

ACM Awards – 2011 Edition

Was it really 11 years ago already that we got to attend the 2000 Academy of Country Music Awards in Los Angeles? Newcomer Brad Paisley won that year for Best New Male Vocalist, and he's now a country music veteran who took the Top Male Vocalist prize in 2011. Someday, I'd like to attend the recording of another live awards show. Nothing beats the excitement in the air and participating in a live tv show taping where anything goes. And never in one place will you see so many super performances by a variety of outstanding performers – both from country music and also outside the genre. But my 4.5 kids keep me grounded, and I don't travel as much as I would or as much as I used to. So until the day when I can get back to a live country music awards show taping (and I will be in no hurry to go to the ACMs until they move it out of Vegas!), I will enjoy watching and voting along at home.

This year was a super show; I had a nice time watching it last night. And a surprise awaited me at the end...

Some highlights:

– Brad Paisley opens with a performance, and then he's joined by none other than – ALABAMA!! They were so awesome; this number really got my country blood pumping!

– Some unlikely duos performing this year:

Unlikely duet #1 – Jennifer Nettles from Sugarland and pop star Rihanna. Their duet made for an interesting performance. Not my favorite kind of music, but they sounded good.

Unlikely duet #2 – Country music sweetheart Carrie Underwood screaming alongside Aerosmith frontman turned American Idol judge Steven Tyler. The first song wasn't great; it was more for Tyler than Underwood, in fact, I thought it a waste of her

lovely voice. But their "Walk This Way" duet was toe-tappin' fun!

Unlikely duet #3 – Zac Brown Band and James Taylor. I'm really starting to enjoy the harmonies of the Zac Brown Band, and their performance with James Taylor tonight was thoroughly enjoyable!

– Probably the first time I've cried while watching the ACM awards – Darius Rucker's song backed by a chorus from the Lifting Lives music camp was incredibly uplifting and awe-inspiring! I loved every minute of it!

Overall, a wonderful show! Except one thing – where the heck was Rascal Flatts?!

And oh yeah, that surprise at the end – Taylor Swift won Entertainer of the Year. No surprise there; if I had paid attention when I filled out my fan ballot and realized that the Entertainer award was fan-chosen, I would have picked Swift in a heartbeat. But I spaced and chose Miranda Lambert (still beat Hubby on the ballot 7-3, just sayin') for some reason. The real surprise came when they announced the nominees for Entertainer of the Year, and I actually found myself rooting for Taylor Swift – what was going on? I've never been a fan of Swift's music, and I hadn't voted for her, so what gives? My 6-year-old daughter was enjoying the show with me, and every time Taylor Swift came on or her name was mentioned, Sammie got SO excited. So I told her I would let her know when "the big award" was coming on, and you should have seen her face when Taylor Swift won – she cheered! It was adorable, and I cried. I cried at the ACM awards twice last night, what is wrong with me? Oh yeah – pregnancy will do that to you. Probably a good thing that I was watching from the safety of my own home.

At Least I Have No Regrets

Spring break is over, and for me it flew by- and it was wonderful. I had my concerns about being so tired and keeping 4 kids from getting bored and restless, and those fears mounted last week when I saw the weather forecast – 40s all week, scarce sunshine, and maybe even a little snow. I was especially concerned that spring break would be my own personal forecast to what summer break will be like because hard as I try not to, I have times where I dread the summer a little bit.

For one thing, there is a wonderful Christian camp that we've been hearing about from a friend, and we've been trying to let our kids go for years now, but it hasn't worked out for one reason or another. This year, it seems that the dates will work, but the fees are a little steep, and the 45-minute trip to the camp x4 (there-back-there-back for two kids) might hurt the wallet a little bit with the price of gas the way it is. Add to that a trip to Nashville Indiana with extended family – SO fun, but 8 more hours of driving, plus groceries and supplies to buy, plus 4 round-trips to South Bend Indiana, and I calculated my mileage from July 4-23 at 1388 – That's one thousand eighty-eight miles in 20 days. Factor in our van's crummy gas mileage and all the pregnant lady bathroom stops, and OUCH. But then I got to thinking about it, and I think I'd rather spend my July driving around the tri-state area than locked away in my air-conditioning with 4 rambunctious kiddos. As I said, the trip to Nashville will be lots of fun, and most expenses have been paid thanks to a generous Christmas gift. So what if I have to miss the 4th of July fireworks for one year (next year we do have to pick a different date though guys if you are reading this ☐ 4th of

July is one of my favorite holidays!). And the trips to South Bend mean that Grandma is taking the kids – so that means fun for them, and a break for us. So what if it's not all 4 kids gone at the same time anymore – that's just one of the small trade-offs for having such a large (wonderful) family. And I'm STOKED that the kids finally get to go to this camp – they are so excited too! So what if we have to leave Nashville at 5am just to drive the 4 hours to get Sammie there on time? But the main reason for optimism for summer vacation was spring break – it was awesome, and it flew by.

For me, the month of March dragged on and on, and I think much of it had to do with my prenatal dr. appointment on the 31st. I just could not wait. Part of it was excitement – this stage of pregnancy is tough in a different way than the rest of it because many of the changes are internal, and you have nothing to show for it. I spend my time looking up sketches of what my baby might look like these days, but unless you count fatigue, nausea, moodiness, or tears, there aren't any outward signs to get excited about – and no, leftover baggage from previous kids does not count as a “baby bump”. Also, I've been extra worried about this pregnancy – I can't put my finger on it, maybe it's that stupid stat I heard somewhere that keeps sticking in my brain – “1 out of 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage”. This is my 5th pregnancy, so that panics me. I wish I didn't read the news so much. Maybe the worry is because of how incredibly difficult this pregnancy has been on me (and my family) compared to the others. Whatever it is, I've been especially panicked, but I've been building a great relationship with my new doctor – she is very understanding and so much more of a problem solver than my previous doctor. But either way, spring break saw me at my prenatal, and everything looks great! Baby is measuring at exactly 12 weeks, right where s(he) should be. AND... I got to see her (him) dance!! The baby keeps sneaking us ultrasounds – I wasn't scheduled for one, but the heartbeat couldn't be detected (my understanding doctor warned me of this ahead of

time, or I would have panicked. Again.), so she took me into the ultrasound room. There, we saw baby on the screen, and my little 2-inch miracle was *dancing* – I saw her legs moving and everything! I keep thinking and saying “she” and “her”, but don’t place any bets – I’ve been known to be wrong about my children’s genders in the past – *before* they’re born, of course, sheesh.

So I took the kids to the zoo on Monday of this spring break, and last night I’m still on cloud nine from seeing my baby dance, and the more I thought about it, the more I realized that I could not resist going back to the zoo on the last day of our season’s pass. We aren’t going to renew because as much as I love the zoo, it feels like a waste to renew right before summer, especially when I’m pregnant and (probably?) won’t feel like going as much. And I know I won’t be able to go after my surgery for a month or so... So I took the kids to the zoo not once, but twice this spring break, and I didn’t even feel like I was going to keel over by the end of today, which means that my first trimester fatigue *might* be fading (afraid to get too excited). I even took an extra kid with me to the zoo both days, a gamble that paid off both times since we all had a blast – even if I was late getting Ellyn home today (that’s why I didn’t stop to chat Justj – I’ve been kicking myself ever since. I really wanted to see your daughters! But I was late, and you just don’t expect to run into a friend 60 miles from home so I was caught off-guard).

So yes, I missed the Chicago Cubs opening day game taking my kids to the zoo, and I’m proud of it! Nevermind that I was looking forward to that game for months. Hubby recorded it for me, and I watched it as soon as I got home anyway. And I’m telling you what, the Cubs did not play badly (except for Dempster – if I still cussed he would be on my you-know-what-list), but they lost. But as I said, they did not play badly, so there is MUCH hope for the season – you can’t tell anything decisive on opening day. Well, except for last year but we’ll

leave that out of it. But the best part is, I have no regrets. I can't imagine how I would have felt had I missed my last chance to take my kids to the zoo in order to watch a game where the Cubs lost.

Super decision on my part, and if this spring break was any kind of predictor for summer vacation, BRING IT ON!

Welcome to the 2011 Season

I was planning to do this yesterday amid all the fanfare of Opening Day but in all the excitement, I totally forgot!

Excitement that built itself up until 1:05PM: The Tigers and the Bombers were standing on their respective baselines. The young lady sang the National Anthem. And then suddenly and without warning there was this "**TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE SUN!**" It must have been a freak occurrence as I heard nothing about it from anywhere else but it got very dark, I couldn't see a thing and moments later when it got light again, the Detroit Tigers and New York Yankees were **BLACKED OUT!** What a way to spoil a perfect opening day. I was informed that the game was on the Detroit feed of FOX Sports, unfortunately, we do not have the service. I do have the ESPN app on my ipod which allows me to get updates which was no where near as fun as watching or listening, but it sufficed. And the "EVIL EMPIRE" (cue the "Imperial March") pulled off a 6-3 victory!

Warmer weather may be yet to come but the MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL SEASON has begun (for some). No matter who you root for good luck to all teams in a fun, exciting, safe, and SCANDAL FREE 6 month run! Number 28 and what is this UNDERDOG stuff!

OK... so the video is a few seasons old but it was the best I could come up with featuring the theme.

A Language All Their Own

WOW – two posts in a row from me, what’s that about? My kids are on spring break, and the older ones are playing with the younger ones, giving me some unexpected spare time. I wouldn’t dare schedule a household project; everyone knows the magic would end and I would suddenly find myself in the middle of an undone project. Don’t worry, I already know it’s a fluke, and I don’t expect it to last long. In the meantime, I enjoyed this video and wanted to share it. Almost makes me want twins someday. Almost.

I think the one twin got an idea about climbing on the kitchen appliances, and the other twin is telling him how he'd fall, get hurt, and how much mommy would yell at both of them. Whatever they're saying, they are adorable!

I Want To Be A Glass Is Half-Full Kind Of Person

...so I'll start with the Cubs. Because goodness knows in my own life, being an optimist is too exhausting. I wake up feeling crummy, determined to make the best of my day, only to have had to step in to referee not less than 10 fights before I even make it to lunch. And I'm not talking about MY lunch – that comes much later (if I'm lucky) after I've served up umpteen helpings, cleaned up infinite messes, and responded to various other distress calls. But the point is that at a time where I could really use my time and energy to focus on me and growing a healthy baby, much of said time and energy is wasted on what feels like mundane, pointless referring and the like.

But with the Chicago Cubs opening day mere HOURS away (ok, dozens of hours, but still countable by hours!), I came across the following article which did indeed fill me with cautious optimism – not for my own summer, no, for there is no doubt I'm going to feel like a huge pregnant balloon, warm beyond reason, lazy beyond doubt. I know that I will have 4 little kids to chase around, and I will have to pry myself out of my chair a little earlier in the chase if I'm going to have any hope of catching them to stop the trouble or keep them out of danger. The optimism isn't for me – it's for the Chicago Cubs. If you're a Cubs fan, read the following, and tell me

if you agree. I especially like the line that says, "...allow me to put on the ol' rose-colored glasses and search out reasons to be hopeful that 2011 will be a better year than 2010 for us Cubs fans. For one, it can't be much worse."

Excellent point, that. After all, I had to write off my Cubbies after watching what was the debacle they called opening day last year. Not that I ever tend to give up on the team, I am a Cubs fan affter all, but well, if you saw them play, er um, "play" baseball on opening day of 2010, then you would agree. Check out the rest of the reasons for optimism here as written by Bob Warja for the Bleacher Report @ bleacherreport.com:

[10 Reasons for Cautious Optimism for the Chicago Cubs in 2011](#)

And GO CUBS!!!



A slightly different twist

A complete story this time. Some who have heard it before, may see a different spin on it.

It was a warm sunny day in the early spring. A young mother was waiting for her daughter to get home from kindergarten. Her youngest was getting rambunctious and really needed her

older sister to play with. It was a trying time for the mother, she spent most of her day alone with only children to talk to. If you've ever been the parent of young children, you can understand the yearning for adult conversation. Yes, motherhood could be trying, but to see the smiles in her children's eyes made it all worthwhile.

Little Katie finally made it home from school with a big "Hi Mommy, I'm home."

Hugs were given and received. Lunch was served and eaten. The two girls went off to play. Finally, the mother could get some things done. There was laundry to do of course, but she really wanted some time to sit with a project she had going. Who knows what the project was for the day. It could have been anything from finishing a dress for one of her children, or knitting a blanket for someone's new baby. These were much easier to handle when the two girls were playing together. And with the older one gone part of the day, it seemed like they didn't have as many fights.

It didn't take too long before the girls wanted to go outside. It had been wet and rainy recently, and this was the first sunny day in a long time. Jenny came to ask her mother if she could go outside with her sister.

"As long as you don't get your clothes dirty, you can go out to play." , was her mother's reply. And she returned to her project.

It didn't take long before Katie came into the room and wanted to use the hose. Of course her her mother said, "No Katie, I don't want you to touch the hose."

Slightly saddened, Katie went back outside to play.

A long time passed, the project was finished and it was quiet. Too quiet. From some premonition that some parents get, she knew that something wasn't quite right. The mother went

outside to see what was going on with her two darlings.

She found them. Oh yes, she found them kneeling in a puddle, covered with mud and the hose was running, slowly making the puddle bigger. They were playing, splashing and laughing. They didn't see their mother come up to them.

With her temper rising, the mother first asked her youngest daughter, "Why are your clothes dirty? I thought I told you not to get them dirty."

Jenny's response was "But these aren't my clothes mommy, Katie said I could wear hers."

Her mother looked and sure enough, the clothes were a bit too big.

"What about you young lady? I told you not to touch the hose."

"But mommy," piped in Jenny again, "Katie didn't touch the hose. I'm a big girl now, I can turn on the hose myself."

What was a mother to do? Her daughters followed her instructions exactly. Oh yes, the letter of the law was stretched, but the elastic didn't break. What would she do?

Firmly she said "Stay here!" to her daughters. She went inside. Her daughters trembled with a little fear. Of course they knew their mother was mad. They had no idea of what was to come. They didn't like thinking about it, but they didn't want to make matters worse, so they stayed right where they were.

In a few minutes the young mother came out again. In her hands, she held a camera. Pictures of two very muddy girls were taken. Excess mud was rinsed off. Baths were taken. Snacks eaten. All was right with this little family. The rest of the day was as normal as any other.

May you find, as this family did, that it is usually best to

keep your temper, and try to find something good in every situation.

Would you read stuff like this?

It was a fairy tale life. Everything went well for them. They had beautiful, loving daughters. They had a roof over their heads, and food on the table. They were living their happily ever after. Now don't get me wrong, the two were not a king and queen. They weren't even a prince and princess. They had no royal blood to speak of, but they had each other. This meant that they had everthing.

As their children grew, they knew that they would need to adjust their lives to accommodate knowing each other again. They started when the youngest was almost five years old. They made time to be friends again. During this time they talked of their children, of course. Their daughters were an important part of their lives, and their well being was discussed often. But they also talked about themselves. They talked about their problems and joys. Most of all they talked about their futures.

I will have to say that the future looked bright for this pair. Everyone who knew them would have said the same thing. It was funny, but they really seemed to be on the same page. Most of the time, if you saw one of them, the other would not be far away. They liked it that way. Together, they were more than they could be apart.

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Looking Forward To The Next One

Well, here we are only 2 months out from our last trip to Disney World, and I'm already wanting to go back. That's nothing new, it's an awesome place, but I'm also reading about many changes taking place. Ok, so I'm not exactly planning the next trip (step one would be how to fit our family of soon-to-be 7 into the minivan along with a week's worth of luggage for a 20 hour drive), but articles like the following tempt me. Especially interesting: Disney's \$1 billion Next Generation project, which includes interactive line queues – they're adding things like an interactive mystery experience to the line of the Haunted Mansion attraction. And apparently they've already added interactive video games to Soarin' and Space Mountain, none of which I had noticed on our last visit! Maybe because we did the Fast Pass? That reminds me, Disney is going to try a new concept as part of the Next Gen project: guests will be able to book their ride times for various attractions from their hotels or from home ahead of time, drastically reducing or even eliminating the need to wait in line (and to see all these brand spanking new queue attractions?). Also something I missed this last time around: the new playground and interactive video games in the line for the Winnie the Pooh ride. Now where would they have room for that, I wonder? But no wonder that we didn't notice these enhancements; that ride normally has an over 40 minute wait even in the down season, so we don't usually indulge in it.

Lots of interesting changes and enhancements on the horizon, [check them out for yourself](#).

It Was The Rat Poison

Last night, I FINALLY was up to attending a great game night with marvelous friends and one newcomer (a newcomer to me although, he had been to at least the Super Bowl extravaganza, I believe. My first game night in three months was full of laughs and great times. I got to see dear friends I have not seen since New Years or before and this also helped my continued progress. Laughter and wonderful times with some of my closest compadres is indeed the best medicine... better than rat poison, that is for sure.

I also got to see the four kids (plus two tagalongs which one of our regular game nighters brought along). Poor Beebs definitely was NOT feeling up to his normal self. The other little ones played on the Kinect system... something which I think looks interesting in the near future.

After the merriment of the evening wound down (about 12:30), I set out to make the 12 mile trek home. Before I even left town, I was traveling along and all of a sudden, a raccoon jumped out in front of me. Instinctively, I swerved and crossed the yellow line. Unbeknownst to me, one of B-town's finest was right behind me and turned on his red and blue lights.

"Did you see the raccoon I had sicced on you?"

Indeed I had! Apparently, the town has gained quite a surplus of the critters... living in the sewers until they plot their take over. Sounds like a bad B-movie to me. The friendly officer and I engaged in a conversation about any future theatrical endeavors I have coming up which led to the tale of my 3 month journey. After my identity was confirmed and I was

not deemed a known terrorist, I was sent on my way. Good thing I did not indulge in the wine that was brought to our night of fun! I don't think it would be good to mix with the rat poison, anyway. ☐

THEN, I got back home and learned that the Buckeyes were defeated by two points by Kentucky with a buzzer beating shot.

So much for my bracket... and I was doing so well for my first time ☐

Make the day special

This is one of those days, a day made special. What makes it special? Not much going on, other than a breakfast of pancakes, sausage and real maple syrup. My little family looks forward to this day all year. The pancakes are pretty ordinary. The sausage is usually top notch. The maple syrup is locally produced heaven in a bottle. In all of that, the day is just another day. But for my little family, this day is special. It has been special for many years.

I'm not sure what year it began, but our little town has a Maple Syrup Fest every spring. This was not the first maple syrup festival I went to, but it has been one that I've been to the most. Our local Maple Syrup Producers use this day to advertise their product, and share it with the community. An educational day, to see how the syrup is produced. Of course you get to taste the finished product in many forms. But really, once you've seen it a few times, you could give the tour yourself. Again, not much there to make it special is there? But for us the day is still special.

You may ask yourself why. I have many times. The answer is quite simple. We took an ordinary event and made it that way.

We found a shared joy in family and friends. A simple task of sharing a meal of sticky sweet syrup, combined with a wagon ride to see a few maple trees. A choice was made to make this day a little different than the rest.

This day had its beginnings in the shadow of a slight bit of depression. It was a day to help someone get out of the "winter blues". One year, a choice was made to get out and enjoy an earlier spring day. And so, our yearly visit to a maple syrup festival was born. It became the thing to do in early spring. It continued, year after year, to be a source of fun for the entire family.

Other days were added to that list, not just in spring time, but all year round. Not just to combat a bit of the seasonal blues, although that was on the top of the list, but to enjoy family and the company of others. We make those days special.

This is very important in life. We go along day by day. We do the same things over and over again. We go to work or school, we come home after the day has ended and we wait to start all over the next day. How boring that would be if that was all we did. But our society made some special days. Most of us call them the weekend. Days outside of the ordinary. Days we look forward to. I also think we need to add extraordinary days. Something to anticipate. Something to hold in heart. Those days need to be shared. They can be shared with family or friends. They are days that lift the heart and the mind. We make them that way and those days find their way into our stories and shared experience.

Some of the special days were started and shared with just one person. Those days are no longer shared, but they still hold a comfortable place in my life. They were days we made together.

A very important life lesson was learned many years ago. Any day can be special. Any day can be held above the rest. We look for those days and hold them dear, because we made them.

They are ours. Maybe this is part of seizing the day?

... To be continued...