

Controlled Chaos

The past two weeks have been filled with visitors from the north... 4 additional family members and the three of us makes SEVEN plus more relatives and assorted friends and you get what can only be described as somewhat controlled chaos. (and that might be pushing it). Charnel, Rich, Kyli (age 2 going on 22), and Chloe (9 months) arrived the day after Easter from Alaska where Rich is stationed and is on leave from his deployment in Afghanistan. I was asked if the noise kept me up at night... What noise? I admit that I haven't needed a traditional alarm clock for the past 14 days but I haven't been awoken at all hours, either. Here are a few of the highlights:

- Dinner made by Rich's bother. Charnel and others wanted some fettucini alfredo with chicken and bacon. I said that I would try it. I took a little sample and as politely as I could decided to make a frozen pizza. I'm usually open to new things but something about it just did not appeal to me. I was amazed that my oldest brother (one of the pickiest eaters... second only to his oldest) tried some; not so amazingly, Jeff didn't care for it, either.
- Cosmic bowling while I watched kids. Honestly, I did not think that the alley allowed children after a certain hour or I wonder if two of the four kids would have gone. I decided to sit that one out to help watch the little ones so the parents could go to bed early.
- Dinner at Texas Roadhouse. Apparently, they do not have them in Alaska. Might they have an Alaska Roadside Igloo where they serve moose steak? But 17 people with 7 little ones. I felt sorry for our poor waitress... I gave a larger tip than I should have. Ok... so there might have been a bit more involved than pity. Peanut tossing by a BIG KID not me caused a bit of chaos before we were

called to our table.

Well... the visitors are here until Wednesday... let's see if more "controlled chaos" ensues.

Moose On The Loose

I forgot to mention another thrill the parents had on their trip. One morning, a large moose was wandering Charnel's yard. Dad was in the middle of dressing and ran out just in time to see the back end of the animal as it made its way along. He quickly told her to take a picture but she was not about to snap the rear of any animal. To hear, seeing the large beasts is common place; they previously had a moose wandering around their area for a week. They have also seen a mother bear and her cubs in the wilderness near the roadway.

One the return flight, mom sat beside a businessman who had travelled to the state several times. He asked if they had seen any moose. The gentleman was slightly disappointed as he had never before seen one and my parents were blessed to see one on their very first trip.

My Parents Went To Alaska And...

all they brought back for me was this stupid tshirt. Well... not really stupid. I like it and was not expecting anything. I just remember some friends who went to Hawaii when I was

really young and brought me a shirt with that momento printed on it (with Hawaii instead of Alaska, of course).

Like their trip last summer to California, their excursion had many memorable moments. As I knew he would, my father found plenty of time to engage in what must be his favorite pasttime: lawn maintenance. He mowed the lawn, pulled weeds, and whatever else he could find to do. However, all outside work had to stop at 9PM following the playing of Taps or there would be trouble. The sun rose at about 4AM and did not set until 11PM every night. Funny that I was asked if dad had sneaked his lawn mower in his carry on bag.

We were greeted by a slew of stories that seem unbelievable but with my family are quite probable. At the Army PX (store) there were three different areas: grocery, clothing, and miscellaneous. You had to pay for the items you picked up in their respective departments. For example, you could not pay for a ball of yarn in the grocery area... as my father attempted to do. And you could not pay for anything without a military ID. Problems ensued and I half expected to hear that the three adults and two small children had been arrested for shoplifting, but no such luck.

While taking a walk along the beach (in 50 degree weather... I would almost take that after the past few days), they happened upon many musicians trying to make a buck. A person from China attempting to return to his native land and a woman trying to pay her way through college were just a few.

As this is a family friendly site, I will not go into detail on my next topic. Charnel has a friend who sells products ala Avon. However, the catalog she sells from is anything but beauty care. Charnel was asked if she would like to start selling. She vehemently turned the offer down. However, I can see where the woman could make money selling her wares.

Finally, the parents had as memorable a return flight as they

did going. All of the flights on the return voyage were packed. Consequently (and I don't know how... only they could be so lucky), they only had one seat between the two of them following the layover in Newark, NJ. Thankfully, the airline took volunteers to be bumped to a later flight giving dad a seat.

As they got off the toll road after driving home from Detroit, the toll collector asked where they had been. Don't you wish you had stayed another week when it will be cooler? I was thinking the same as I heard the forecast over the last week... WELCOME HOME!

In Trouble Even From Across The Country

More on the title later. My parents' trip to Alaska began Saturday when they were to fly out of Detroit early that morning. However, there were mechanical mishaps on the plane which lead to the cancellation of the flight. Around 3PM, a flight was arranged that would carry them non-stop to their destination. Some good there since they were to have a 2 hour layover in Seattle. They arrived in Alaska around 10:30PM EST. However, their luggage did not arrive until 11:30PM Sunday night.

Yes, even with the parents being thousands of miles away at Fort Richardson near Anchorage, I still was able to stir up some mishaps. It seems that my sister wanted to get into the house Tuesday night. Thinking I was doing a good thing, I made sure that I locked the house before going to work. When Christi could not get into the house, she did what any normal

32 year old would do: called Mommy and Daddy and interrupted their trip. This could have been avoided simply by driving the half block to the grocery store and seeing that I was at work and asked for the key. My car was parked at the house... surely logic would dictate that I was nearby somewhere. Instead, I get a phone call from Alaska asking why I would lock the door. Well... needless to say, that will not be happening again. Who would break into a house in little E-town? And don't get any ideas. AAAAHHHH, sisters. But I was more upset that she bothered the parents. I mean, what are they going to do, use the remote control door unlocker? Oh, well such as life.

Welcome To The Craziness

The family received news today that our extended family has grown by one. Around 3PM, we got a phone call from Alaska informing us that my cousin Charnel had delivered a 6lb. 3oz. baby girl, Chloe Mae who is being welcomed I am sure by her big 2 year old sister, Kyli Nicole. 20 inches long and has a thick head of black hair (can she mail some to me...or just send it back with grandma and grandpa when they fly up on Saturday). One very cool thing, the proud papa who is on deployment in Afghanistan was on the phone listening as their second daughter made her entrance into the world. When Charnel called and talked to Mom, she told her to call everyone. Well... everyone but two people she called had already heard via text messaging or were called by someone else whom it seems tells everyone in the world after she hears any juicy gossip. But all is well – healthy baby girl with ten fingers, ten toes, and healthy mama. Won't be able to see and spoil her until March when Rich returns from Afghanistan and they come South for a visit. I'm surprised there haven't

been any pictures sent over cyberspace. What are you waiting for?!

Welcome Chloe (I like that name)



An Early Christmas

Christmas came early to our humble abode this year. We have members of our family who are moving to Alaska next week. My cousin lived with us from her first grade year until she graduated from high school two years ago. Her husband is now a PFC in the Army and was recently stationed in Alaska. My father's niece came to live with us after she had been in at least three foster homes and my mother was approached by her case worker to discuss assuming custody of her. It was deemed much more beneficial for her to live with actual relatives. So on Thanksgiving Night of 1994, she came to our doorstep. I hate talking about her in the third person, but the first few years of her life were less than idyllic (and I will NOT get into that). Needless to say, she eventually became a much more important part of our family. Some of the little things that most of us take for granted she had to accept over time (leaving the bathroom door closed, getting too emotionally close too fast). However, I am ecstatic that she has grown into a young, mature, caring wife and mother to their 17 month old daughter. But like any siblings, we have had our share of quarrels.

So today was spent watching the Buckeyes handily defeat Northwestern (a three-peat to the National Championship is now out of the question, but a Bowl berth is still entirely likely). Then eating a feast after which I took a nap. After

the nap, we watched all of the little ones open their gifts that were given to them before the departure. Later on, my cousin's best friend stopped by to deliver a rather expensive Build-A-Bear (or penguin as the case may be) and we played some Phase 10. I kept getting skipped time after time (by the same person) while another player continued on her way and eventually won the entire game. Not very strategically minded I must say. So, a bit of Christmas cheer arrived a bit early. May God bless the little family as they make their way WAY North to Alaska.