

Miracles Are All Around

Sorry for the gaps between posts but really hard to find time between working at 6AM Monday morning. Getting to bed at 3AM Tuesday morning. Reading, rereading, typing, retyping, running lines with my sister, rehearsal and everything else. After Monday night's practice I was not sure what I had gotten myself into. But after some kicking and screaming (mentally) I think we are ready. Monday night was just a BAD practice as the few people who were there in the audience to take pictures, etc could tell you. I have NEVER been in a show that was in such a bad way that soon to performance. So... I was up until 3 o' clock going over my lines until I was ready to explode. Then, I got up Tuesday morning and had my sister run them with me.

Last night's rehearsal was a noticeable difference. Not without the occasional missed line but no one shouted "LINE!" and we made it to the end. After rehearsal, Beth and I went to [Mary's](#), hung out, ate, and ran lines again. This morning, I ran lines again. Do you think I may be overdoing? Maybe it is just the new experience and I'm trying tooooo hard because I KNOW the lines. I just need to RELAX!! Remember why I am up on that stage and it is not because of one line (although...HAHA, Beth!)

So after getting off work at 5, I will head over. Look over the script again and be miraculous!

Rocks and other things...

My oldest daughter almost stole my next blog post right out from underneath me. ☐

In the past, I've been told the story about rocks and other things many times. Most of the time it is almost exactly the same. The situation changes a bit, but the story and the message behind it stays roughly the same. One story really got me thinking and it had an extra twist.

I'll give a rough outline with my own little twist...

A master had three large piles of Stones, pebbles and sand behind him. He went to the pile of stones and filled his bucket with them. He asked is the bucket full? All of his students responded yes.

He then proceeded to add pebbles to the bucket, shaking them down until he could fit no more. Again he asked if the bucket was full. One brave student muttered probably not, or you would not have asked us the second time.

The master was pleased and then added sand to the bucket until it filled each crevice. He asked is the bucket full? All of his students said no.

"Very good!" the master replied, "You are learning." He then added water until it almost reached the top. A student saw this, and said "The bucket is not yet full master." At that point the master took his teapot and filled the bucket the rest of the way.

"What do you learn from this?" the master queried. One student responded, "No matter how full your life is, there is always room for more."

The master said to this, "Not quite, the message is that if you don't fill in the big rocks first, you will never get them in. So decide, what are your big rocks in life. Do those first. The little stuff will find its own path."

"But why did you not fill the bucket with the water master?" a student finally asked.

To this the master replied, "No matter how busy you get, always leave room for a cup of tea with one you love."

And that my friends is my story of the rocks, stones and sand...

Thinking about thinking

Has anyone noticed that the "thinking" gorilla has been on this page for a while now? I noticed. I haven't felt like changing it recently. And I have been thinking a lot.

Some thoughts are coalescing in my mind.

1) I should spend more time with family and friends. That does mean less time doing theater stuff. I think I'm going to be very choosy about my theater endeavors. I'm not going to limit the number of shows, but I won't be in a show just because it is the only show I'm the least bit interested in.

2) Part of everything is doing what I really want to do. Yes, some chores just can't wait, but a lot of them can. Clear evenings should be spent with a telescope. Sleeping during the day should not be a problem on weekends.

3) NO is a very important word. I should use it more often.

4) YES is another important word. I should use it more often.

5) I didn't contradict myself in the last two items. I need to learn when to say yes and when to say no.

6) I may end up hurting some feelings when I say yes or no. I will apologize for that, but not for my decisions.

7) Life is too short. There will never be enough time to do

everything. There won't even be enough time to do all of the important things. It is best to choose the most important things first. Old simulation with rocks, pebbles, gravel, sand and water... If you really want to know, ask. I may explain it in another blog...

8) I will stop worrying about sleep. The best thing is to sleep when I can and the rest will take care of itself.

9) Relationships with others are the keys to a happy life. If you are getting along with others, your life will be better. Hmm that was deep.

10) I know what real love is. I can't really explain it, but I know what it is. Guess what, nobody can take that away from me. It is mine and it will always be a part of me.

Talking To The Animals

Do a search on youtube.com for talking animals, and you'll see birds, dogs, and cats that say human words. Not all of them know what they're saying, but some of them do. I came across an article on cnn.com about 4 animals that could REALLY talk – these include a seal, a cat, a parrot, and a chimpanzee.

In 1971, George and Alice Swallow found a baby seal just off the coast of Maine. The little guy appeared to be orphaned, so they took him home and kept him in their bathtub.

For the first few days, they tried to feed him ground mackerel, but he refused to eat. Once he trusted his new parents, though, he began eating so voraciously they compared him to a Hoover vacuum cleaner and the name stuck.

When he got too big for the tub, Hoover was moved to a small

pond behind the Swallows' house. After only a few months, Hoover was eating more fish than his human caretakers were able to provide, so they contacted the New England Aquarium in Boston, hoping the facility had room for him.

When introducing the seal to the aquarium, George mentioned that Hoover could talk. Of course no one believed him at the time. A few years later, though, researchers at the aquarium noticed that Hoover's guttural sounds really did seem to be forming words and phrases. He was often telling people to "Get outta here!" or asking, "How are ya?" He could say his name and a few other phrases, all with a thick Bostonian accent.

Once the word got out that the Aquarium had a talking seal, he became a media sensation, making appearances in Reader's Digest, The New Yorker, National Public Radio, and even on Good Morning America.

Sadly, Hoover died of natural causes in July 1985 at the ripe old age of 14. He was so admired that he received his own obituary in the Boston Globe. He left behind several offspring, but none possessed his unique gift for gab.

I did a google search for Hoover the Seal, and I did find one piece of audio, but my husband says the words are not Hoover's. I'm not sure what to think – my husband has a point: if there was a talking seal, and he died in 1985, why aren't there more video clips of him out there? I can be kind of gullible, but then again, thousands of people claim to have seen this seal talk, so I don't know. Here is the youtube video I found which is audio only. What do you think? If anyone has visited Hoover and seen him talk, I'd love to hear from you!

Then there was Blackie, the talking cat.

When Carl Miles of Augusta, Georgia, trained his cat Blackie to say, "I love you" and "I want my mama," they took their act on the road. Throughout the early 1980s, Blackie made paid appearances on local TV and radio programs, and even hit the big time with a spot on the network TV show That's Incredible.

However, as the novelty wore off, Carl and Blackie ended up performing on street corners, asking for donations from passersby. After some complaints from locals, police informed Carl that he would need to get a business license in order to keep up Blackie's street show. Carl paid the \$50 fee for a license, but something about it rubbed him the wrong way.

So Carl sued the city of Augusta, under the pretense that the city's business license code mentions many types of occupations that require a license, but a talking cat show was not one of them. But that wasn't the only issue Carl had—he also claimed the city was infringing on Blackie's First Amendment Right to Free Speech.

Carl lost his case, but he appealed the ruling until it came before a federal court. The argument was finally closed when three presiding judges declared that the business license ordinance allowed for other, unspecified types of businesses to require a license, which would encompass a talking cat performer.

As for the First Amendment violation, the courts said the law did not apply because Blackie was not human, and therefore not protected under the Bill of Rights. Furthermore, there seemed no good cause for Carl Miles to be the one to bring the suit in the first place. If Blackie felt his rights were being violated, as a talking cat, he should have been the one to say something.

Next comes Alex the African Grey parrot. I've always wanted an African Grey parrot (ever since as a kid I enjoyed the book Harry's Mad by Dick King-Smith), and so I took special notice of Alex when he would make media appearances. He died suddenly and unexpectedly in 2007, most likely from some sort of heart problem, but not before his accomplishments amazed millions.

According to Dr. Pepperberg's research, this avian Einstein could identify 50 different objects, knew seven colors and shapes, and many different kinds of materials like wool, paper, and wood. For example, hold up a blue block of wood and Alex could tell you the shape, the color, and even what it was made of.

However, he also grasped more complex concepts that required a higher level of thought and understanding. Put a handful of red and yellow blocks on a tray and ask him how many were yellow, he could tell you the correct answer. If you then asked him how many of those same blocks were green, he would say "none."

Furthermore, hold up two blocks of different colors and different sizes and he could tell you which was bigger.

And finally, Lucy, the chimpanzee who was raised like a child by humans:

When she was only two days old, Lucy, a chimpanzee, was purchased by the University of Oklahoma and sent to live with Dr. Maurice Temerlin, a noted psychologist, who, along with his wife, raised the little chimp as if she were their own human child.

Lucy was taught how to eat normal meals at the table using silverware. She could dress herself, often choosing to wear skirts just like her "mother" did. She could even make tea for her "parents" and the team of researchers who trained and

cared for her.

Dr. Robert Fouts, one of the groundbreaking psychologists who taught American Sign Language (ASL) to Washoe the chimp in 1967, helped Lucy learn to communicate using around 250 ASL signs. Lucy could not only give the signs for objects like airplane, ball, and food, but she could also express her emotions with her hands, often "saying" when she was hungry, happy, or sad.

Lucy had become so close to human in most every way that she only found human men, not male chimpanzees, sexually attractive. It was pretty clear that, in her mind anyway, she was the same as her parents.

It's a sad fact that once a captive chimp has reached about four or five years old, their immense strength can become a danger to their human caretakers. Often they need to be placed in a zoo, a lab, or some other facility better equipped to handle primates. In this case, the Temerlins raised Lucy as their daughter until 1977, when she was almost 12 years old, before they finally felt like they had to find her a new home.

After much deliberation, they decided upon a nature preserve in Gambia on the west coast of Africa. They, along with research assistant Janis Carter, flew with Lucy to her new home to help ease the chimp into the wild. However, it was not going to be as simple as they'd hoped.

At the preserve, Lucy was put in a cage at night to protect her from predators. She had only ever slept in a bed inside a nice, quiet, suburban home, so the jungle was a completely new and frightening environment for her.

She was also scared of the other chimps, strange creatures she had only encountered a few times before in her life, preferring to stay close to her parents and Janis whenever she could.

She wasn't eating because her food had always been delivered to her on a plate; she didn't even understand the concept of foraging.

When her parents suddenly became distant and weren't providing her with the life she had always known, Lucy became confused and sad. She would often use the sign for "hurt." And she lost much of her hair due to the stress of her new situation.

Realizing that Lucy would never move on if they stayed, her parents left her behind after three weeks. Janis agreed to stay for a few weeks longer, but it was soon clear that Lucy couldn't change who she was. And so, Janis never left.

Janis helped found a chimpanzee sanctuary on an abandoned island in the middle of the Gambia River. She took Lucy and other chimps that had been raised in captivity and lived with them on the island, teaching them skills they would need in the wild, like finding food and climbing trees.

For most, the new lifestyle quickly became second nature. But for nearly eight years, Lucy refused to give up her human ways. She wanted human food, human interaction, and to be loved by, what she considered, one of her own kind. It wasn't until Janis stopped living on the island that Lucy was finally able to accept her new life and joined a troupe of chimps.

Whenever Janis visited the island, Lucy was still affectionate, still used sign language, but thankfully, she always went back with the chimps into the forest.

Sadly, Lucy's decomposed body was discovered in 1987. Her exact cause of death is unknown, though some believe she was killed by poachers. Others say it was probably something less spectacular, like an attack by a dominant male or an illness.

There's one thing that no one who knew her wonders about,

though, and that's the fact that Lucy never really believed she was anything less than human.

Ok, so the part about Lucy being sexually attracted to male humans is a bit disturbing and TMI. Nonetheless, the article provided a fascinating look at animals who act closer to humans than we can imagine. Just a friendly reminder that all animals can be dangerous, however, so as they say, don't try this at home!

And I'm somewhat surprised that [Koko the gorilla](#) who uses sign language was kept off the list – Lucy the chimp could use sign language, so what about Koko?

To read the article in its entirety, [click here](#).

Some Might Have Called It A Disaster...

... but not me. I'm talking about my hugely busy, albeit super-fun weekend. It began Friday night when we took the kids to the Fort Wayne Tin Caps (minor league baseball) game. We decided to go mainly because we needed to get to a Ticketmaster outlet to buy tickets for an upcoming arena football game. Since we live in a rural area, the nearest Ticketmaster is an hour away, but the drive to the city to get tickets was still cheaper than all of the service fees Ticketmaster wanted to tack on for phone or internet orders. So we decided while we were in the city, why not take the kids somewhere fun, so we decided upon the baseball game. The only problem is that we found out just as we were leaving (at 4:10) that Ticketmaster closed at 5 – we live more than an hour

away, especially at rush hour on a Friday evening. It was a big deal because we had already bought our baseball tickets, and the only reason we decided to go to the baseball game with such a busy weekend ahead was because we were going to use the money that we were going to save buying the football tickets at Ticketmaster – except now we weren't going to make it by 5 (did I mention that Ticketmaster's website said they were open until 6? So this really wasn't our fault...) Long story short, we arrived there at 5:20, and the people at the Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne were very accommodating. We got our arena football tickets at the original price without the crazy sur-charges – YAY! So on to the baseball game... It was fun, though we had barely sat down on our lawn seats when my almost 2-year-old son took a tumble and was one dad-catching-his-shirttail away from falling from a 3-foot-high ledge onto cement and cracking his head open. We promptly moved seats, and after my son ran around for a bit, we were actually able to watch some of the game, even though our team lost.

Saturday was my daughter's birthday party, and we ended up with about 10 kids (this is a guesstimate – they were never still enough to count them all!). Thankfully, the weather was nice, so we decided to keep all the kids outside for the entire party. The kids started to get rambunctious, and it was difficult to keep so many kids entertained and out of trouble for so long (note to self – next year, an hour is plenty long for a kids' birthday party) – we had the parents coming 2½ hours after the party started on Saturday, which was WAY TOO LONG! Everything was going ok though, until one of the party guests opened the gate while playing hide n' go seek. Suddenly, we had 2 dogs loose and roaming the neighborhood. 2 of the adults fanned out to go catch the dogs, and I was left to control the 10 kids (AND my son and his cousin who are around 2 years old). Some of the kids were scared for the dogs, some were bored by being outside, some were whining for cake, and others just stood there, looking as

shell-shocked as I felt. Then the phone rang, and it was a neighbor on the next street over (whom I've never met) saying that they have our dogs. Thinking my husband was still around, I followed my mom and oldest daughter with some leashes to capture the dogs. Somewhere in the melee, it became apparent that my husband was just on his way back from looking for the dogs, and he comes back to the entire birthday party which he thought was unattended (though I was leaving as he was coming), but in the meantime, my daughter had decided to lead her guests into the house, like some sort of catastrophic parade. We got to the neighbors house, but they only had one dog by this time, so my mom and my daughter went to find the other one while I returned the puppy to the house. When I got back, we were still missing a few adults who were out looking for the dogs, and my daughter the birthday girl is begging for her cake. Eventually, my mom and my daughter returned with the dog, everyone was fine, but we were still missing some adults who were still out looking for the lost-now-found dogs. We found everyone, and tried to relax, even though there was still an entire hour left of the party – WHEW! For the most part, the kids were good, but there was one little girl who was not a very good listener. She seemed to rub off on the other kids too. Is it a coincidence that this is the same little girl who had opened the gate in the first place? For the rest of the party, she was obsessed with the puppy. She wanted to hug him, squeeze him, and hold him every second. After his romp around the neighborhood, he was quite tired and made an easy mark to catch, but he was still a good sport – good thing he's great with kids. I asked her to leave the puppy alone at least 4 times, and I heard my mom doing the same, and later my husband said he also tried, especially when he saw her dragging the puppy by his collar. She reminded me of the character Elmyra from the cartoon Tiny Toon Adventures. For those of you who aren't familiar, I had fun finding the following clip – picture this little girl at our birthday party leading the pack of 10 kids, and you'll wonder how we survived. Starting

at the 35 second mark, this could have been a scene from our house on Saturday:

After the fiasco of a party (the kids had fun, so I wouldn't call it a disaster, even if it was stressful at times), my family took the kids to their hotel for a party, and Hubby and I got some alone time. The problem was, after the busy week we'd had, we were too tired to do much of anything. We hastily chose a Redbox movie, and it was terrible. To my husband's credit, he wanted to just forget it after seeing the small selection, but I pushed for [Meadowoods](#) since it was the only horror movie available and it was just \$1 and we had already waited in line at the Redbox – I didn't want it to be for nothing. But it was a complete waste of time (movie-wise I mean, for any time with Hubby is well-spent); we would have been better off watching someone's youtube videos for 88 minutes instead, that would have been far more interesting. If only Redbox had an imdb link at the Redbox units – perhaps Meadowoods' 3.1 rating would have made me just want to forget it too...

Sunday our church service ran late (of all days), and so we were running late for the entire day... But we had a nice brunch with our family before seeing them off back to Illinois. We then picked up my daughter's friend for a playdate, and I was off to my MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) group get-together a little late because I had to finish up my thank-you notes and my appetizer. I had decided upon little smokies in the crock pot instead of picking up a 7-layer dip as I had originally planned because I didn't want to be even later after having to stop at the store to get the dip. Everything was well-planned, and the appetizer actually tasted good... but I forgot to drive gently on the way there – I was already late and in a hurry. I wasn't even out of town before I had to hit the brakes and make a hard stop, sending the crock pot flying, leaving me with a huge pool of barbeque sauce on the front passenger-side floor. I pulled over and cleaned it up best I could – I am so thankful I had a roll of paper towels and extra plastic bags in the car! But when I got to my friend's house, my smokie appetizer in my crock pot

had NO sauce left... oh well, what could I do? There was plenty of other great food, and I ate too much. I think I was the only one to take the food they brought home with them, but I can't really blame anyone for not wanting seconds on the sauceless smokies. To add injury to insult, the crock pot tipped again on the way home (what is WITH my driving?), and I had smokies on the floor of my car this time. Did I mention that Hubby and I spent an hour cleaning out the car last week? But I guess it worked out since if we hadn't cleaned out the car, the BBQ sauce would have spilled all over the junk that was in the car – this way I just ruined the floor of the car and the floor mat – and luckily for me, I have 4 kids and therefore don't put too much stock into the car's appearance or condition. Besides, talk about built-in air freshener... if anyone accuses our car of stinking like anything but BBQ sauce for a long time, I will certainly be surprised!

After everything that went wrong this weekend, some might classify it as a disaster, but we call it FUN!! ☐

One Week To Go

After tonight's rehearsal, I am even more excited. There are some issues to be ironed out but what show doesn't all the way to opening. Mary send me a text during rehearsal commenting on one of the aspects of the show. Something that is very noticeable but I think is essential and makes it even more challenging, but I did agree. Even more I think I NEEDED to be in this show to see how far I could push myself.

One of the issues was staging. The director specifically pointed me out and I could not have agreed more! In one

scene, I was not sitting how I needed to be to interact with "Eve." It will be remedied. Madame Director commented on my facial and body expressions. Seriously, do they stand out THAT MUCH!

Bring... it... on.

And the Yanks finally came home and won a game after the near sweep by the team from Motown.

A Retrogaming Post

As I promised to JustJ, my next post is a retrogaming one! I decided to make it about a single game, one that spawned many versions and was the first arcade game from Nintendo's famed Shigeru Miyamoto, a new hire at the time who was charged with making a game that would be used in the many leftover cabinets of a game that didn't sell so well. In arcade terms, a conversion kit. If you know any Nintendo video game history, you know this is the man who came up with the hot selling Super Mario Bros and Legend of Zelda series. In video games, he is a creative genius. But this post isn't about Mr. Miyamoto, it is about his first smash hit called Donkey Kong. While I was sort of a general arcade game junkie of the time, this one game was my absolute favorite. For those who have been a long time away from the game, here is a short video of the arcade game in action: