

# I Know One Business That Isn't Suffering In This Economy

We had to go to the ER yesterday, and it was bustling! Since this is our second visit in a month, I can tell you that unfortunately, yesterday's busyness was not any different from the norm. Seeing as how we're talking about a hospital as a business that's doing well in this awful economy, that is not a good thing.

Here's what happened, and it's not a matter of life or death (at least for us), so don't be alarmed about the ER visit. My husband had been having severe stomach pain since Sunday afternoon that was getting worse, so that's why we went to the ER. Turns out to be a virus, so that's great of course! We were thinking kidney stone or something worse, so we're very thankful. While we were in the ER, some interesting events unfolded regarding some of the other patients. First, there was the girl who left her contacts in for 2 weeks out of "laziness". She finally took them out, and the next morning, her eyes hurt, they were all swollen, and she couldn't see. The doctor speculated that the contacts had become fused to her eyeball and actually tore the top layer off when she removed them. They sent her to an eye specialist.

Next was the couple who came in with the woman (girl actually – they were probably in their late teens or early twenties) complaining of burning during urination. My husband overheard the doctor ask the girl how many sexual partners she's had in the last 60 days. She answered, "just my boyfriend." Then they asked the boyfriend the same question, but they did it while the girlfriend was in the bathroom, and he said he didn't know – yikes. More than 10, they asked, and he said, "yeah." I wonder if they waited to ask the boyfriend until

the girlfriend was out of the room on purpose. I wonder if they're going to tell the girlfriend. Makes an interesting moral argument... there's something someone should know, yet there's doctor-patient confidentiality... but then again, the boyfriend wasn't a patient, his girlfriend was the patient. Maybe the doctor's job dictates whether or not he would have to tell the girlfriend. What if her symptoms are indicative of an STD, then the doctor would have to tell her that of course... wonder if he'd mention her boyfriend's infidelity as well. Well, that's enough time on that story – onto the third ER story, which is sad...

The doctors and nurses started rushing around even more than they were before, and they all kept talking about how they were about to get much busier. "Something's coming in..." they were saying. I started overhearing snippets of conversation including something about calling the state fire marshall and an autopsy... Turns out someone had been found dead in their basement after their house was on fire. That is not a usual occurrence around here; this was a big deal at the ER. There was a sheriff walking around, and a body bag was wheeled down the hall. A sad event, no doubt, but something that would seem like just another day at work to doctors and nurses working at an urban hospital. I wonder what the circumstances of the fire are; I read in the newspaper that when firefighters arrived, there was only a little smoke showing on the roof. The man was found dead in the basement, so that seems a little suspicious. The state fire marshall is conducting a joint investigation with the sheriff's office, so maybe when they're done the story will be back in the newspaper. Well, anyway, I'm just relieved that all is well with my husband. I hope not to have to see if the ER remains busy any time soon!

---

# The Orphanage

Wow. What a good movie. [The Orphanage](#) is an eerily spooky ghost story, and I don't really know what else to say about it because I want to make sure not to spoil anything. They must have felt the same way when they wrote the summary on the back of the dvd's box because it was very general and even incorrect in some aspects. The movie is in Spanish, and I'll admit that scared us away from watching it for awhile. We got to go out to see a movie together while we were in Florida last January, and we went to buy tickets for The Orphanage, but the worker told us it had subtitles. So we saw [One Missed Call](#) instead, and that wasn't nearly as good, not even the same kind of movie. Our movie rental place has a satisfaction guarantee, so when we told them how unhappy we were with The Fun Park, we got a free rental. My husband was trying to be quick again – that's what got us into trouble with The Fun Park in the first place though – so he just grabbed The Orphanage, remembering that we had wanted to see it after reading the glowing reviews from critics. Pretty soon, it was Sunday already and we hadn't watched the movie and it was due by 11 pm that evening, so we quickly watched it while the kids were all napping from our big weekend. It didn't take long to forget we were reading subtitles rather than watching people talk in the movie; it was that good. The critics were actually right for once. Like I said, I really don't want to give any of the plot because it'd be difficult to explain anything without giving away spoilers. So I'll just say, if you like spooky movies, this one is a must-see. It's not even really a horror movie; it's supernaturally suspenseful. The story draws you in and doesn't let go... you may not speak the same language as the characters, but you identify with them, feel their pain, and genuinely care about what happens to them as the story unfolds. SEE IT! It's a totally different movie experience between the subtitles and just the kind of movie it is – I HIGHLY recommend it!

---

## 18 Kids – Are They Crazy?

They don't seem to be, they just like kids, I guess. You might have heard of the Duggar family from Arkansas. They are kind of like celebrities. Their claim to fame? Having 18 natural children. No adoptees or fosters. The 18 includes 2 sets of twins and one on the way; there are 7 girls and 11 boys – they don't know the gender of the new baby yet. Their story interests me because with 4 kids myself, I thought I had a lot of kids. It's interesting to me to see how they go about their daily lives with 20 people living in their house. Their house is custom built, they actually built it themselves as a family project. They have lots of things in their house that help organize their lives and make everything run more smoothly, for instance, they have 4 washers and 4 dryers in their laundry room and one communal family clothes closet where the clothes are sorted by size. Their kitchen has 2 convection ovens, 2 microwaves, 2 warming drawers, 2 dishwashers, 2 sinks, and a fridge/freezer. And that's the small kitchen. The industrial kitchen is outfitted with 4 ovens, 2 griddles, 4 freezers, 2 refrigerators, 2 sinks, a pizza oven, a deep fryer, and a popcorn machine. They even have their own buffet line; that's how they serve their food. Each kid goes through the line and gets their own food, well, the ones who are old enough, anyway. They also have a drink counter in their dining room with a fountain pop machine.

Even though they have all these things in their house that help to accommodate such a large family, it's amazing to me that they can still function with all those kids. The kids are home schooled and also take piano, violin, and harp lessons. I think the key here is scheduling. The family has a daily schedule that they follow which is supplemented with

reward charts and checklists for each family member. Each person has a jurisdiction within the house that they are responsible for cleaning during family cleaning time. It sounds like a well-oiled machine, but I'm sure they run into their share of snags. I just have so many questions about their situation, though, like how can a woman want to go through the birthing process 16 times (remember, 2 sets of twins)? How is her body even able to carry and give birth to 18 children? Is she addicted to pregnancy? Do they have a money tree in their yard? What is their grocery bill? When do they have time for grocery shopping and who does it? Do they have a vehicle that fits them all, or do they have to travel everywhere in a caravan? Does Jim-Bob (the dad) work outside the home? It's kind of funny, isn't it, that his name is Jim-Bob, he's from the south, and he has 18 kids. Talk about illustrating stereotypes.

But seriously, they must be rich, or at least *were* rich before they had all those kids. Not only would their grocery bill be outrageous, but they built their own large home and they need furniture to accommodate 20 people – that's 19 beds alone! Oh, and I almost forgot to mention that all the children's names start with the letter j. Well, anyway, I just thought I'd write a little about the lives of this interesting family. If you want more information about them or want to look at pictures of them or their cool house, they have a pretty nice website. They also make appearances on news shows frequently and had a reality show on the Discovery Channel that followed them as they built their house. I wonder if they plan on sending all 18 kids to college? And if all 18 share their parents' views of contraception, they are going to have *hundreds* of grandchildren!

---

# Moving The Choo-Choo

If you've grown up in Chicagoland as I have, then you'll know what I'm talking about when I describe a few staples of a typical suburban 1980's Chicago childhood. #1 – You've attended a taping of the Bozo show. As I've stated before, the girl I went to the show with was put on the waiting list for tickets when she was a fetus. We went to the show taping when we were 9 – that's how long it took for her name to come up, thus illustrating how popular the experience was. #2 – If you had perfect attendance in school, you won tickets to a White Sox baseball game. Even I, a true-blue Chicago Cubs fan, ventured over to the south side as a youth to cheer on the men in black as a reward for not missing any days in a school year. Don't tell anyone though; it's not something I'm proud of. #3 – You got your grilled cheese served to you by a miniature train at the Choo-Choo restaurant in Des Plaines.

Now that it's 2008, I doubt they give away major league baseball tickets for perfect attendance in school anymore. I know for a fact that the Bozo show is no longer around, but I also know that the Choo-Choo restaurant is alive and well – for now anyway. The Choo-Choo is a small diner that serves typical american fare – hot dogs, grilled cheese, burgers, and the like. If you sit at the counter, your food is delivered by a miniature train that circles the dining room and disappears into the kitchen. It seems they are thinking of moving the Choo-Choo to build a new police department. Not putting it out of business, thank goodness, but they are considering moving it. I hope this does not happen because I'm not one to favor change, and I can't help but feel that if the restaurant is moved, it will suffer loss of business which will eventually lead to its demise. I don't understand why the proposal involves moving the entire building; from what I remember it is a very small crowded space, and the magic is in the train serving your food, not in the building

itself. Since 1951, this little diner has been there, and many generations have enjoyed it. I think it would be a shame to move it as it would lose at least a little bit of its nostalgia for some people if it were in a different location. Leave it there in its tiny building. Let people stand in lines that often run out the door in order to get a counter seat where the train runs as they've done for decades. People are more likely to return with their children and later on, their grandchildren if it's left exactly the way they remember it.

My husband and I had very different upbringings; his was a life of "privilege", getting every material item he could ever want, although his parents were never home. Mine was the opposite, a loving family always together although we had to stretch the already tight budget just to be able to afford such luxuries as an occasional happy meal from McDonalds. But we are both products of Chicagoland, therefore we share the memories of the Sox tickets perfect attendance prize (not that my husband ever won any; this is no surprise if you know anything about his school years), being at the Bozo show tapings, and our visits to the Choo-Choo restaurant. My kids have been to the restaurant also, and I hope it's still there for them to visit with my grandchildren someday.

---

## Catching Up

A while ago, my husband suggested that I blog everything I do. While that seemed a little outrageous and time consuming to me, I am going to share this email I just typed to a long lost friend from high school. I got an email from her the other day out of the blue saying that she had just gotten married, so I sent her back congratulations and a brief

summary about my life for the last 12 years. I got a reply from her and found out she's still in school (poor thing – we're 30!). I typed back such a long response that I thought it might as well be a post on my blog as well – 2 birds with one stone, so they say... Now you don't have to hack into my email to read my personal stuff! That's a thinly veiled reference to my last post about the dueling newscasters, one who was hacking into the other's email. Here's the email I sent to my friend – in case you're wondering why it gets random in places, those are answers to questions she asked me.

Great to hear back from you! So are you going to be a lawyer when you're done with school? Where are you guys living? We are living in a little town in Ohio – I think it just might be the most perfect place to live, for us anyway, we hated Illinois and city living. It's very rural out here. Everyone knows each other; they're all very friendly. It's small, not even 9,000 people, and it's surrounded by farms. But we love it; we still have Walmart, restaurants, a movie theater – all the modern conveniences. It's so nice to send the kids to school and not worry about them like I would at schools in the Chicago area.

So you are planning to have kids then? I wouldn't say I'm ahead of you – maybe in the insanity department, it gets pretty loud and crazy around here! But seriously, being pregnant is actually kinda fun, especially when you can feel the baby moving. I had pretty good pregnancies; though I had gestational diabetes with 2 of them, and I had to take shots of insulin. Of course that wasn't fun, but it's pretty easy to do things when you know it's for the good of the baby. I can't say much about the deliveries. My first one was really long, my second one was awful, my third one was very easy, and my fourth one was horrible. If I have any more, I'll probably have to have another c-section, but at least then I don't have to go through labor. It's different for everyone. I have a friend who has 5 kids and she never needed any drugs with any



of her deliveries. Her longest delivery was 2 hours from start to finish, shortest was 20 minutes. Not only that, but all her kids starting sleeping through the night before they were a month old! She makes me jealous! But anyway, it's all worth it in the end. My last delivery was so horrible, yet I'm already back to wanting more kids... if only they'd let us sleep... And it's so neat to see how different the kids' personalities are. My second oldest, Sammie, was so crazy in the womb it felt like she was kicking my organs around. She is still crazy and is our most challenging kid. Disney was a really easy delivery, and she's our sweetest kid – so happy, friendly, and cuddly.

Our marriage is going great! My only regret is not marrying him sooner – we had a long engagement, otherwise we would have celebrated our tenth anniversary last year or the year before! He is still perfect – he helps around the house (understatement) and takes care of the kids... we definitely have a 50-50 household. Lots of husbands don't do anything but work, so I consider myself very lucky. He works from home, has his own business, which can be challenging because I have to keep the kids away from him while he's working. He is very good with computers and has lots of great ideas, so he supports us while my work is taking care of the kids. And I'm never bored – there is always plenty to do with 4 kids to take care of. I think about going back to work sometimes, but only when I get sick of watching Barney and talking to a 2-year old all day. I don't think I'd like to go out and work outside the home though, unless it was at a zoo, and the zoo is an hour away. Who knows what I'll do when all the kids grow up and go to school all day. The blog I'm doing that I sent you the link to makes a little bit of money, and I'm happy doing that in my spare time when I can get it. We also do lots of volunteer work in the community. We hold a few board positions for various community organizations, and we do lots for the local community theater group – Chris likes to be in plays. He's a great actor and singer, and he's also written

several plays. I like to do behind-the-scenes stuff; we've directed shows together, and I like to produce and stage manage also. I'm too shy to get on stage myself, and I'm starting to realize that my feelings on that will probably never change.

So what's your new last name, did you change it? Did you go to our 10 year high school reunion? I didn't because I was pregnant with Disney – she was born 10 days after the reunion! I don't have many fond memories of high school anyway; I didn't really know a lot of people, compared to how big our class was. Aside from you, Kristen, Kelly, and Sarah, the people I hung out with most of the time went to Glenbard West.

Did you have a big wedding? Where was it, in IL? Where are you going to school? Do you still talk to Kristen or anyone else from high school?

It's been fun catching up with you – send me some pictures of your wedding! I will send you some more pictures of my family. Our last family picture was taken probably over a year ago, but we will be due for another one soon so Christopher can be in it. I'll probably want one for Christmas cards. When I get one, I will send it. Take care!

---

## Stage Fodder

There's a story that's been in the news lately that I think would make an awesome play... now I just have to get my husband, an accomplished playwright, to pen it...

Have you heard the one about the dueling newscasters? For 4 years, Larry Mendte and Alycia Lane co-anchored the evening

news together at KYW-TV, the CBS affiliate in Philadelphia. Last December, Lane was fired because she allegedly got into a scuffle with an NYPD officer. Somehow, details of her arrest were leaked to a Philadelphia Daily News reporter, along with other details of her personal life which has included 2 divorces. She complained to the tv station that someone was reading her emails, but they treated her as if she was paranoid.

It turns out that her co-anchor, Mr. Mendte, had bought a keystroke-logging device to get her passwords in August 2006 and was intercepting e-mails from Lane's two personal accounts and one work account. He was fired also – a shame because the duo was making gains on their competitor, longtime leader news leader WPVI-TV, the ABC affiliate in the area. Mendte is now facing criminal charges and has pleaded guilty to one count of illegally accessing a computer. His motivation? Jealousy over his co-anchor's \$780,000 yearly salary because his was only a measly \$700,000. I had no idea news anchors make that much! But anyway, there's an extra little tidbit to this story that wouldn't even need to be embellished when writing it into a play: Mendte's wife Dawn Stensland is also a news anchor; she works at the Fox affiliate in Philadelphia. Coming to a stage near you!

---

## **Miss Kasandra Scarlet Did It In The Spa With The Dumbell**

The classic board game Clue is getting a makeover. Sure, there's been lots of variations of it over the years; among them Simpsons Clue, Disney's Haunted Mansion Clue, Dvd Clue, and Clue Jr. But now they are giving the game a more modern

look by changing characters, weapons, and rooms. Here are some of the changes:

- Colonel Mustard is now Jack Mustard, a former football player
- Professor Plum is now Victor Plum, a billionaire video game designer
- Mr. Green is now Jacob Green, an African-American
- New Rooms: theater, spa and guest house
- Weapons: Hasbro replaced the lead pipe, revolver and wrench with a dumbbell, trophy and poison
- Each of the characters has a special sleuthing power

Hmm, I'm not so sure about this. I tend to like things the way they are. I've played both versions of a few board games that have been modernized, like Pay Day and Life, and I strongly prefer the original versions. I guess we'll have to see, although it will probably be a long time before I try the new Clue because I buy my games at the thrift store. The only way the new Clue will get to the thrift store super quick is if it really stinks!

---

## Wanna Feel Old?

Of course you do, who doesn't? Besides, it's Friday night, and you're at home reading my blog! ☐ I guess you could be reading this at a later time... But anyway, if you're around my age or older, then you remember [Molly Ringwald](#), a popular actress in the 1980's from many teen-themed movies such as [Pretty in Pink](#), [Sixteen Candles](#), and the iconic [The Breakfast Club](#). If you were a fan of these movies as a teen or young adult yourself, you will probably feel old when I tell you that Molly Ringwald is playing a *grandmother* in her next

role. That's right – grandma. A woman whose kid has a kid. Sigh. While we're on the subject of feeling old, I read an article the other day that had some interesting facts about the lives of students entering college this fall. Each August for the past 11 years, Beloit College in Beloit, Wis., has released the Beloit College Mindset List. It provides a look at the cultural touchstones that shape the lives of students entering college. For these students, Sammy Davis Jr., Jim Henson, Ryan White, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Freddy Krueger have always been dead. Here is some food for thought with the rest of the list:

1. Harry Potter could be a classmate, playing on their Quidditch team.
2. Since they were in diapers, karaoke machines have been annoying people at parties.
3. They have always been looking for Carmen Sandiego.
4. GPS satellite navigation systems have always been available.
5. Coke and Pepsi have always used recycled plastic bottles.
6. Shampoo and conditioner have always been available in the same bottle.
7. Gas stations have never fixed flats, but most serve cappuccino.
8. Their parents may have dropped them in shock when they heard George Bush announce "tax revenue increases."
9. Electronic filing of tax returns has always been an option.
10. Girls in head scarves have always been part of the school fashion scene.
11. All have had a relative—or known about a friend's relative—who died comfortably at home with Hospice.
12. As a precursor to "whatever," they have recognized that some people "just don't get it."
13. Universal Studios has always offered an alternative to Mickey in Orlando.

14. Grandma has always had wheels on her walker.
15. *Martha Stewart Living* has always been setting the style.
16. Haagen-Dazs ice cream has always come in quarts.
17. Club Med resorts have always been places to take the whole family.
18. WWW has never stood for World Wide Wrestling.
19. Films have never been X rated, only NC-17.
20. The Warsaw Pact is as hazy for them as the League of Nations was for their parents.
21. Students have always been "Rocking the Vote."
22. Clarence Thomas has always sat on the Supreme Court.
23. Schools have always been concerned about multiculturalism.
24. We have always known that "*All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.*"
25. There have always been gay rabbis.
26. Wayne Newton has never had a mustache.
27. College grads have always been able to Teach for America.
28. IBM has never made typewriters.
29. Roseanne Barr has never been invited to sing the National Anthem again.
30. McDonald's and Burger King have always used vegetable oil for cooking french fries.
31. They have never been able to color a tree using a raw umber Crayola.
32. There has always been Pearl Jam.
33. The Tonight Show has always been hosted by Jay Leno and started at 11:35 EST.
34. Pee-Wee has never been in his playhouse during the day.
35. They never tasted Benefit Cereal with psyllium.
36. They may have been given a Nintendo Game Boy to play with in the crib.
37. Authorities have always been building a wall across the Mexican border.
38. Lenin's name has never been on a major city in Russia.
39. Employers have always been able to do credit checks on

employees.

40. Balsamic vinegar has always been available in the U.S.
41. Macaulay Culkin has always been *Home Alone*.
42. Their parents may have watched *The American Gladiators* on TV the day they were born.
43. Personal privacy has always been threatened.
44. Caller ID has always been available on phones.
45. Living wills have always been asked for at hospital check-ins.
46. The Green Bay Packers (almost) always had the same starting quarterback.
47. They never heard an attendant ask "Want me to check under the hood?"
48. Iced tea has always come in cans and bottles.
49. Soft drink refills have always been free.
50. They have never known life without Seinfeld references from a show about "nothing."
51. Windows 3.0 operating system made IBM PCs user-friendly the year they were born.
52. Muscovites have always been able to buy Big Macs.
53. The Royal New Zealand Navy has never been permitted a daily ration of rum.
54. The Hubble Space Telescope has always been eavesdropping on the heavens.
55. 98.6 F or otherwise has always been confirmed in the ear.
56. Michael Milken has always been a philanthropist promoting prostate cancer research.
57. Off-shore oil drilling in the United States has always been prohibited.
58. Radio stations have never been required to present both sides of public issues.
59. There have always been charter schools.
60. Students always had *Goosebumps*.

I hope I didn't depress you, but remember, it's not my list, so blame Beloit College and Molly Ringwald if you feel like an

old geezer. Why don't we just forget about the list and toast our recycled bottles of Coke to life experience.

---

## Poor "Little" Colin

When I saw the news story the other day about an orphaned baby humpback whale, I was tempted to put it in my blog, but I didn't because I had a feeling it wouldn't end well. I'm sorry to say that I was right, and I'm only writing about it now because the saga is over.

There was a baby humpback whale off the coast of Australia who was trying to suckle from yachts; they estimated him to be about 1 or 2 months old. For some reason, he had been abandoned by his mother, even though he was obviously still nursing. They tried to help him; they tried leading him out to sea, integrating him into another pod of whales, and they speculated about what to feed him. But because he was still nursing, they didn't know how to take care of a 12 foot orphaned whale. Throughout his plight, Australians following the story grew attached to the "little" guy, and they affectionately named him Colin. They watched as Colin grew weak with hunger as the days went by until sadly, the decision was made to euthanize him. Suddenly, he was no where to be found... but I guess it was just the darkness cloaking him because they did find him the next day, and they pulled him ashore and administered a lethal injection.

As an animal lover, this story was very sad for me to read, but mostly, I just don't get it. Why did humans have to take it upon themselves to euthanize the whale? Why couldn't they have at least *tried* to feed him? It's not that I think any animal should suffer, but this was nature... it wasn't humans



who injured the baby whale, so why not let nature continue taking its course and just leave him alone? Who knows, maybe he would have found a pod of whales to nurse him back to health before it was too late. But no, the humans just had to intervene – they had to drag a baby whale out of the water, his natural habitat, and kill him. They didn't want him to suffer starving to death in the ocean, but what about the terror he felt when he was captured and dragged out of the water? And let's not even talk about how much all this costs. Seems like they could have fed a few starving people, put a roof over someone's head for a few nights, or provided medical care to the sick if they had extra money laying around to execute a whale. After all, every little bit helps, right? But what's done is done; the saga of Colin the whale is over. Maybe humans will eventually realize that their constant meddling with nature sometimes brings more harm than good.

---

## **Thank Goodness She's Off The Streets**

I was sick of reading the horrible news stories on CNN, so I went to [thesmokinggun.com](http://thesmokinggun.com) in search of some comedic relief. The following story is more amazing than funny – it's amazing that they put this poor girl through this, and it's amazing that they wasted tax payers' dollars in doing so.

From [thesmokinggun.com](http://thesmokinggun.com):

AUGUST 21–The next time you forget to return a couple of library books (and ignore those annoying letters about the overdue status of said volumes), think of Heidi Dalibor. The

Wisconsin woman, 20, was arrested earlier this month in connection with a pair of books overdue for several months. Dalibor, who made the mistake of ignoring a court citation issued after she failed to respond to letters and phone calls from the Grafton library, was busted August 6 for failing to return copies of Janet Fitch's best-seller "White Oleander" (a 1999 Oprah Book Club selection) and "Angels & Demons," author Dan Brown's precursor to "The Da Vinci Code." According to a police report, Dalibor was apprehended at her family's home, cuffed and stuffed in a cruiser, and booked for violating the "overdue library materials" ordinance. Dalibor subsequently settled with the library by paying her overdue fines and reimbursing it for the cost of the two novels, which totaled around \$180. Dalibor's mother Patty said that her daughter was "a good kid" who works two jobs. She is also now the owner of the Fitch and Brown books, which Dalibor got to keep as a result of paying off her library levies.