

Disney World Fairy Tales (Not Quite)

I came across a really fun article awhile ago called: Confessions Of A Disney Cast Member. The article was written by a guy who spent 5 summers working at the Walt Disney World resort as a Disney cast member. If you're like me and a frequent visitor to the Magic Kingdom, then you will appreciate the following not-so-tall-tales. Even if you've never been to WDW, the following stories are fun to read. Among the entertaining stories he has to share:

Excuse me man, are you pregnant?

What's more terrifying than the 38-foot drop on Disney's Big Thunder Mountain Railroad? Having to ask women in line if they're pregnant. It's for their own safety, but forget a woman scorned—hell hath no fury like a woman who's been mistaken for being pregnant. Once, when I was in training, I watched a coworker approach a larger female park visitor and ask, "Excuse me, ma'am, but are you pregnant?" "Pregnant!?!!" the woman screamed, her voice turning heads at the happiest place on earth. "No! What are you saying? Do I look fat to you?!" She turned to her friend and screamed some more: "They think I look fat. Let's get out of here!" I was so traumatized by that incident I crafted a plan to avoid offending anyone. Whenever I spotted a "suspect," I asked everybody in the vicinity—including teenage boys and women in their 70s—if they were with child. If the woman I suspected was actually pregnant, she left the ride quickly. If she wasn't, she just thought I was working a gag.

I sure am Randy today.

Disney made the "first name" name tag famous, but the tag doesn't always match the person wearing it. One day, as I was steering the raft to Tom Sawyer Island, my name tag dropped

into the river, forcing me to get a new one. There wasn't a single "Robert" left, so until a replacement could be made, I pretended to be "Randy," a name that amused visitors from the U.K. to no end. Elderly English ladies lined up to have their picture taken with me. One screamed when she saw me, grabbed her friend, and yelled, "Is that really your name?" Being a good Disney cast member, I lied and said yes. The friend said, "You know, we love a good randy man back home." But lady, even I'm not that good a cast member.

To get onstage, dress the part.

A few attractions choose audience volunteers to be part of the show, but the selection process is far from random. Typically, you need to be a certain gender, size, and age for each of the different roles. You might even need to be wearing a specific item of clothing. On my off days from work, I used to go over to Universal Studios, and I would get picked all the time to play "Mother" in the old Alfred Hitchcock show. They needed a guy my height and weight who happened to be wearing the same type of plain white tennis shoes I always wore. Also helpful for getting picked: cuteness and enthusiasm. Curious kids who ask nicely and look excited often get extra attention, along with thrilling perks like riding up front and introducing shows.

Stroller relocation program

Disney's a family place, but the people who work there come to loathe strollers. It's part of a cast member's job to keep strollers in nice, orderly lines and to make sure they're only left in designated areas. But park visitors keep their strollers in an appalling condition, loaded up with dirty diapers, rotting bottles of milk, and half-eaten PB&J sandwiches. Others see no problem with parking their strollers right in front of an attraction's exit or entrance. Sometimes thoughtless individuals like this incur the wrath of the stroller police, and their precious Bugaboos and

Maclarens are intentionally relocated to a place “far, far away”—at the very back of the area cordoned off for strollers.



*Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of (confiscated) rum
On special Grad Nites, when Disney hosts loads of freshly graduated high school kids, the park puts extra staffers inside Pirates of the Caribbean and other rides as lookouts to monitor less-than-legal activities. Our focus was mostly on what the kids were consuming. Booze, cigarettes—you name it, and a Disney cast member has confiscated it from a 17-year-old at one time or another. One clever kid, forced to hand over his bottle, noted the irony of getting busted in the middle of a ride that celebrates a drunken pirate orgy. “Hey, don’t the pirates have enough?” he asked. “They need mine, too?”*

*Please keep your happiness to yourself.
This attraction has been camera monitored for your safety. That’s the spiel Disney broadcasts over its loudspeakers for many rides. But the cameras are also meant to protect you from yourself. One night, while most parkgoers were watching the fireworks display, a couple strolled over to Pirates of the Caribbean, where I was working. They not only had a boat to themselves, but empty boats all around them. The real fireworks display, it turned out, was visible on the security cameras to all of us working that night. Let’s just say the show the couple put on wasn’t exactly G-rated.*

If you enjoyed the above stories, you might want to [read the article in its entirety here](#), along with other theme park insider info.

What Are The 3 Largest Cities In Nebraska?

A few weeks ago at a family birthday party, a friend posed an interesting trivia question which I thought I had a fair chance at since it involved a state where I once lived: the great state of Nebraska. Do you know what the 3 largest cities in Nebraska are?

Answer: Omaha, Lincoln (everyone knows those two) and... Bellevue. I've heard of Bellevue, but it wasn't my guess for third place. I was thinking of the western city of Scottsbluff, which is actually on the western side of Nebraska near Cheyenne Wyoming. I guessed Scottsbluff since it has a zoo that I always wanted to visit when we resided there, but we never made it there since Scottsbluff was almost as far away from our home in Lincoln as was our family 2 states over in Illinois! But anyway, my point is that Scottsbluff didn't even make the top 10 of Nebraska's largest cities. The city of Kearney (pronounced Carnie) crossed my mind since it was always advertised as a nearby tourist attraction when we lived in Lincoln, but it was #5 on the list. And by the way, #5-10 of the largest cities in Nebraska only have between 20-30,000 people!!

I found this info while I was looking up the answer to my friend's trivia question, and I found it interesting, so I decided to pass it on. Then again, it was probably only

interesting to me because I used to call Lincoln Nebraska home. Well anyway, if you come across the '3 largest cities in Nebraska' trivia question, you can now impress your friends by correctly saying Omaha, Lincoln, and Bellevue!

Playing Tourist In Toledo

It began with terrible news – my husband's uncle had a massive heart attack and was in a coma. His uncle was in Youngstown Ohio, on his way from Illinois to Washington DC where he was going to take his two sons for a vacation. A week ago Sunday, we packed up our family and were ready to head to Youngstown to be with the boys since they didn't have any other family in the area, but at the last minute, we found out that their mom was on her way.

We were all packed and ready to go, plus the summer almost got by without us taking a family vacation. Sure, we had some fun excursions with extended family and friends, but nothing with all 6 of us, just the 6 of us. So we changed our destination from Youngstown to Toledo, cut out a bunch of that driving, and were able to utilize a hotel gift certificate that had been burning a hole in our pockets. Although Toledo is not our home town, we live only an hour away so we visit often, which is why I used the term 'playing tourist'.

We went to the zoo (for the umpteenth time, but I could never get sick of the zoo, NEVER!), ate some delicious food, and swam in the hotel pool a bunch. We visited a mall; something I haven't done in probably over a decade (I don't count our local mall – it's more than half vacant, and its food court has only one restaurant left!), and I was disappointed to learn that the mall's Dippin' Dots store (which is the only

one anywhere nearby) DOES NOT carry my favorite flavor – Root Beer Float! But the Dippin’ Dots were still delicious, and besides, that’s just one more thing that makes Orlando that much more special – plenty of Root Beer Float Dippin’ Dots in the store near Disney World, how I miss that place. We couldn’t believe how crowded the Toledo mall was on a Wednesday afternoon, and because I hadn’t been in one in years, there were all these new gadgets, gizmos, and what-nots that our family had to check out and play around with, probably making us look like total hicks. But that’s ok, we had fun! And not only do I love living in a rural area because we have no crime, crowds, or traffic, but it makes things like visiting malls or big movie theaters rare treats and fun vacations!



4 party animals in the hotel

Probably the most fun I had on this vacation was when we rented a pontoon boat and took it into Lake Erie. Now, don’t be fooled by stats – You wouldn’t know that Lake Erie is the second smallest of the Great Lakes in surface area when you’re out there on a boat – you go out far enough, and you can’t see shore, like all of the Great Lakes. When we looked at a map when we got home, we found that we had barely even gotten into the lake, yet it took us about 30 minutes to get there and there was water as far as the eye can see. Setting Lake Erie apart from the others is its relatively shallow depths, at least on the west side of the lake where we were visiting –

the water averaged 1-3 feet in depth! It looked really strange to see people *standing* in the lake, really far from shore, with water only up to their knees!

There were some interesting and fun islands to explore; we anchored our boat near the Woodtick Peninsula and waded onto the beach for some sea shell hunting and sand playing.



My kids were well behaved on the boat, and they enjoyed themselves, with the little guy even finding time for his afternoon nap.



(Note the can of precious Coke Zero clutched in his hand. He stole it from his dad, but apparently it didn't help keep him awake!)

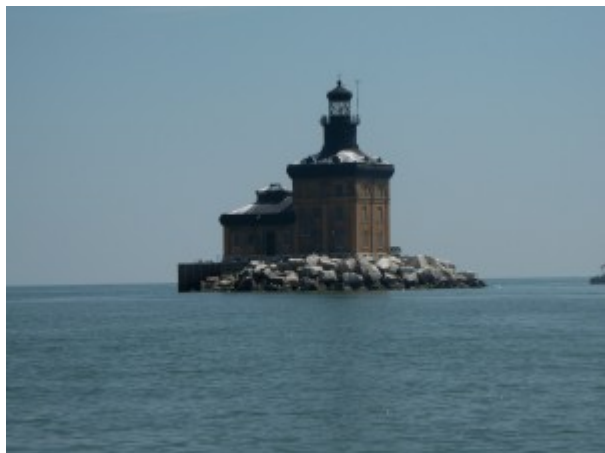
We wanted to dock at a cool looking place called Turtle Island, but it didn't seem very kid-friendly – maybe next time if Hubby and I can get back for date night. [Turtle Island](#)

(click the link for more history) was once destined to be a great resort island, but plans fell through, and it remains abandoned. There are some abandoned structures that remain on the island, including an old lighthouse and an old-fashioned crane (on the right of the island in this picture).



Since Turtle Island is way out in the lake, you wouldn't expect there to be wildlife, but we saw this fox looking for fish on the beach – so cool to see!! Perhaps because of the shallow nature of this part of Lake Erie, animals can just walk out to the islands, or maybe the fox was a stowaway. Pardon the bumpiness of the video – taking pictures and video was something I struggled with the entire time on the bobbing boat!

There is also a “haunted lighthouse” (in reality it’s called the [Toledo Harbor Light](#)) that looks very cool and emits a ghostly warning horn every few minutes.



As we were floating nearby gaping at it, a Coast Guard boat came speeding up to us, lights flashing and all. What the...? There were four Coast Guard officers on the boat, all armed, and the one in charge informed us that they “had the authority of the US government” and were going to board our boat and search it.

As serious as it seemed, they must have liked what they saw because we were awarded a “good as gold” form, which means that we had been following all the maritime laws and regulations. But it was kind of a strange experience to be all alone floating in the middle of Lake Erie one minute, only to have a boat full of gun-wielding government agents on your case the next... They were nice enough, I suppose, but sheesh, why our boat? Later when we returned to shore, the owner of the boat rental place said that in all their years of renting out their boats, none of their clients had ever undergone a boarding inspection by the Coast Guard. Lucky us. Perhaps with all my kids on board, they were suspicious of some illegal Canadian smuggling, eh?

Despite all the high-seas adventure, the vacation was fun and so refreshing to be able to spend time together as a family without distraction, not having to worry about household

chores, responsibilities, or Dad's work for a few days. Just what I needed to get out of my kids-are-fighting-constantly-rut at home, and hey – I even lost track of that back-to-school countdown I had been swearing by before the vacation!

And the best news of all this? Hubby's uncle has been released from the hospital and is now recovering at home. Time will tell us what he will need to make his heart healthier, but for now, he is out of immediate danger and for that, we are so thankful!

VIP Squared

Every year, my husband and I are very lucky to get a week-long break from being busy parents of 4 kids when Grandma takes the kids to her house for a week. For the past two years during this vacation, we traveled downstate to King's Island, an amusement park near Cincinnati. King's Island offers a VIP Tour, which means that for 9 hours, you get your own personal park employee to lead you around the park and to the **front of all the park rides of your choosing**, even holding your stuff if you really want him to! In case you're interested, a VIP Tour at King's Island also includes an all-you-can-eat lunch buffet, unlimited fountain drinks all day, a ride photo, an ice cream cone, a behind-the-scenes tour of The Beast, and \$25 in park souvenir money – which can be spent on carnival style games, buying more food (if you need it after the buffet!), or in the park's gift shops. While it may seem expensive up front, if you do the math, the VIP Tour ends up being a great deal all things considered, and we highly recommend it; especially if you're a coaster enthusiast!

Being able to walk to the front of any ride line of one's

choosing is really cool – it's hard to imagine, until you ride coaster after coaster without pause!

We began our day on The Beast (only because the Diamondback was not functioning, but luckily our fears of it being broken for the entire day were dispelled and they were able to fix it before long). The Beast is an almost 5-minute long journey into the desolate forests of southern Ohio on a wooden roller coaster! As we learned from our behind the scenes tour (included with the VIP Tour as I said), prior to its unveiling in 1979, The Beast was built on-site and follows closely the terrain upon which it is built. It was not pre-ordered and shipped to the park in segments like many modern roller coasters.



The Beast follows its native land's terrain and disappears into a tunnel at the bottom of its first drop

After riding The Beast twice in a row (almost 10 minutes worth of roller coasters right there!!), we moved on to the Vortex, an old-school steel roller coaster with more than a few high speed inversions. I had printed out my blog post I had written about the VIP Tour a year before, and it served as a

helpful guide for this year. And I have to say, everything was much more enjoyable this year – last year I had written in my blog that I didn't like the Vortex much and that the Backlot Stunt Coaster was lame, but this year both rides were much more fun than I had remembered – perhaps because I knew what to expect from the park, and so the element of surprise was minimized. I'm a person who likes to know what to expect rather than to be completely taken by surprise – I have 4 little kids, so I have enough surprises throughout my average day, thank you ☐

But whatever the case, whichever the reason, this year's VIP Tour was even more fun than last year's! All of the rides we rode were better than I had remembered they were, and the Whitewater Canyon water ride was even more fun when riding with friends! Of course, I think it helped that this year's temperature was almost 90° instead of the unseasonal 70° we had during last year's tour – getting soaked last year left us near frozen! And I learned a little bit from last year's tour – no blisters from walking around in wet shoes for me! I brought a little bag and put a change of shoes in it. As much as it may have annoyed my co-VIPs (but then again, I was the only gal in a group of men), I changed into my flip-flops every time we got on a water ride. Not only did I save my feet from blistering, but I got to order our guide to carry my shoes around the park! Ok, so I actually felt pretty badly making the poor guy carry my shoes around, but it was kind of like being a queen for a day, and – carrying our stuff **was** his job after all...



The Diamondback
Roller Coaster

Being led around the park by a guide all day, slipping in front of the 'regular guests' to get to the front of the lines (and picking whatever spot you choose on all the rides! Note to self for next year: front car on The Beast rocks, back row on the Diamondback is sweet, and the back is ideal and technically the front for Firehawk...) gave us plenty of time for 'extras' in the park: things we don't normally do in theme parks, usually for lack of time like souvenir shopping, playing games and seeing shows. The show we chose to see this year – and it's strange, I know, that I keep promising myself a theater break but still I continue to find myself in a theater audience – was called 'Too Much TV', and it was actually pretty fun! It began with a 'host' who went around the audience asking for them to 'name that tune' as different tv show theme songs were played. I thought I would be good at this kind of thing, but apparently my brain had been scrambled upon one (ok, a dozen) too many roller coasters earlier in the day because I couldn't get any of the answers correct. But it's ok, I didn't raise my hand too high- unlike a fellow VIP who was called upon, but he answered correctly and won himself a Too Much TV button – way to go! Despite a fleeting regret in the beginning of the show (am I really watching yet another stage show?!?), I did enjoy myself. I recognized 100% of the show titles and about 80% of the lyrics since I used to be a huge tv fan and had watched many of the shows when I was a kid (many in reruns; I'm not THAT old!) The show included 6

dancer-singers, and it began with TV shows from the 50's – 60's (a few of these I watched like Patty Duke and Mary Tyler Moore – um, in reruns of course ☐ while the rest I just knew the themes since they were very famous like the Andy Griffith Show) and continued to shows from the 70s (3's Company, Brady Bunch, Partridge Family, etc), 80's-90's (Full House, Perfect Strangers, Growing Pains, Friends, etc). LOTS of fun, especially for a former TV junkie like myself. The singers / dancers were pretty good, and I have to say that one of the highlights of the show was that during the Brady Bunch theme, they showed clips from the episode where the Brady's actually visit King's Island!! I had totally forgotten that episode (I used to be a huge Brady Bunch fan; I watched it every day in syndication after school, and I had the book / episode guide written by Mr. Greg Brady (Barry Williams) himself – I used to check off the episodes I had seen – ahem, NERD!!), but anyway, I will have to dig it up on youtube.com or somewhere and watch it again now!!

Miraculously, the rain held off until minutes after our guide was dismissed for the day – we had been watching the storms move in all day the day before our tour, hoping it wouldn't affect our trip. We had promised our guide an email depicting our thoughts on what riding The Beast was like in the dark, but as I said, it began to rain, and we were forced to take a break. That's when we realized just how tired we really were – too tired to wait for the rain to stop and the rides to re-open, so we'll have to experience The Beast at night next year. And I could not be looking forward to it more!!

On the way home, we found a White Castle (don't have them way up here in the bufu northwestern corner of Ohio), or at least that's what the sign said. But the White Castle location was connected to a gas station, and the sliders did not taste quite the same... I thought they were just old until I brought some home and re-heated them, and they STILL were a bit off... hmmm... Normally these things reheat really well, and I'm

sorry to tell the White Castle newbie in our group that he still hasn't really tried an authentic slider. They hit the spot at the time and had we taken the time to stop anywhere else, we would have gotten home even later than the 1 am-ish that we did and would have been even more exhausted. My bodily soreness from being beat up by various coasters all day was less than last year, but it also lasted a day or two longer than I remember. Oh well, more to tweak for next year! Maybe I will bring TWO pairs of shoes for Mr. Guide to carry around for me, haha!

And one final note... We have a running joke with a member of our group – we went to Disney World with him almost two years ago, and it seemed that every ride which he rode stalled; including rides that didn't usually stall. At King's Island, only one ride stalled while we were on it, but we got stuck in what I am sure is the most precarious position in which a person can get stuck at that park – flat on our backs, under the great blue sky on the Firehawk. Here is a picture of how we were stuck; note that these people are in the station, which would have been better since there were people around to help. We were stuck flat on our backs *outside* of the station for about 10-15 minutes, and I couldn't help but notice how sympathetic the ride operator seemed during her announcements directing us to stay calm.



Also noticeable were the extremely red faces and disoriented nature of our fellow riders who were finally returned to an upright position and allowed to leave the ride with us. For the record, our park guide happened to be on the Firehawk with

us (on the VIP Tour, you can also make your guide go on rides!) and said that he had never seen it stuck like that before. So yeah, while we were only stuck on a ride once during our day, what a place to be stuck!!!

And surely I don't want to leave you with a bad impression of the Firehawk, nor of King's Island, so here are some fun youtube videos from other riders:

Firehawk (you lie on your back and then are flipped after the lift onto your stomach. Like Superman, you fly thru a series of loops, inversions, and open track):

Next, not one of my favorite rides at King's Island, though still fun, the joy in Invertigo is watching the person's face who is sitting across from you. Ride with a friend sitting across from you, and experience the g-forces backwards first. Then watch your friend's face as they experience the same thing backwards you just did – It's priceless!!

And now for my favorites, The Beast (start watching at a minute and ten seconds into the video for the real action):

And the Diamondback:

All this watching the POV cams on the coasters makes me want to do it all over again... But unfortunately I have to wait... So until next year...

Magic After 112 Years

If you are a tangents.org fan, then you've already read two riveting accounts of a little tangents field trip of sorts to Cincinnati Ohio. I don't mean to be redundant, but I'm going to post my take on the excursion for my friends and remote members of my family to read my take on the trip.

We began our journey bright and early Monday morning, July 19, and I like how the other tangenteers failed to mention that the keys were accidentally locked in the trunk. Someone, I forget who (and I'm not going to mention who it was that locked the keys in the trunk except that it wasn't me), but someone had the brilliant revelation that the back seat could pull down, thus saving us a 30-mile round-trip drive to get the spare set of keys. Us 4 adults (3 of my kids were with Grandma, and my little boy stayed with a family friend since he couldn't have gone on roller coasters at King's Island the following day) crammed into a little Sunfire, and somehow I got the privileged front seat for the whole trip – hey no complaints here, I was so much less sore than I was after last year's trip – I don't think I could say that if I had been crammed in the back of the Sunfire for two days. But taking the little car was necessary because we estimate that we saved around \$70 in gas by not taking our gas-guzzling mini-van, so thanks to the owner of the Sunfire for letting us put the miles on his car.

We arrived at our first tourist destination, the wonderful

Cincinnati Zoo with more than enough time (or so we thought) to explore the entire humongous zoo complex. I just love the Cincinnati Zoo – we visited years ago, and I don't really remember much about that visit, other than accidentally driving our car into the zoo... But they seemed to have fixed that entry problem by now. Hubby and I visited this zoo last year, but we didn't leave early enough, and after some delays and the 4-hour drive, we really didn't see much of the zoo. But this year, we had left bright and early and were prepared to stay all day, despite the 90°+ weather. I was appointed tour guide (why? I don't know – I'm a pretty big zoo enthusiast, I guess, and I'm a pretty good navigator until you throw hills or mountains into the equation. And the Cincinnati Zoo has more than a few large hills and low valleys to navigate around, but we did well – Hubby and being especially thankful that we didn't happen to have kids to carry or a double-stroller to push up all those hills in that heat!!!)

Cincinnati has a WIDE array of species to see! Some I had scarcely heard of, some I had NEVER heard of; I just wish I had taken better notes and written down which species I saw that I wanted to do more research on when I got home. Oh well, I will be back – Ohio is the only state to exhibit my favorite animal, the manatee, outside of its native Florida, and we are blessed to have not one, but TWO zoos (Cincinnati and Columbus) that exhibit this beautiful creature – so yeah, I will be back downstate to get my manatee fix. Cincinnati has two manatees that arrived from Florida just a few months ago, and they are relatively young creatures – just 3 and 4-years old. Manatees can live to be 60-70 years old, so the manatees at the Cincinnati Zoo were relatively small compared to the others I've seen in captivity. No less breathtaking, the little guys did move a little bit faster and seemed more playful than their adult counterparts. I knew about the 'Sleep With the Manatees' program that Cincinnati offers before this visit, but I was reminded again – that is of

course something I would love to do. But "Sleep with the Manatees"? I think I'd probably have to call it something different since I wouldn't be doing much sleeping if I got to spend the night in the manatee exhibit! Someday...

Another remarkable, highly endangered creature housed by the Cincinnati Zoo is the [Sumatran Rhino](#). There are five rhino sub-species left on this planet, and the Sumatran is the most rare – estimated at less than 275 individuals left in the wild. A Sumatran Rhino successfully gave birth at the Calcutta Zoo in 1889, but as decades passed without any further successful reproduction in captivity, people grew concerned and developed a program designed to save the Sumatran Rhino. Widely considered a failure, the program ran from 1984-1996 and consisted of capturing 40 wild Sumatran Rhinos and trying to reproduce them in captivity. By the late '90s, no rhinos had been born of the program, and half of the captured rhinos had died. In 1997, the United States was down to only 3 captive Sumatran Rhinos: two females (in the Los Angeles Zoo and Bronx Zoo) and one male (Cincinnati Zoo). It was decided that the animals be united for one last breeding attempt in Cincinnati. In September 2001, the first captive-born Sumatran Rhino calf in 112 years was born (this was the 6th pregnancy for the mother; the previous 5 pregnancies were not successful)! Another calf followed in 2004, but sadly that same year a disease outbreak killed all of the Sumatran Rhinos in captivity in Malaysia, reducing the number of captive Sumatran Rhinos in the world to **only eight**. Another calf was born in 2007, and that same year the calf who was born in 2001 was returned to Sumatra to try to breed him there. If you are not an animal lover like I am, then you might find my little rant about the Sumatran Rhino boring, and I apologize. But there aren't words for how fascinating it was to see an live animal walking around and making noise who is so rare in our world. Although this particular rhino species is the smallest of the 5 currently in existence, it is fascinating in other ways; such as its light coat of reddish-brown hair, its almost

constant vocalizations (which we were able to witness), and its ability to twist saplings into patterns to communicate with other rhinos in the wild. A truly fascinating creature; if you are going to be in the Cincinnati area, I highly recommend stopping by the zoo and glimpsing this historic animal specimen. Here is a video of Emi's 3rd and final calf who was born in 2007:

We stopped for lunch and took in one of those 4D shows; which was alright – being in the air-conditioned theater for 30 minutes was worth the admission fee alone. The 4D consisted of a 3D movie of animals with some additional effects – water spraying, high-powered fans blowing (Ahhh...), things to poke your back, etc. The air blasters on my seat were not working, and neither were my feet ticklers, but no matter, for the air blasting sound in my ears is not one of my favorite things anyway.

By the time we got around to the other side of the zoo, I was so hot and tired that I was becoming willing to skip certain parts of the zoo. We did stop in the petting zoo, another one of my usual favorites (I know a secret spot on goats where they tend to feel sore, and my patented ‘goat rubs’ are usually very much appreciated... not as much in the heat though).

Two exhibit buildings of note: I really enjoyed the nocturnal house and the cat house (which housed more than just cats, and many species of animals with which I was not familiar – maybe they should change the name – ‘Cat House And Friends’? ‘Cats and More’? ‘Cats, Etc.’? That sounds like the work of the zoo’s marketing department; clearly my talents do not lie in that area). The nocturnal house had plenty of species outside of the usual fruit bats you see in the nocturnal houses of many zoos. Along with its share of nocturnal marsupials (a few species of gliders and something called a potto), Cincinnati also has vampire bats (complete with ones feeding out of little dishes of blood – delightfully and creepily fascinating!) as well as flying foxes – bats the size of my large parrot at home with faces resembling foxes or small bears.

Overall, a wonderful day with some great friends, even if it was super hot! Up next, my run-down of the following day spent at King’s Island!

One more time around please.

When I see the huge structures of steel or wood, my heart fills with anticipation. The thrill of a Roller Coaster makes me feel years younger. But then my body starts to react in ways it never used to. A queasy feeling enters. I think to myself, that it is only in my head, but more often than not, my stomach shows me who is boss.

The funny thing is that this doesn't usually start on the large coasters. The ones that send the stomach turning are the little ones. It all started with the carnival type rides. The ones that go in circles multiple times. They never fail to turn the motion sickness on.

Even with some medication, the queasy feeling was felt. Not as bad as some times, but the day would need some pacing. But without a line to wait in, pacing was only the distance between two rides. So, I had to sit out a couple of rides. Even with that, I had more rides on roller coasters than I've had in a long, long time.

4 times on the Beast

I think 4 on the Diamondback, but it may have been 3.

1 each on the Racer, Vortex and the Backlot Stunt Coaster. I think I also road the Adventure Express if that was the one with the lame ending. That is a lot of coaster riding in 8 hours (9 hours VIP with 1 hour for lunch). Not to mention 4 times on the White Water canyon ride, once each on Congo Falls and a shoot the rapids ride and bumper cars.

During a normal day at a theme park you can expect to hit 7 or 8 coasters in a 10 to 12 hour day. More if the lines are shorter. I road 11 or 12 times, my tangent's friends road on a

few more coasters than I did. As I said, I needed a break every now and again.

Tour of the Beast was just great and so was the show we caught. I can't say much about the lunch, since I was in no mood to eat.

All of this was great and I would have said it ranks right near the top of my theme park excursions, but there was more. I spent some time with some wonderful people, and that made the two days in Cincinnati grand.

A day was remembered

and celebrated in my heart.

A 7th birthday came and went without you being here to celebrate it with us. We have spread apart a bit this little family of ours. 3 not much more than an hour away, one more than 18 hours away (at least by car). And I know you were missed.

On your birthday, I had to take your dog to the vet. He needed some care, and would be in observation for two days. I had taken him in for a checkup the week before, making sure all of his shots were up to date. He was scheduled for a couple of days in a puppy vacation. I had scheduled time with some friends and he would have been in good hands. But then I got the news he needed some medical care. I was at a in a bit of a quandary. Should I go on my trip while he was at the vets, or take that time to be around for him.

Unless the unfortunate happened, I would not be seeing the little guy for two days. Unlike hospitals, there are no

visiting hours at the vets office. My being around would not help him at all, so I decided (with a bit of a heavy heart) to go on my trip. I'm glad I did.

On your birthday, I went to the Cincinnati Zoo with some friends. Unfortunately, you never knew them, and they never knew you. I think you would have liked them. It was a good day.

As I wandered around the zoo, I did wonder about the changes that were made. Some of the exhibits were exactly like I remembered them. Others seemed very new to me. Since this was not a zoo we visited often, I imagine most things were new. It has been a few years since my last trip there. We were still pushing a stroller or two around the last time. I'm sure the manatees were not there on our last visit. I seem to remember more elephants, but I could be thinking of another zoo. I think you would have remembered that. A couple of red pandas (one of your favorite animals) were doing what they do best, sleeping in trees. Just like almost every other time we saw them.

We did spend a full day at the zoo, but like all of our trips, we never seemed to have time for the entire zoo. Extra time spent at this animal, or another seemed to slow down the pace. But then again, what sort of pace should there be at a zoo. If we can't take the time to learn, observe and wonder about animals we share this planet with, why would we care if the places they live are there in the future. That was the lesson we tried to teach our children, so that they could teach theirs.

Again, it was a day well spent, but I wish you could have been there. Miss you still.

Independence Day And That Other Nashville

Well, it's been a long week and a half – which is probably how long it will take you to read this super-long blog post I'm about to write. Hey, it's been awhile since I've been able to blog, and I have lots to say! Tons of fun since the 4th of July weekend, but go-go-go constantly, and I am so tired, it's unbelievable! A quick (well, kinda, sorta) rundown...

July 3 – my birthday, so we dragged the kids down to a larger town down south to see their fireworks, one of my favorite birthday activities. The only problem is that the fireworks didn't start until 10pm, and we wanted to get there by 2pm because we had tickets for a raffle at a party thrown by a store. Even with our 5 tickets, we did not win any one of the 50 prizes (no surprise there; our luck is terrible when it comes to things like that). But the party was lots of fun with airbrush tattoos for the kids, sand creations they could make, free coloring kits, and also free hot dogs, pizza, and baby water bottles. We had no trouble killing time for the next 8 hours, although it did exhaust all 6 of us. We had a nice birthday dinner at Bob Evans (have you tried their pot roast stroganoff? It's yummy!!), even though they forgot to sing to me or my little boy, whose birthday is 8 days after mine (so we were celebrating both). No matter, I usually hate stuff like that anyway (like it for my kids – for me, not so much), but I was willing to give it a try just for the free dessert. Oh well. This larger town's fireworks were much better than our hometown's, though the kids would not let me forget that they are starting to find fireworks boring. Might have to find something new for next year's bday celebration, or maybe a babysitter so Hubby and I can enjoy fireworks alone for a change...

July 4 – After church, we packed all day long for our upcoming

camping trip. This involved doing lots of last minute laundry and preparing the house as best I could so that it wouldn't be too much of a mess when we got back. Although we were exhausted, this turned out to be a good decision because when we got back from the 3 day camping trip, my mother-in-law and her sister and kids were here waiting for us – that was SO not the plan. They were supposed to be at their hotel, and we were going to change into our bathing suits and go meet them at the hotel for swimming, giving me a chance to pick up my very messy house. But more on that next post...

July 5-8 – July 5 was the day the kids had been waiting for – we left for Nashville. Not the well known country music capital of the country in TN, but the lesser known, population 800 Nashville in Brown County, southern Indiana. What a beautiful place! I can understand why it's a very popular destination in the fall, the scenery must be nothing short of gorgeous when the leaves change colors. As for visiting in July, that was nice too. Never mind that the weather was above 90° all 3 days of our vacation – we barely noticed, thanks to the accommodations my husband was able to find for us: an over 3,000 sq ft fully furnished house that fit all 13 of us comfortably on its secluded 10 acres. I made a video tour of the house, but I haven't figured out how to put in links to youtube.com playlists yet, so you lucked out – a video tour of a house you've never been to would probably bore the pants off of you, and now you don't have to sit through it. You'll have to settle for the ultra-exciting text version I'm going to describe below (some of which you can skip if it gets dry – remember, I use my blogs as sort of a family diary as well. Years into the future when I'm long gone, I'm hoping my loved ones will enjoy reading my ramblings. If not, hey, my feelings certainly won't be hurt!).

The long, tree-encircled, steep hill of a driveway ended at a garage with a basketball hoop, grill and table and chairs for grilling out, which we did a lot! Hubby and I played a few

games of H-O-R-S-E with my dad, which quickly became a championship when all 3 of us were tied at one win apiece. Unfortunately, Hubby and I were not able to win a title for our family name, but we still had lots of fun. Just off of the driveway, there was a swing that overlooked the pond area, which was a short way from the house, down a steep hill and past the firepit area. We had lots of fun cooking our lunches over the campfire and making smores at night. My 10-year-old daughter also revealed her hidden talent as a master fisherman, er fisher-person! She found a bit of line on the ground with a hook, and proceeded to use it – **without any bait** – to catch no less than 5 fish, and they were larger fish than we had caught with my nephew's fishing pole and using bait!!

Upon entering the house, the living room (2 couches and large tv with over 100 movies from which to choose, as well as a bookcase full of board games, books, and magazines) was to the right, and the kitchen and breakfast nook was to the left. Off the back of the living room was a washer / dryer (who wants to do laundry on vacation? But in case of emergency, it was very nice to have, especially if you were going to stay longer than the 3 days we were staying) and a half bath. On the 2nd floor, directly at the top of the stairs was a bedroom with a bathroom (where my sister, her husband, and their 2-year-old slept), another living room (this one with a couch, futon, and billiard table), and a wrap around 4-season room with CD player and CDs (no country music?!? Don't worry, this is the only suggestion I could think to make on my comment card – everything else was perfect) and a Foosball table. Off of the 4-season room was another bedroom with bathroom (this is where Hubby and I and our 2-year-old slept), and then outside of the 4-season room was a yard with a deck with swing, chairs, picnic table, hammock, hot tub, swingset, sandbox, and outdoor fireplace. And oh yeah, my sister's room and our room shared an outdoor patio as well.

We also had a cut-throat pool game championship with my dad,

but we didn't do very well at that one either... and since we're on the subject of lost games, I might as well get it out there that Hubby and I came in last on the Cornhole tournament as well. How funny is that when the Illinois family had never heard the term 'cornhole' anyway? ☐ Must be an Ohio thing, but that didn't seem to help our Cornhole skills... So we lost H-O-R-S-E, we lost cut-throat, and we lost Cornhole, but in what must have seemed like an even exchange, we made our reluctant family play some party games against their will – Mafia and Partini. I can't say they were big fans of either game, but at least they gave them a try and gave us some hilarious memories in the process. Here's what happens when people reluctantly play a normally very fun game called Partini:

Back to the house... from the 2nd floor living room was a staircase that led up to the 3rd floor master suite, which boasted a master bathroom with whirlpool tub. My parents slept up here, and lucky for them (?) there was a huge walk-in closet right next to their bed, which the 4 older kids (my 3 girls and their cousin) immediately eyed as a "clubhouse" where they could sleep right next to Grandma, who of course agreed. Also on the 3rd floor was a little nook with another queen bed, huge closet, and a little couch and chair – this is the bed where Uncle Bud slept. And off of the master suite was a huge outdoor wrap-around deck, where Hubby, my dad and I spent the first night watching the hilarious comedy The Goods in the fresh woodsy air (on our laptop – didn't want you to think there was a tv outside or anything. There were an abundance of cool bugs – huge moths and a different sort of firefly than I'm used to, but no outdoor tv).

Overall, a wonderful trip; I don't think we could have asked for it to be any better... well, perhaps the weather could have been a bit cooler, but what else can be expected in early July in southern Indiana than three 90°+ days in a row? That made our trying out the hot tub interesting – here we are packed in like sardines; we did try putting some ice cubes in it, but that didn't work so well. It kind of felt like being meat in a stew for a giant's brew:



And with that kind of weather, it made us even more thankful that we had changed our original vacation plan which was Jellystone campground in Fremont Indiana. It still sounds like a fun place, but the cabins there were very tiny and didn't have bathrooms, plus it was going to be mobbed on the dates we had to go – July 5-8. I will take our secluded, 3000+ sq ft, air conditioned house with plenty of bathrooms

any day! It was a bit further than Jellystone – 4 hrs vs. 45 minutes, but it worked well because our Chicago family had basically the same travel (distance-wise, anyway – they made a lot more stops than we did and so the trip took them longer to complete).

Whether you're looking for a fun place to have a family get-together, a vacation with friends or with co-workers, I highly recommend checking out the houses and cabins for rent in Brown County Indiana. If you would like to know which cabin is the one we stayed at, just leave me a comment, and I can send you more info!

A promise to me.

As March comes to a close, I need to reflect or dream about the first part of April and the coming Major League Baseball season. While I have followed the spring exploits of my favorite team, I can't really get excited about spring training. Until this last week of spring training, we hardly ever see a complete starting lineup. There are a variety of minor league prospects, players past their prime and those with little or nothing to offer all trying to get the the 25 player roster. Those that have it made are just getting loose for the coming season. Some good ball is played, but as it is often said, it doesn't count.

Next week the real games start. I will be following every score. Grumbling at losses or poor play. Feeling aggravated when a star player is hurt or not doing well. Cheering for every win.

So if you follow baseball, this is the time of year you've been waiting for. If you don't, your time will come. ☐

My promise to myself. I'm going to go to at least 1 major league game this season. I don't know when or even where, but I will do it.

And to my fellow old-time tangenteers, Good luck to your teams, until they play my favorite team. ☐

Go Tigers.

Crazy Prices!

We live a little over an hour outside of Toledo, Ohio, so it's the 'big city' we visit for extra shopping, better restaurants, and of course, the zoo. We've discovered a little cafe just north of the Ohio toll road called [Nick's Cafe](#), and they have GREAT food (including Greek selections – YUM!!) that comes in HUGE portions at very reasonable prices. Just thought I'd give them a plug since the place is never hopping when we're in there and I would HATE to see them go out of business... Anyway, next to Nick's (well, there is an abandoned honky-tonk bar between them called Bootleggers) is an old Frank's Nursery and Crafts building that recently opened up as something called Crazy Prices. The first time we noticed it, we were too tired to check it out, but last week we had enough energy left to go in, and it's awesome! They have a variety of wares, from groceries and household items to furniture and clothing, all at discounted prices. Like any store like this, some things you have to be careful about since there might not be much of a discount, but when we went, they had a special sale – 50% off ALL grocery items!! We ended up with about 4-64 oz. bottles of juice for the kids, lots of snacks and granola bars for school lunches, and a whole bunch of other stuff for around \$21! Plus, they give

each kid a little squirt gun as a prize for “being good and letting mom and dad shop”, and they also give you a wooden token for each \$5 spent – the token is good for \$5 off your next purchase of \$10 or more! We will definitely be back! There is also a location in Bowling Green, and [if you go to their website](#), they don't mention the Toledo location but it's there on South Reynolds, just north of the tollway. Better yet, we learned that this is a Christian organization! Their mission statement: *The Vision of Crazy Prices is to see a chain of discount retail stores providing income to an ever-growing list of organizations that are supporting young people, many of whom are hungry and hurting, emotionally, physically and spiritually.*

If you are in either the Bowling Green or Toledo Ohio areas and you like clearance shopping (my husband can't get enough – we spent over an hour here last weekend and he wants to go back this weekend – no complaints out of me, I like to clearance shop too AND this gets me yet another trip to the zoo!!), check out Crazy Prices!