

Easy Money

How I wish I were talking about real life, but 'Easy Money' is the title of a board game we've recently discovered. As you may have read in the past, my husband and I collect board games. We used to go to thrift stores and pick up any games we saw that were missing from our collection. We fashioned ourselves a large game closet where we keep them all, and there are some games in there that we haven't yet had the chance to try. A few weeks ago, we pulled out the board game Easy Money and gave it a whirl – we all loved it!

According to the instructions, the first thing you do to prepare the game is to count out millions of dollars (fake of course, but still too bad) and bundle them into various amounts. This does actually add a fun element to the game; for some reason, it's much more fun to bet a million dollar bundle than it is to wager a million dollar bill – go figure. Had we purchased this game new, we would have had to do all the money-bundling ourselves, and knowing our general lack of patience, we might have quit right there. But we're glad we purchased this game used since all of the money had been pre-bundled for us. What I don't understand, however, is why the people who bundled all the money then got rid of the game, especially without seeming to play it much given the game's relatively good condition. Once the bundles of money are made, each player takes his or her turn, all moving the same pawn around the board until the bank runs out of money. Each player follows the instructions on the space they land upon, and usually some sort of gambling or betting is involved. I really like the game's Lottery concept, but the Wall Street spaces are not my favorite. I've played 3 games of Easy Money, and the Lottery was responsible for letting me win 2 of those games at the very last minute. When someone lands on the Wall Street space, every player has to predict whether the market will go up or down and bet accordingly. Since the

chances of winning the Wall Street bets are 50-50, you'd think I would have made some money. But I have some sort of terrible Wall Street luck, and I'd bet (pun intended, hehe) that I've only won the Wall Street gamble under 5 times throughout all 3 games I've played. I take it in stride though, the rest of the game is so fun and great for the whole family. Its only negative is the fact that it only accommodates up to 4 players, therefore it is not a contender for the crowded game nights we have with friends.

A Big Sarcastic THANKS

THANKS – to the one who got us the 300 piece puzzle for Christmas. Granted, 300 pieces are not too many for a puzzle. But normal puzzles usually have the person putting together a broken portrait, like a picture of a landscape or a scene. But the puzzle given to my 10-year-old back in December was a depiction of a collection of small toys clustered together on some shelves – what seemed like 300 toys broken into 300 pieces which we were supposed to piece together..

I wanted to do this puzzle together as a family days after it was given to us, but since that was one of the worst weekends of my life, we didn't get around to it. Tonight, my 10-year-old was having trouble sleeping after her little sisters had gone to bed, so we hauled it out and went to work. Thank goodness the little ones were asleep. There was no way that they would have felt anything but frustration when trying to do this puzzle – it was too daunting for even my husband to try, but then again, he is not a puzzle person in the slightest. As a matter of fact, when he saw our completed triumph, he asked, "How do we preserve this?" I answered, "Why bother, we'd probably like to do it again; it was fun."

He gave me the strangest look and said, "I guess our definitions of fun in this case are completely different."

I'm proud to say that together, my daughter and I finished the "impossible" puzzle about 15 minutes under our two-hour goal. Here are some pics:



Despite my clever blog post title and in all seriousness, I am thankful for the time that we spent together doing the puzzle, and we will look forward to doing it again. The thanks I would like to expend to the puzzle-giver is not at all sarcastic; we actually had a lot of fun. But that same puzzle-giver should keep a watchful eye... there are now two of us looking to challenge you to an equal payback ☐

Clue – The Office!

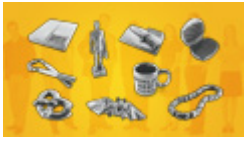
My first Christmas present of 2009 – Clue The Office Collector's Edition!



Ok, I have to be honest – could you tell I started the draft of this post weeks ago? But I had to finish it, cuz this is a super-cool game given by a very thoughtful friend. In addition, I received some other awesome gifts: Walmart gift cards and a gift certificate to the local pet store so I can get my parakeet – more on that later. My gifts also included something incredibly touching and sentimental from my husband and kids, but that's all I need to say about that to keep from traveling the dark road of sadness.

Back to Clue – The Office version – it was so fun! In true keeping with Office traditions, the victim in the game is Toby Flenderson! Obvious, especially when the game's instructions were penned by Michael. Each player chooses an available character, and they get a little Office ID card for their person (Office fans at our church exchanged this game for Christmas, and they replaced the little Office ID's with pictures of church staff – hilarious!). Players then move about the Office, entering rooms like Michael's Office or Accounting, and play continues just like the other versions of the game Clue – you make accusations about who killed Toby with which weapon in which room. My favorite part of this game (aside from the fact that I won the first round we played!) are the weapons – pewter figures representing

various hilarious Office plot lines; for example, a bike chain, a Dundie award, and my personal favorite: a George Foreman grill!!



It's a must-have for any fan of The Office, to be especially appreciated by game collectors like myself!

Totally 80's!

I haven't done one of my board game reviews in awhile, so I thought I'd write about a little treasure we found at the Goodwill tonight and actually had time to play – Totally 80's Trivial Pursuit. Since my husband and I were both children in the 80's, we thought we'd enjoy this version of the popular trivia game – even though I threatened to kick some butt since between the two of us, I'm the one who's chosen to fill her head with useless knowledge (most of which I've forgotten over the years anyway!), but what I'm trying to say is that I usually win the trivia games in our family. So we start to play the game, and the pawns are in the shapes of various pop culture staples in the 80's. There is a Care Bear, a computer, a Trapper Keeper, and a CD – cute! And I loved how the pie pieces are stored in the bases of the pawns when players earn them! My only complaint is that there definitely should have been more pawns – can't believe there wasn't even a Rubik's Cube pawn?!? How about some Jelly Shoes? A banana clip? Cabbage Patch Kid? Atari console? The list could go on and on... Here are the ones they **did** include:



But anyway, my husband did end up beating me, but I have two excuses. 1. The kids came down in the middle of the game and kept trying to play with the pawns which was distracting and I lost my focus. 2. My husband is older than me, and therefore he remembers more of the '80's – haha! Ouch! Ok, so I'm a little bit of a sore loser – rematch tonight?

(I guess this didn't end up being much of a review. It's a Trivial Pursuit game, nothing new there. But if you were around during the 80's and enjoy getting quizzed about the decade of excess, you're in for some fun!)

80s Toys

All that talk of California Raisins on my blog the other day got me to thinking about many of the toys I used to play with when I was a kid growing up in the 80's. I was a big fan of Fisher Price's Little People back then, and I generally liked playsets of any kind. The internet is a cool thing for many reasons, and it's fun for stirring up nostalgia now and then. I remembered this set of wind-up skill games they had in the

80s that were really small. After a few minutes of google searching, I found them: [T.H.I.N.G.S. by Milton Bradley](#) (Totally **H**ilarious **I**ncredibly **N**eat **G**ames of **S**kill – who remembers these?) . It's funny how most of these little toys look like just your everyday junk from China when you're an adult, but when I was a kid, I had the Sir-Ring-a-Lot game and wanted all the rest of the T.H.I.N.G.S.

I was also really into [Nerfuls](#) after sending away for one (visor guy) in exchange for cereal UPCs. These were little 3-piece figures – a body, a ball for the head, and a hat or hair. Some came with vehicles and the coolest parts were the stackable Nerfuls houses.

Legos were also really cool (still are!), and I'm thinking of getting my 5-year-old some of her own sets for Christmas this year.

Added link to [Weebles Mickey Mouse Clubhouse.](#)

Outlaws And Hideouts Revisited

All of this talk of hideouts and outlaws (see my previous post about Robber's Cave) makes me think about a really fun card game we've recently discovered – it's easy to become a Bandits junkie!



[Bandits is a card game by Buffalo Games](#), and it's fun for the entire family. It accommodates 2-6 players and is recommended for ages 10+, but we've found that our 9-year-old daughter and her friends can learn it and play quite easily.

Basically, a player begins with a hand of six cards, and he has 3 options on his turn: start a gunfight, draw a card, or stash loot in his Hideaway. Many shoot-outs and much thievery ensues until the deck runs out of cards, and players count their stash in their Hideaways to determine the winner. Those are the basics – there are many other fun cards that offer various twists on the game play (double-crossing lawmen and outlaws, booby traps, backfires, to name a few), and I'm just skimming the surface of the game; you really should play to appreciate it. I don't know that I've ever played such a fun card game (I like [Pit](#) a lot, but it's another type of game altogether), and each game of Bandits is unique dependent upon the number of players – a 2-player game plays out much more differently than does a 4-player game. I'd like to try it with 6 players, but we can never haul it out at game night since we always have more than 6 players. However many players there are, Bandits is definitely worth playing and highly recommended by this game collector!

FOOTBALL! Time To Blog, Except...

... I've gotten engrossed in another video game. And because I'm a mom of 4 and don't have a lot of extra time, my blogging frequency is going to suffer while I divide my spare time with mindless gaming, oh well. With the start of the NFL season and back-to-school-time, I will have more time at home for my favorite quiet activities like reading the newspaper, blogging, and playing video games while my husband watches football (Go Bears!). I thought I'd be rolling out blog posts, but then my husband put an N64 emulator on my computer, distracting me with what is quite possibly the best video game ever made – in my opinion, anyway: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. It's an adventure game, which is my favorite genre of video game, but I'm very picky – there has to be large 3D worlds to explore, as well as a variety of puzzles peppered with the perfect combination of inventory, fighting, and weaponry. This version of Zelda has everything, and this is actually my second time playing it through. Currently I'm in the second dungeon (Dodongo's Cavern) which is probably my least favorite in the entire game. Once I get past it though, I have lots of fun ahead – there are plenty of areas left to explore; including an underwater colony and the inside of a volcano. This game also skips ahead 7 years, and you get to see what Hyrule (the country you are defending) looks like in the future when your character has grown into a young man from a little boy. Here is a screen shot:



...which makes me want to get back to it so I can kick some Dodongo a**!

GO BEARS!!!

Random Night Of The King

On a random note, I decided at the last minute to kind of theme-up game night a little bit last week. I went to the library to find some background music to put in the kitchen CD player during game night, and the first thing I found was a Garth Brooks Greatest Hits collection – and not one of the two that I owned back when I was a huge fan – one of the reasons why Garth Brooks became intolerable, what a sell-out. But he has some really good songs, and I thought it'd be great to hear some of them again. Realizing I've tortured enough unwitting souls with my love of country music, I looked through the regular music. But it was the adult section of the library, and I had two of the kids with me, so I was in a big hurry and all I could find was an Elvis greatest hits collection. Thinking about it on the way home, I remembered a recipe I had come across months ago and put aside – Elvis' favorite sandwich in a cookie. What was Elvis' favorite

sandwich? Peanut butter, banana, and *bacon*. So I made the peanut butter, banana, and *bacon* cookies, we rocked to Elvis, even though he ruined more than a few people's careers in the [Mafia](#), I think. I didn't come across anyone all night who was ecstatic about my Elvis cookies, but they were more for the experience of emulating Elvis (this would have made a fun dress-up version of game night, haha) than they were for people to find delectable. I, for one, found them tasty, but not great. I'm not a big cookie person anyway, and I found the combination of bacon and banana quite interesting, though in a good way. Coincidentally, I found out that 3 days before our game night was the 32nd anniversary of Elvis' death, so it ended up being a tribute of sorts, I guess. I like the idea of themed game nights once in a while, especially if it doesn't require much extra dough (pun intended) or work. How about we light up the comment board with suggestions for possible future game night themes?

*** – Here is some bonus footage – the Elvis cookie recipe. Enjoy and let me know any alterations and feedback you have! From the article where I read about it:
“Go with your gut – not your head – on this one; the combination of peanut butter, bacon, and bananas really is delicious.

ELVIS COOKIES

Makes 30 cookies

1 cup smooth peanut butter

1/2 cup packed light brown sugar

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 large egg, lightly beaten

1/4 cup all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 cup crumbled cooked (very crisp) bacon (about 6 strips)

1/2 cup diced firm banana

Heat the oven to 350F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. (I did some research because I didn't want to buy many

extras like parchment paper, so I just greased a cookie sheet with margarine and it worked fine. So in place of the parchment paper, lightly grease a cookie sheet.) In a large bowl, combine the peanut butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar. Use an electric mixer on medium to beat until well combined. Beat in the egg until just combined and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour and the baking soda. With the mixer running on low, add the dry ingredients, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Gently mix in the bacon and the bananas, trying not to mash the bananas. Using slightly wet hands, roll rounded teaspoons of dough into balls and place on the prepared baking sheets, leaving about 1 inch between them. Dip the tines of a fork into water, then use it to flatten the cookies until they are about 1.5 inches around. Bake on the middle rack for 11 minutes. Cool the cookies on the baking sheet for 2 minutes, then remove with a metal spatula to racks to cool completely.

NOTE – a guest commented that he wished there was more bacon!

Dr. Sanderson's Game Library

I could kick myself for not taking a "Before" picture of our game closet. For those of you who don't know, my husband and I have a hobby of collecting board games. We go to area thrift and Goodwill stores, and we buy every game in sight we don't (think we) have. It's gotten out of control, really it has. In our defense, we have a semi-regular game night with friends where we try out many of the games we obtain. But the game collection outgrew its closet, and we began stacking games on the floor of the closet until even the floor started to overflow with games. So, after we cleaned up what used to be the craft room in our house (gonna call it the 'East room'

for now I guess – we can't decide if we want it to be a family rec room or a kid-free parents' cave), we decided to move the game closet into the closet of the East room because it's bigger. And now that phase of the project is complete! And it's awesome!

We threw all of our props and memorabilia from the community theater shows we've worked on in the East room. Since my husband was the handsome 'Dr. Sanderson' in the show *Harvey*, we somehow ended up with the name plate for his office door. We stuck it to the closet in the East Room, and that is where our game closet now resides. Therefore, I'm announcing the opening of Dr. Sanderson's Game Library! Pick a game... ANY game*! However, the following picture is just a sample of the library – a fraction of the closet. Not only could I not rotate the image (so imagine the scene as 90° to the right), but I couldn't get much of the library in the picture!



**unless you are certain game night regulars who are known for kicking butt at the Disney Trivia game – we have “accidentally” misplaced that game, hehe!*

Farm Frenzy

You might have noticed a decrease in the frequency of my blogging. I am still super-busy with my 4 kids, but now that the horrible months-long-lasting illness has run its course through our house, I have more energy and time than I've had in a long time... so why am I posting less? Because I've gone and gotten myself addicted to a video game, of all things!

It's called Farm Frenzy Pizza Party, and it's addicting to play! Basically, you get this little plot of land where you choose what animals to buy and manage. Each different kind of animal drops a type of product, and you can either use these products to make other products, or you can sell them. You can upgrade your warehouse to make it store more products, you can upgrade your factories to produce products more quickly, and you can upgrade your vehicles to make them faster. The game is surprisingly complicated, yet easy to learn. Ultimately, the more difficult levels consist of making pizzas, and each pizza is made up of five types of product. Complicating the game player's goals is the fact that some of the pizza components are made up of two different products themselves, so you have to choose which animals and factories to buy and in what order to make the products with the funds you have. There are also bears that drop down from the sky that eat your animals and even trample your factories! It's really fast-paced (you get rewarded for completing the levels in a timely fashion also), and like I said, it's very addicting.

I was looking for a hobby, but this is ridiculous. I could have chosen something a little more productive than sitting on my butt and playing a video game. But this is *fun*. And I haven't let myself indulge in a hobby that's non-productive in a long time... Usually in my spare time I organize our family photos or work on our kids' school memory books or things like that... What's that you ask? What about my blogging? Well,

ok, I see your point. So I have a few hobbies now; they'll have to compete for my time. And right now, Farm Frenzy is winning! Here is a screen shot:

