

Snow Day!

Yet another snow day is upon us... that makes #6 for us this year, and it's now officially time to start making them up in the summer. Which I guess is good news for me, because the kids now have at least 1 extra day to attend school in the summer, near the time when the baby is due and I wouldn't know how I'm going to handle all 3 of them alone anyway! But for today, we are stuck here, buried under about 6 inches of snow which is still falling. My gem of a husband had already shoveled twice – it's our "date night", and he says he wants nothing to stop the car from taking the kids to the babysitters later. But I feel badly for him cuz it just keeps snowing and burying our sidewalks yet again. And speaking of being buried, our garbage is no where to be seen – oops! Once a month where I live, we have big garbage day, when you can put all your garbage out for free, no special bags or stickers needed. So today was ours, and even though none of the neighbors had theirs out, we put ours out, like idiots... my idea. So now it's buried, and I don't know how they're going to pick it up. Don't think the neighbors would be too happy if we leave it there until next month!

So the kids are already fighting, and Dr. Phil isn't even over. I still have to make lunch, get my load of laundry in, finish this post, and make sure the kids pick up the mess they made all morning. If I get all that done and I can bundle the kids before it gets too cold and windy outside like they are forecasting, we might go sledding. I'm not a big fan of the snow days; it throws our whole schedule off, but at least they'll be going one more day in the summer – disappointing for them = freedom for me!

Oscar Party

We had an Oscar party last night. It was a lot of fun! We asked the guests to bring a \$5 item from home they would have put in a garage sale. Everyone filled out a ballot, and whoever got the most correct guesses (my husband out of sheer luck, can you believe it? He doesn't know anything about the Oscars! Congratulations Honey!) chose an item first, followed by the person with the next most correct guesses, and so on. So, we got a cool looking food chopper. Haven't tried it yet... I didn't do too badly on the guessing, I got to choose fourth... but I was disappointed because the item I really wanted (needed, actually) had been taken by then... but I am happy with the food chopper, I'll have to see how it works. What I really wanted were the set of metal padlocks, it sounds weird, I know... but we have this escaping parrot who needs all the doors on his cage padlocked – there are 3 – and he can bite thru plastic padlocks. The other day he got out of his cage and chewed the light switch plate off the wall... so I'm afraid we're going to come home one day to fried parrot. But, who would have guessed that the padlocks would be in such high demand. Not my husband, who did get to choose first but thought the padlocks would be left for me to choose, so instead he chose the food chopper for me – awww. But I really recommend doing award show parties, sports-watching parties, etc. this way, it's lots of fun, and it's really interesting to see what kind of stuff you end up with.

But enough about us and our party, let's move on to the real party... I didn't really see any of the red carpet this year – oh darn – cuz we were busy playing a game and then we watched Barbara Walters interviews, which I don't usually watch. I did see Hillary Swank, who I mistook for Halle Berry – don't know what that was about, but she looked really different, barely recognizable. I thought the show was supposed to start at 8, but it started closer to 9, which could explain why our

poor friends were stuck here until midnight on a work night! I thought Jon Stewart did pretty well as host. He was pretty funny, but my favorite Oscars host is Ellen – I really wish they'd have her back. I got 8 of the 24 votable categories correct. Not an outstanding score, but among our party of about 10, I think it was about average. The only award contenders I saw this year were *Gone Baby Gone* and *Juno*. See one of my previous posts for a review of *Gone Baby Gone* and you'll see why I wasn't broken up about it losing out on its Oscar chance. I was glad to see *Juno* win for one of the screenplay awards – it was a really well written movie, and I recommend it to anyone who is not a teen. If you have a teen, watch out, and do not let them see this movie, as it totally glorifies teen pregnancy, makes it seem easy, and will most likely have them saying, what's the big deal, I can handle it, no problem. Enough of my rambling, here are the Oscar winners in case you can't find them anywhere else for some weird reason:

Best Motion Picture: "No Country for Old Men."

Lead Actor: Daniel Day-Lewis, "There Will Be Blood."

Lead Actress: Marion Cotillard, "La Vie en Rose."

Supporting Actor: Javier Bardem, "No Country for Old Men."

Supporting Actress: Tilda Swinton, "Michael Clayton."

Director: Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, "No Country for Old Men."

Foreign Language Film: "The Counterfeiters," Austria.

Adapted Screenplay: Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, "No Country for Old Men."

Original Screenplay: Diablo Cody, "Juno."

Animated Feature Film: "Ratatouille."

Art Direction: "Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street."

Cinematography: "There Will Be Blood."

Sound Mixing: "The Bourne Ultimatum."

Sound Editing: "The Bourne Ultimatum."

Original Score: "Atonement," Dario Marianelli.

Original Song: "Falling Slowly" from "Once," Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova.

Costume: "Elizabeth: The Golden Age."

Documentary Feature: "Taxi to the Dark Side."

Documentary Short Subject: "Freeheld."

Film Editing: "The Bourne Ultimatum."

Makeup: "La Vie en Rose."

Animated Short Film: "Peter & the Wolf."

Live Action Short Film: "Le Mozart des Pickpockets ('The Mozart of Pickpockets')."

Visual Effects: "The Golden Compass."

The Price is WRONG, Bit... TAKE TWO, ENTER WALMART

I thought this would be a perfect title to use for my venting session about many people's favorite place to shop, Walmart.

But since I just used the title the other day, this will have to be take two on the title.

I have a love-hate relationship with Walmart. It's a lot more hate than love at this point, but I try to be an optimist, view the cup as half full, that kind of thing. I used to love the place. That was when I had lots of other shopping choices. Also I wasn't stuck there at least once a week for hours on end with crabby kids because I had fewer kids then, and for some reason, they used to like shopping there. But now that Walmart has put many of the other stores in my area out of business, and there aren't very many other choices for local shoppers to make, Walmart is beginning to engage in a little bit of price gouging. Let me back up for a minute... what I loved most about Walmart when I first started shopping there were their low, low prices. This is no longer the case! I go to Walmart about twice a week. I try to go just once, but that plan never works in my favor – we either run out of something, I forget something, or something comes up, like an impromptu get-together or Pampered Chef party. But anyway, so I'm there twice a week, at least. And EVERY time I go, they raise the price on at least one of my "staple" items! Even if it's only 7 cents or so, it's still a big deal to me, because over years, it really adds up! And, in the case of the toilet paper I buy, it used to cost \$1. The price went up to \$1.24 **in one visit!** I'm no math wiz, but I think that is almost a 25% price increase **in one visit!** Also, it's difficult to compare prices at different stores if the prices are constantly changing. But don't be fooled – Walmart knows this. And that's not the only trick they have up their sleeve either. If your Walmart is anything like mine, they are out of stock on things constantly! I think it's a purposeful action so that they can force you into buying a similar item that costs more just to avoid running out of the item yourself or having to take the time to go to another store – if there are any other stores left, that is. For example, let's say Walmart is out of the Great Value

(Walmart's generic brand = same as Heinz but cheaper) brand of ketchup. Are you going to tell your barbecue guests you don't have enough ketchup? Or are you going to make another stop at different store, unloading all your kids from the car just to run in for ketchup? Or, are you going to choose likely option #3, the one Walmart wants you to choose: you mumbling and swearing under your breath as you pay more for the Heinz ketchup, of which Walmart has so thoughtfully stocked plenty? If I had the time or any fewer kids, I would probably go with option #2 just on a matter of principle, but I just don't have the time nor the energy to take a freaky stand against Walmart and their price gouging ways. In updating this blog I will keep you posted on what has changed by how much – it will be good to help me vent so my family and friends don't have to hear all these gory details constantly. And, because I've rambled forever about Walmart, I will also save my gripes about their oil changes for another post. For now, I think I'm done wasting time droning on and on about Walmart... besides, it's almost Oscar time!

The Pampered Chef

I hosted a Pampered Chef party last night – it was just for fun. I do like their products, but I find them extremely over-priced. My experience of working for a company that imported goods from China doesn't help these opinions; that's when I got to see how inexpensive plastics can really be. But anyway... we did have fun. And an interesting note for all you stoneware fans out there – stoneware is an imposter! If you're not familiar with Pampered Chef parties, I'll give you a run-down of how it all went down...

When you agree to host a party, you choose one recipe to make

with all the victims, I mean, friends, you invite to your party. I, being pregnant, could not resist the sound of the chewy caramel brownies. We were having a grand old time, measuring things, chopping things, and spilling ingredients all over my living room, until the consultant proceeded to burn the brownies to a **crisp!** The smoke alarm went off and scared the kids and everything! Which brings me to the subject of the mythical stoneware, noted for its ability to cook things evenly. Guess what? The brownies did burn **edges first!** So much for that theory. My husband, ever the conspiracy theorist, was wondering if she didn't burn the brownies on purpose trying to gain sympathetic orders from my victims, errr, guests. But, once we saw the effect of the stoneware, this theory was proven incorrect by the sheer failure of the purpose of the stoneware. Needless to say, I will not be choosing any stoneware items with my party-hosting credit! And I have to admit, the brownies were a big disappointment. Not at all cuz they were burned, but because they were TOO sweet and rich for my tastes, however pregnant I am. I did feel badly for the consultant; but stuff happens, gotta chalk it up to gaining experience. Overall, I would recommend hosting one of these parties. It's fun to get together with your victims, I mean your friends and family and cook. You have to be a little bit willing to stand up for yourself though – the consultant WILL pressure you to invite tons of people, call them all constantly to remind them to come, and will also try her darndest to get YOU to be a consultant yourself! And since my “excuse” of having 3 kids 8 yrs and under PLUS 1 on the way wasn't really good enough – I had to “just say no” in the end – good luck to you! So as long as you can deal with the peer pressure involved, it is definitely worth a try to host a Pampered Chef party. And thanks to all my suckers, I mean, my guests who ordered things – that was really nice of you and I appreciate it – we had fun!

The Price is WRONG, Bit...

You know I'm not going to finish that sentence... if you've seen Happy Gilmore, you know how it ends, anyway. If not, rent it if you like comedies, it's a good one. In case you haven't noticed, I watch a lot of tv. Actually, I don't really watch it, I just leave it on to listen to while I putter around the house doing various chores and tending to children all day... it's nice to hear adults talking, even if they aren't talking to me – I can pretend. Anyway, I usually have The Price is Right on in my laundry room for my parrot – it's his favorite show. He likes to imitate the AWWW noise the audience makes when they get something wrong. I'm getting used to Drew Carey. He's no Bob Barker, but he is finally becoming less nervous and getting in the groove of the show – or so I thought. The other day when I started this post – it got POSTponed (HA) because the baby and I have been under the weather – Drew was a little “off”. The opening prize was a train set, and he goes, what do you want to bid for that chainsaw? As he admitted, he didn't even look at the prize! Then later on, he called one of the models Rachel Ray. Funny stuff – and though it might seem like I have too much time on my hands, I beg to differ.

Finally, a Walking Baby!

She finally did it! Tonight was Disney's first serious attempt at walking! Well, she has tried before, but tonight she was doing it over and over, 5 steps or more at a time! I

tried to get it on video, but as soon as I took out the camera, she got all distracted and started crawling toward the camera saying “cheese, cheese” – it was really cute, but I had to put the camera away and get back to walking! It’s like she knew the deadline was nearing, because we have a Dr. appointment on Monday just because the Dr. wants to make sure she’s walking – she was really surprised she wasn’t walking at her 15 month appointment so she asked to see her again in a month to make sure... Now she has until Monday to practice, and her sisters are a big help with that! Since tomorrow is her 16 month birthday, I was wondering, how late is she? Beyond average, I know, but I’m curious about how late kids start walking... let me know if you know of any lazy late walkers – it’s kind of like a poll, let’s see the latest we can find, hope it’s not Disney though ☐

Baby Names

Ok, with a baby on the way, I’ve got baby names on the brain. With 3 girls already, we’ve exhausted our supply of favorite girls’ names. Since we just found out this one is also most likely a girl, we have been pondering ways to name the baby. Our first 3 all have middle names that start with “A”s, so we’d like to keep that pattern. The problem is, since we’ve used up all of our top choices by now, I would like to name this baby after a relative. My relatives don’t have the best sounding names... I don’t want to offend anyone here, so no offense, but Dolores (my grandmother), Phyllis (my mother), or even Lisa (my name = my husband’s idea to use it) just don’t appeal to me, to say the least. I was very close to my deceased grandmother whom my husband never met, but her name was, GULP, Frances. Now, I do not regret using the middle-names-start-with-A pattern at all, I think it’s cool and all

of our girls have pretty names; so far anyway, but if we didn't have to stick to the pattern, we could name her something we like with Frances as a middle name to use as the namesake. But, with our lovely pattern at stake, if we're going to use the name Frances, it has to be a first name. After being blessed with 3 beautiful girls and getting to give them 2 names each of our choosing, I think it'd be nice to use a namesake this time. But my husband HATES the name Frances. I can't say I blame him, he never met my grandmother, and I'm not a big fan of the name either, but I think it would grow on us and we could also call her by her middle name or a nickname. And, let's face it, we can't get more flak than we've already gotten for naming our third child Disney! That's a long story, best to be saved for another post... but let's just say little Disney is our happiest baby yet, so who has any right to say what's in a name?

Dr. Phil

Dr. Phil is one of my favorite tv shows, especially during the writers' strike. Thank goodness that's over because my FAVORITE show is The Office, which I also plan to write about once they start airing new episodes – CAN'T WAIT! I also enjoy Lost and what I call "junk tv", meaning whatever is on like Moment of Truth, other fly-by-night reality shows, and shows like Cops and Dateline. Enough of the tangents (wink, wink ;)) – back to Dr. Phil.

First, let me talk about how lucky I am to be a Dr. Phil fan living where I live, in the middle of rural Ohio, halfway between Toledo and Fort Wayne, Indiana. That means we get two of each of the major networks, one out of Toledo, and one out of Fort Wayne. Dr. Phil is on in Toledo at 10 am, and it's on

in Fort Wayne at 3 pm AND 7 pm. The 10 am and 7pm airings are the same episode, so if I miss the morning one, I have another chance to catch it. And if I miss both of those, the 3 o'clock airing from Fort Wayne is a week behind the others, giving me yet another chance to see a missed episode!

Anyway, today's episode was disturbing. Not like people-who-harm-children disturbing, but there was this husband who was a "right-fighter" and a "bully" – if you're a frequent Dr. Phil watcher you will know that these are two of his favorite terms. These and "hero". Hardly a week will go by when he doesn't say "this relationship needs a hero". So anyway, today's "right-fighter" was probably the worst husband I've ever seen on the show. I don't understand the point of their marriage, to be honest... I can't believe Dr. Phil didn't pull out another of his favorite sayings – "Children would rather be from a broken home than living in one." This guy verbally and emotionally abuses his wife about her weight, cleaning, everything, then justifies his every action. I think you probably had to watch the show to even get the severity of what was going on... If you live near Fort Wayne, catch it next Wednesday at 3!

Gone Baby Gone

Saw the movie Gone Baby Gone the other night... Had a free rental at the video store; every once in awhile they call and give us one... but I hate standing there forever trying to choose a good movie! So we had Saw IV in hand, and my husband's like, you know, we really haven't liked the last 2 Saw's all that much, compared to the first one. So I said yeah, and I saw Gone Baby Gone, and since I'd heard it was supposed to be good, we went with it. Besides, it got Oscar

nominated, and I always like to be in on Oscar buzz... Not my kind of movie. Not that it was bad, but just a lot of dialogue and violence... not my kind of movie. It was entertaining, and I appreciated the twists and turns without seeing them coming, though I can't say the same for Hubby. We like to give movies we watch our own imdb (interest movie database – cool site!) ratings, so I gave this one a 6.2. Hubby gave it a 4.2. I appreciated the movie for what it was, and I can't say much more without spoilers, so I won't. The bottom line is, if you like violent crime dramas with intense dialogue, this movie is for you. I personally have trouble following movies where they talk about a bunch of characters and the audience is expected to keep them all straight, but that's just me. A few plot inconsistencies, but my rating was kinda high because I did appreciate the complexity of the plot, even if it was a bit difficult for me to follow at times... so to quote one of my favorite movies, That's all I have to say about that.

Blankies

Did you catch Barney today? Probably not... but I did so I'll fill you in. Baby Bop lost her blankie, prompting much song and dance. Which got me to thinking... how old is too old for a blankie? Actually, this blog was inspired by my oldest daughter who is 8 and still has a blankie. I suppose it doesn't sound like a big deal if I just put it that way, I mean, it's not like she carries it everywhere with her anymore... it was actually pretty easy to get her to stop bringing it places with us, thank goodness. But when we're at home, it's a different story. It IS carried everywhere around the house. And if, help us all, we should have misplaced the blankie somewhere during the day and she doesn't have it to

sleep with at night – let's just say the ENTIRE family suffers until it is found... So... how old is too old for a blankie? Worse yet, our 3 1/2 year old is now figuring out what a wonderful power trip she can take if she holds blankie hostage, causing ever-growing conflict. Soon the 1 1/2 year old will be in on it too, probably just because she'll decide there has to be something awfully special about that blankie based on the way her sisters are acting, but still, we don't need any more conflict! I think I will surf the net and get some feedback about this subject... Dr. Phil once had a college-age guest on his show who still had her blankie. It was nothing but a tattered piece of material, and I remember him joking, "Does it keep you warm?" Hehe. I remember in the movie Mr. Mom, the dad decides the kid is too old to have a "whoopie". I think they burn it or something cruel like that... I would never do that, but I do worry that some day if I get frustrated enough, the blankie might meet some sort of tragic demise... So, is 8 too old for a blankie? She still sucks her thumb too, but that will be another blog all together!