashwater Falls was undergoing maintenance (usually does in January when we go, but this is a small price to pay for ideal weather and low crowds – BEST time to visit Orlando!!), but we enjoyed the classics like Big Thunder Mountain Railroad (and little Disney liked this one, even though it is a roller coaster!), Jungle Cruise, Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean, and Hubby's and my personal favorite that many others find to be lame, The Carousel of Progress. We skipped out on Space Mountain this time, mainly because the kids wouldn't have liked it, and we don't find that its long wait is worth it for a herky-jerky

outdated roller coaster. If you are into indoor roller coasters in the dark, I've always liked the Aerosmith one at Disney's MGM, er, Hollywood Studios, although we never find that park worth the time for a visit since there isn't much there. And [King's Island](#) in Mason Ohio outside of Cincinnati has a SUPER dark coaster called Flight of Fear. But back in Orlando, the People Mover ride in the Magic Kingdom, an elevated train-type ride that goes all around Tomorrowland, treated us to a one-of-a-kind glimpse inside Space Mountain – *with the lights on!!* The People Mover travels into the Space Mountain building, but usually you can only see the glowing streaks of the ride trains as they zip past. Because of a ride malfunction, the lights in the building were on, so we got an insider's view of all the tracks and trains which was pretty cool!! After the Magic Kingdom, Derek, Chris and I took the two oldest kids to Fun Spot to try the extreme go-karts, but it didn't go over so well. The oldest hated them, and she made me go putt-putt-putt all the way up the spiral and around the track – that was not fun; I'm more pedal-to-the-metal! But we all took a spin on the bumper cars, and that was some great old-fashioned family fun that everyone was able to enjoy.

Thursday January 20 – Breakfast at Sizzler (every day – told ya!), then on to our second day at Universal, this time with Derek, although we lost one because by now, Jamy's back pain was so bad that he had to stay in the rental house and relax all day. Thankfully it did not rain this time, and we had a wonderful day. It was a bit chilly, but we couldn't resist the urge to ride Bluto's Barges 3 (or was it 4? I can't remember) times in a row – we were drenched! Smarter ones in our group (Derek and Grandma) opted to stay out and stay dry, but those of us who got off soaked (and shivered) had a blast. It's a large round boat that's propelled down a raging river of rapids; every time it dips, the riders on that side get drenched by a wave that cascades over the wall of the boat. Then there are waterfalls and waterspouts – it's so

much fun to bond with the strangers in your boat as you take turns laughing over who gets soaked and who dodges the torrents of water – whether everyone speaks English or not, there is bonding in the boat! Next it was on to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, and I think I talked about this earlier in this diary – it's amazing; that's all I need to repeat. We went on the Forbidden Journey ride again, this time with Derek, and he really liked it. Unfortunately, they decided that Sammie had shrunk an inch or two since Monday, and she no longer met the height requirement, so she had to wait in the child swap room – which is actually quite entertaining because they have the old Harry Potter movies playing, and I had forgotten how young Harry Potter (actor Daniel Radcliffe) was when the movies began.

After Universal, we went to the McDonald's largest Playplace where the kids had a blast. Grandma stayed with them while Hubby, Derek and I went to the Titanic attraction I've always wanted to see. Unfortunately, our adventure was a bit marred when Hubby was pulled over and ticketed for U-turn in a No U-turn intersection. In our opinion, it should have been a warning – clearly we were tourists, it was an honest mistake, he didn't do it when there was oncoming traffic present so no one was in direct danger, and of the 3 people in the car, not one of us saw the (supposed) no U-turn sign. Personally, I think Orlando should treat their tourists a little more like the guests that they are, especially considering how much money the average tourist brings into their local economy. Also, they seemed to milk us for every penny – the ticket itself was very expensive, and because we were from out of town, we couldn't even show up to traffic court and contest the ticket, not to mention that when we returned home, we were bombarded with offers of traffic school via mail, which showed that they were looking for even more money by selling our info to these traffic schools so they could bombard us with ads. A frustrating episode in our otherwise super vacation, but that's enough – traffic ticket tangent over!

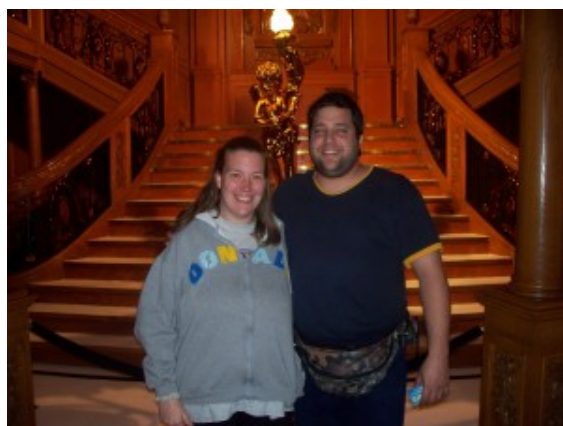
So back to the Titanic exhibit... I've always wanted to see it,

but it's quite pricey, and we were always nervous about spending so much on trying something new that we didn't even know would be worth the cost or not. So enter Groupon – before we left, there was a Groupon for Titanic, and we got it. It kind of obligated us to fitting this in since we already had tickets, but with the money we saved on Groupon, it was worth it. And, we even made it on time, getting pulled over and all! Upon entry, each visitor gets a little card with the name and info of a Titanic passenger, and one of the rooms at the end of the tour has a wall with all the names of the passengers on it. The lights go down, and the names of the passengers who survived stay bold while the names of those who perished are hollow, so you can see if “your” passenger made it. Mine survived, which I had guessed correctly because she had been a first class passenger. Our tour guide (portraying the famous Titanic personality “Unsinkable” Molly Brown) was very knowledgeable about all things Titanic, but our friend Derek's passenger card stumped her – the name on his card was half-solid, half-hollowed, so we don't know if he made it through the ill-fated voyage or not. But overall, it was a lot of fun, and a well spent hour or two. I've always been a Titanic buff (excluding the movie which I feel really commercialized, cheapened, and capitalized on the tragedy and the great loss of life involved – enough about that), so this museum was right up my alley. There were re-creations to see and explore (a first class cabin, the deck, which they had even chilled to provide an example of the actual temperature that night, and the grand staircase, see picture below), as well as actual artifacts recovered from the bottom of the ocean, like dishes. There was room after room of signs to read and pictures to look at, and as much as I don't like the movie, they even had a few costumes and props from it which were interesting to see. Among my favorite parts of the exhibit: the hall of newspapers, which had newspaper editions reporting the disaster in 1912 from all over the country, complete with early 20th century advertisements and other news articles.

I also found this quite remarkable: it was an ordinary cooler, and the exploration staff autographed it and put it down at the bottom of the ocean where the Titanic now lies. I forgot how long it was there, but it's not nearly as long as the remains of the ship have been there, and this is what the ocean pressure did to it:



Interesting as it may be, it is a sad representation of what will happen to the remains of the luxury liner itself. Scientists estimate that it won't last more than 50 additional years if people don't find a way to salvage it and bring it up for study.



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

After Titanic, we stopped at Dippin' Dots, but it was our only taste of the delicious ice creamish treat for this trip, and I was SO disappointed to find out they discontinued my favorite

flavor of Dippin' Dots: Root Beer Float. ☐

BookWorm

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

I read [*In the Presence of My Enemies*](#), the inspiring true story of the Burnham couple who, after years of missionary work in the Philippines, were taken hostage during a vacation there and held for a year. I read [*My Lobotomy*](#), the biography of a man named Howard Dully who underwent a forced frontal lobotomy at the age of 12. I read [*How Many Hills to Hillsboro*](#), an account of a family of 5 who attempted and almost made a cross country trip together in the '60s – on their bicycles. I delved into fiction, reading the entire Harry Potter series and loving it. And now I call myself an avid reader with a “to read” book list a mile long – and by the way, all of the above mentioned books I enjoyed immensely, and I highly recommend them.

I think that's how I ended up reading 3 books at the same time. It began when I was looking for something to read that would compare to Harry Potter, so I tried C.S. Lewis' Narnia

series and began with *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*. While enjoyable, it wasn't quite the can't-put-it-down book that I was looking for, so I consulted my "to read" list and decided to try a Stephen King book that had been recommended by a local newspaper columnist – [Under the Dome](#). With the exception of some short stories, I haven't read Stephen King before, but I've enjoyed a few of his movies. So far, *Under the Dome* has been exactly what I'm looking for – page-turning excitement that is hard to put down! The novel is about a small town in Maine that is suddenly and inexplicably cut off from the rest of the world by a mysterious, invisible – yet very real barrier. Between trying to draft and enforce their own laws, keeping lawless individuals under control and townspeople from going crazy – literally – and attempting to figure out what the dome is and how to get rid of it, the little town has more than its fair share of strife.

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

As if reading two 1000+ page books at the same time weren't enough (though on the plus side, it's not like I can possibly get the characters in the Bible and those in *Under the Dome* mixed up – a complication I used to run into in my heavier reading days when I would try to read a book for pleasure and a book for school at the same time), another one of my requests came in at the library – *Caril* by Ninette Beaver. Being a more obscure book, I don't know that I will get the opportunity to get it from the library again, so I'm

attempting the book-reading tri-fecta. Caril is the unauthorized biography of Caril Fugate, the alleged accomplice to [Charles Starkweather](#) who went on an infamous murder spree centered in Lincoln Nebraska in 1958. Although Caril was tried and convicted in a court of law, there has been much debate about her actual role in the murders because of her age at the time – 14. The book follows the cases and Caril's incarceration and is written from the media's point of view in the 1970's before Caril was released from prison. It's been interesting to read about other news items of the day (breaking news items in 1958 included: Liz Taylor's husband killed in a plane crash and Elvis being drafted into the Army) and also how differently people reacted to news reporters taking interviews for the brand-new medium of the day: television. Family members of suspects, law enforcement, and attorneys were all much more willing and able to talk to reporters and share details for the camera than they are today. You may have seen one of a number of movies made about the Starkweather cases; the most famous is Natural Born Killers, although that movie DOES NOT follow the cases accurately and is, in my opinion, a terrible movie. I guess the reason I'm so interested in these cases is because Charles Starkweather was a different type of serial killer and one who has escaped the major notoriety of say, Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy. I also lived in the lovely city of Lincoln Nebraska for a year, and I've seen many of the places where the crimes took place for myself – including the penitentiary where Starkweather was electrocuted and the cemetery where he is buried.

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

And one more note – further encouragement to read Under the Dome is the movie being made due to come out this year – looks

like a made-for-tv movie, which is difficult for me to imagine based upon the violence involved and intensity of the story. But if Stephen King's other tv mini-series are any indication, Under the Dome the movie version will not disappoint and is an excellent reason to pick up this great book for some perfect summer reading!