

With A Little Help From My Friends

AHHHHHH... after a two week hiatus, I returned to my weekly voice lesson. Fun times! While waiting for K, I was entertained once again by her 5 year old son who now happily reports that he has beaten computer chess on the medium level.

A feat I could only dream of achieving. He is also looking forward to the beginning of the school year but is a bit apprehensive because he does not know who his teacher will be.

Been there... done that! He also presented me with a colorful piece of artwork that he made while mixing a bunch of paints together. And I got the full rundown of the family vacation.

Rehearsals are going even better than I could have imagined.

During the two week break, I scoured my books to find a few more songs to work on. I found "Friend Like Me" from *Aladdin*.

WOW! Once again, deceptive but will be fun to work on. I dug out a few other songs that I hope to look at in the next few weeks: a few more duets, a small group piece, and some solo pieces.

After going through one of the pieces which is now ready for performance, we read some Disney songs which I will be looking at again. I tried my best Italian crooning voice on "Bella Notte" a short little piece that must have had some instrumental during the spaghetti and meatball scene in *Lady and the Tramp*.

After some more sight singing, we both decided that we definitely want to do a weekend gig at the theatre. The first thing to do is NARROW my song list. I have a very large collection of music to choose from... ones I have worked on and have gotten near perfection, some I have looked at, and others that I want to look at, and some I have been encouraged to look at. I was informed that my voice sounds "really good" on

each of the songs I have attempted (even the ones I have never looked at before).

So... with a little help from my friends (those who have inquired about doing a duet with me... you know who you are; those I will ask to do a little group number (or two) with; and someone to provide a bit of filler between some of the numbers) I should be prime for the public shortly after Baskervilles wraps or, at latest, after the first of the year.

Doesn't it just sound lovely?

And the fog rolled in...

Tonight/this morning I was ready to sit in my lawn chair and look for shooting stars. The Perseid meteor shower was to hit its maximum two days. The sky promised to be clear. The mosquitoes did not promise to stay away, but I have my bug suit. □ So, I drove the truck out into the field, had my chair sitting in the bed, and I watched the night sky.

I saw a couple of shooting stars, but no storm/shower. Kind of a sprinkle. I had a grand view of the summers stars. The sky was dark enough to see the Milky Way. For an hour I enjoyed kicking back and just watching the sky turn.

Then I noticed some of the horizon stars were not as bright as they had been. Passing clouds I thought, not a big deal. Then I noticed more and more of the stars were just that much harder to see. Dang too many clouds except I stood up and the sky was clear once again. The cloud had formed much lower as fog around my truck. I stood for a while in hopes to see one or two more meteors, but within 15 minutes the fog was at my head. No more star gazing.

I should have guessed with the heavy rain this afternoon, and the warm temperatures today that fog would form easily. I just wish it would have held out for an hour or two. I'm sure I could drive one way or another to get out of my little fog bank, but the bed and work are calling me. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

A Change For The World's Greatest Detective (Not THAT One)

It began with Wonder Woman... and now the Dark Knight is going to undergo a costume change. However, Batfans do not despair.

The change is nowhere near as dramatic as the Amazon Princesses. I do not follow comic books closely enough to know that Bruce Wayne has "retired" in the current mythology and will be making a dramatic return in November. I do recall the "[Knightfall](#)" saga in which he was beaten and paralyzed by the villain known as Bane. Paralleling the Death and Return of Superman storyline, the millionaire (or is it billionaire) playboy was replaced by a new Batman until Wayne recuperated enough to reassume the cape and cowl. AH... only in the comics!

The only MAJOR change (That I see) in the Caped Crusader's appearance will be the return of the black bat on the yellow background emblem. Not an Earth-shaking switch by any means.

Besides, I do believe that he does possess an array of different costumes for different purposes.



The Current Look



The New Upcoming
Design

Book idea

I normally don't do things like this, but since I have a blog, I might as well. I have decided what I want my first book to be and I have already started on the research.

I am going to write about Egypt! A young woman, early twenties, I think, is going to be touring Egypt and finds herself in Ancient Egypt. There she sees all the monuments in their glory and learns about Ramesses II and Nefertari. That's all I'm giving up. So, any thoughts? Would anyone be interested in reading it? Of course, it could take years because of all the research to do.

Disney's Driving Lesson

My daughter Disney is 3 years old and full of questions. Today was her first dentist visit, and she had questions about every aspect of going to the dentist. On the way home, she had more questions: Can I still sneeze? Can I still drink? Can I still eat? She had no idea what life would be like with clean teeth. Before the appointment, she was a bit scared, but in the end she found getting her teeth cleaned fun and tickle-y.

After the dentist, something happened that will have me laughing for a long time. A stoplight turned yellow, and it was one of those with the pedestrian's crosswalk really far in front of the light, so I had to hard-brake, which for some reason prompted little Disney to pipe up from the back seat and ask me, "What the h*** are you doing?" I turned around and asked her where she learned that word, and her sisters looked terrified that they were going to somehow get blamed for this – the looks on their faces were priceless. "From Kirsten", said Disney, referring to her little friend at the babysitters. I was relieved to know that it wasn't something she had picked up from home, and we had a little chat about some words not being appropriate to say.

Kids will be kids, and I'm not worried in the slightest about my sweet little 3-year-old becoming as foul-mouthed as a trucker's reputation. Actually, I will think of this little episode every time I need a smile – it was so funny how she just blurted it out that way, it makes me laugh out loud just thinking about it!



my sweet little Disney

Best Way To Spend 88 Cents

According to JJ my parakeet, the best way to spend 88 cents is on this little number:



I saw this little bird toy at Walmart the other day, and even though I knew it would scare the heck out of my scaredy-cat parakeet, I bought it anyway. It's a piece of plastic in the shape of an upside-down T – a perch for the bird to sit on, while the part that sticks up hold millet sprays – a favorite treat for parakeets.

I adopted my little guy JJ (short for Jungle Jack Hanna named after my favorite celeb) back in January, and he hasn't ever been interested in playing with any of the toys in his cage. My 2-year-old son used to bang on JJ's cage, and so the little bird became afraid of people, and I haven't been able to pet him in months – he flies away from me. I was so afraid that he led a miserable existence locked away safely in my bedroom – until about a month ago, when I moved him from our bedroom (where he was by himself most of the time) to the living room (the centerpiece of most of our large family's traffic patterns). JJ has been SO happy to be a part of the action! I've been happy to see him happy, but he still wasn't playing with toys – until I bought this 88 cent Walmart Wonder on a whim. At first, JJ kept his distance, and I feared I was right – he WAS afraid of everything! I had to leave the house for awhile, and when I returned, the millet was gone from the toy – I was ecstatic!

The next day, I snapped the above picture of JJ perched on his new toy, and ever since, he's been in love with his 88 cent Walmart toy! He sits next to it and preens himself, and he even gazes at it lovingly.

I reiterate – BEST 88 cents spent (on a pet) EVER!!

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!)

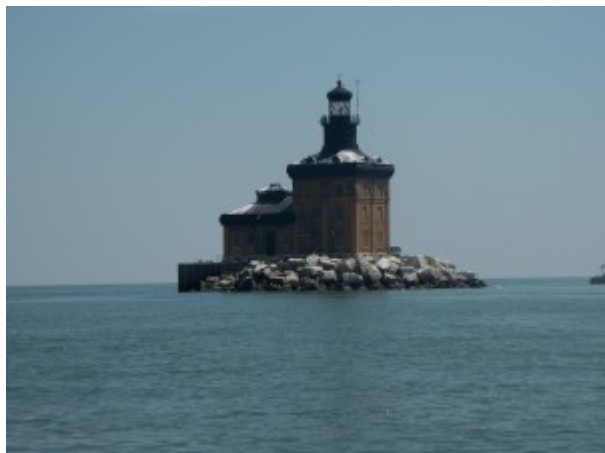
We wanted to dock at a cool looking place called Turtle Island, but it didn't seem very kid-friendly – maybe next time

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!

What If...

Tomorrow night my church gets to host the world premiere of a movie titled "What If..." at our Elgin campus. Since my small group normally meets Monday nights, we agreed to go to the movie instead. Since our church is at four campuses (five including a small one in the city) with 2-3 services at each, this single event at a single campus promises to be a crowded one, especially at the price they are charging- free. Just today I learned this world premiere comes probably thanks to the director, Dallas Jenkins, joining the staff at the church as Director of Visual Media. He is the son of author [Jerry B. Jenkins](#) (best known for coauthoring the Left Behind series). Hmm... a [partnership with a well-known actor](#), and now a movie director, son of a famous author on staff, not to mention my pastor whose name is out there- have you heard of the radio program [Walk in the Word](#)?- should I worry about my church becoming too public? In any event, I am looking forward to the movie and meeting the three stars afterward. I wonder if this appearance was part of their contract? So- all I have to do is make sure I finish work no later than 5PM so I can get there- a half-hour drive from the store I end at in St.

Charles (and a mere 5 min. from the store I start at-aargh!). In any event, here is a link to the trailer. ~~Sorry, I couldn't find it on youtube so I couldn't embed it:~~ FOUND IT!

