

Bowling Obsessed

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

thrillers; so much so that you'd want to see one that is almost a thriller parody. You have to go to this one in a cynical mood, looking for stuff to make fun of – and you won't be disappointed.

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

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

You Have Now Entered... THE TWILIGHT ZONE!

It's unusual for me to blog twice in one day, but hey, today itself has been unusual. First, the swine flu has officially

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

There were a few other weird things that happened today (surprise 99¢ / gallon milk at Walgreens, for one!), but they are just little things, too many and too little to mention. Add them all up, and that's why I'm making a second post of the day. The other major weird event is this – I got a mysterious letter in the mail today, and I have to say, it scared me. I think I've been watching too many stalker movies (blogging about that tomorrow). But this letter had my name on it – just my name, not my husband's name or The _____ Family or anything – just MY name. And it seems to be typewritten, not even printed on a computer – *typewritten*. Seeing a letter in a security envelope with your name and address typewritten on it without a return address is enough to give anyone pause, I think – but I am also a paranoid

person. If I had gotten this letter in 2001 during the Anthrax attacks (someone was sending the deadly material Anthrax through the mail, and people were killed), I definitely wouldn't have opened it. So anyway, I opened the mysterious letter I got today, and guess what was inside? A thick green piece of paper that turned out to be blank – weird. Even more strange was that there was a Meijer gift card wrapped in the green paper. An *activated* gift card – the TO and FROM are blank.

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

This Economy Stinks!

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

their website says it all: "Due to the Economy, Fun Spot Park and Zoo Will Not Be Open For The 2009 Season".

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

Adding to my angst about losing Fun Spot, I just found out yesterday that Ball Quest in Defiance, Ohio will not be open this season either. Ball Quest had a mini-golf course, a driving range, and batting cages. We had lots of fun there last summer as well, and it was a place we visited often with friends. We even had some batting cage tokens left over! But the sign on the gate of Ball Quest says, "Not open due to increased taxes. Thank County Commissioner Kime". Ouch – a little bitterness, it seems? Ball Quest was a small family owned business. My friend once showed me the "tea room" they had decorated beautifully in a Victorian motif. I wonder what will happen to gorgeous room and its antique furniture, complete with an antique wooden high chair? I really loved min-golfing at Ball Quest – the course went up a small hill that overlooked beautiful NW Ohio farm fields... and I'm not sure if there are other batting cages nearby! Yet another source of family entertainment – GONE! If they keep going at

this rate, we'll be left with nothing in no time! People complain all the time that families just don't do as much together as they used to and as they should, but if family entertainment keeps getting shut down, that trend will only continue and increase! Here is a picture of my girls having a blast at Fun Spot last year – their baby brother was to be born only two weeks later. It was over 85° that day, and I was physically miserable, but we all still had SO much fun!



Nightmare On Alumni Street

As has been the trend lately, they are going to remake a popular horror movie from my youth – [Nightmare On Elm Street](#). When the movie came out in 1984, I was too young (and scared) to watch it, but the main character, [Freddy Krueger](#), was everywhere. Everyone wanted to be Freddy for Halloween, and just his picture was enough to scare me silly. I think even people who don't like horror movies know who Freddy Krueger is – a burn victim with a hideously scarred face who has knives for fingernails and invades the dreams of his victims. We tried watching Nightmare On Elm Street as adults not too long ago, and it wasn't scary – it just came across as dumb. So maybe a remake IS in order. I just hope it's not horrible

like Rob Zombie's Halloween remake. Actually, the Friday the 13th remake wasn't so great either. I did enjoy the Texas Chainsaw Massacre remake though, and I really liked the remake of My Bloody Valentine – two movies that prove slasher films can be successfully remade. So I hope this Nightmare on Elm Street is on par with the latter two I mentioned.

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

This Swine Flu Business

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

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

A College Student Could Have Done Better

Recently a fellow blogger mentioned a dorm fire at the university where his youngest daughter is to attend. While I'm sure that much was learned from that particular tragedy in order to safeguard future students, it gave me a flashback to my own college days when there was a fire in the dorm where my friends lived. That particular dorm building was 28 stories high, and I was hanging out somewhere around the 25th floor on the night when the fire alarm went off. Obviously, we couldn't use the elevators to evacuate the rather large building, so we had to use the stairwells. I remember that after descending flight after flight of stairs, the monotony of the flights started to mess with my head a little bit, and by the end, it became difficult to even move my legs in the motion to go down the stairs – maybe a testament to just one of the challenges faced by those in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001? Luckily in our case, however, the fire was not threatening to our welfare, and we all made it out of the building safely. When we got out, we gathered around to watch the flames being extinguished – and much to our surprise, the flames were licking the part of the building where some of my best friends lived. Turns out, the fire had started in my friends' room (not where I was hanging out that

particular night) and demolished it. The couch where I had crashed many a night had turned to just ash and a metal frame. I found it interesting that the firemen gave us a walk-thru of the room afterward – apparently something they do on college campuses? They taught us about the ‘flashpoint’, where the fire must have started and how hot it was there, and they also pointed out various objects from around the room and explained the temperatures it must have been in the room for the fire to have that effect upon that particular object, etc. – very informative! So anyway, the point of this post is **that** building – it’s called Watterson Towers, and it’s located at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois. Not the pertiest thing, ain’t it?



First off, the thing is HUGE; it houses 2200 students. Illinois State University is a college campus located amongst farm fields in central Illinois – a far cry from Chicago – and Watterson Towers is the highest building between St. Louis and Chicago – a distance of nearly 300 miles. Also, the design of the structure is... well, it’s bizarre – for lack of a better adjective. I think a college student could have done better at designing a building, hence the title of my blog post. It has been rumored that the [designer of Watterson Towers committed suicide](#), but I’m not sure if this is true or not. Click on the link I supplied above to read more about this – someone asked if the designer committed suicide because he thought the towers would eventually collapse, and the person

who asked the question mentions that firefighters told them that if there were a fire at Watterson, students wouldn't make it out alive – go figure since I and hundreds of others are proof that that theory didn't pan out – thank goodness! Obviously those rumors are overblown, at least some of them, cuz I can't find any info about the designer or his fate. But the bottom line is, it **is** a very strange design for a building, especially one that is to house college students. Sadly, more than a few students have jumped from the windows of Watterson over the years to escape the pressure that college students often needlessly feel.

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

From Wikipedia.com:

Watterson is composed of 10 houses, each considered its own

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

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

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

building in the last 10-15 years?

New York Trip Diary – Volume 7... Nah, Forget It

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

elevator and her record for 'longest survived fall in an elevator' still exists today. Here is a picture of the accident:



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

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

Flat Stanley To The Rescue!

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

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

It's a long story – My grandson Ben colored a "Flat Stanley" – do you know about him?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thanks!

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

Dear Ben,

Thank you for sending Flat Stanley to stay with me for a few days. We had a nice time together!

The first day, Stanley played with Peanut, and then after

lunch took a nap with him. Later, we went to Imagination Station where Stanley climbed everywhere, and took a tumble on the highest level! That night, he slept in the bed in the guest room where your parents sleep when all of you come to visit. He had plenty of room!

The second day, Stanley climbed a tree in my back yard. He chased the squirrels up and down the trees, but they were much faster runners and tree climbers!

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

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

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

Love, Grandma



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

would make for some cute blogging material. I had heard of Flat Stanley before, how about you? Any Flat Stanley adventures you'd like to share?

I Smell A Rat...

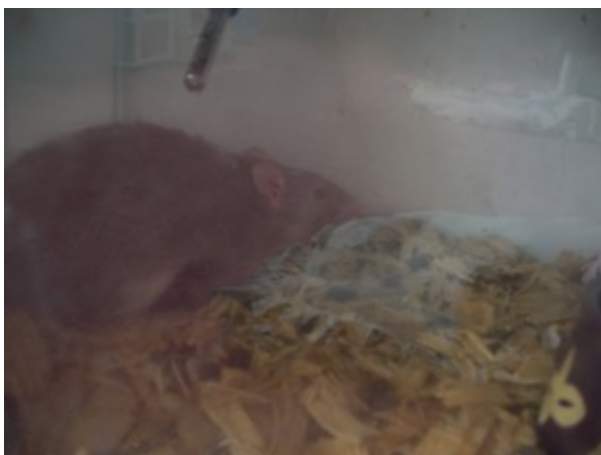
Make that 4 rats. We now have 4 pet rats. How did that happen, you ask? A bit of mistaken identity when they were picked out at the pet store resulted in rat babies? No, all 4 are male – I don't think there's any mistaking that. What happened is this...

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

family). You need to do all the research about care before you obtain the pet; such as cleaning up after it and how much it will cost to feed it – which is why our daughter's friend's family needed to “get rid” of their rats.

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

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



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



My Bookshelf 0' Rats – just what I've always wanted ☐



The Clinic – A Preview

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