

Busiest Weekend EVER! Part Two

(continued from a previous blog post)

So here's a recap of Sunday – church, brunch, Hannah Montana movie – and that is where I left off.

So we get to the Hannah Montana movie, and of course our 9-month-old son wakes up from his nap just in time for the movie (couldn't be awake to play at church, couldn't be awake to indulge in brunch, alas – that's always the way when you have kids – they sleep thru everything good, and I swear it's a rule – they always wake when the irony is thick!) But, because the Hannah Montana movie is a musical, our 3 youngest were kept too busy to perform their usual awful antics at the movie theater. It was a girly movie, especially with a double love story plot, but our little boy is only 9-months-old, so he didn't notice the girlishness. Instead he loved the musical interludes, and he clapped to each one enthusiastically. For some reason, and I've written about this before, the movie theater turns our normally sweet 2-year-old into a little stripper. Luckily, by the time the idea to take her clothes off occurred to her today, it was near the end of the movie, so she only got as far as taking off her socks and shoes – although she did make sure to note (yell) while doing so, “Don't look at me – I take clothes off!” Ok, Disney, if you don't want people looking, why are you taking your clothes off? Such is the logic of a 2-year-old, I guess.

We had no major spills this time (I'm referring to our last experience when we saw Monsters Vs. Aliens and we somehow dumped an entire soft drink into the lady's purse who was sitting behind us – major oops!), and today our baby was on his best behavior as well because of all the music in the movie – something that I think saved us as far as our 3

youngest kids' behavior at the movies today. As for the movie itself, I enjoyed it more than I did Monsters Vs. Aliens, probably because I actually got to watch this one. But an extra nice surprise for me was the country music add-ins – surprise performances from Taylor Swift and my favorite group, Rascal Flatts. They sang one of their best songs acoustically as if they were relatives just sitting around jamming at a family get-together (can this be MY family get-together?), and it was thoroughly enjoyable. Miley Cyrus even showed her country roots in a song which attempts to revive line-dancing; I guess kids these days (now I sound like I'm 80 – GREAT, when did THAT happen?!?) have a dance they do to this song, but whatever, I kind of liked the song. Overall, I truly enjoyed the country theme that was abundant in this movie – groovin' country music, gorgeous farm fields, cowboys ropin' horses... what's not to like? There was also a surprise (for me) appearance by Jan Levinson Gould from the tv show, The Office. Of course in this movie, she wasn't Jan – she was some southern belle who played Miley's dad's love interest – almost as far away from Jan as one could be, but I still enjoyed the Office reference. Also, keep in mind that this is a Disney film, so there are LOTS of prat-fallish types of humor, as well as recurring movie themes. For example, 'lobster trouble' (ala Splash, circa 1984), 'switching identities for different dinner dates' (ala Mrs. Doubtfire, circa 1993), 'major celebrity comes in to save a town' (ala Wayne's World 2, circa 1993 or ala Mystery, Alaska circa 1999), it's always best to be yourself' (ala... wow, WAY TOO MANY TO MENTION – take your pick...)

So anyway, I have to (reluctantly) admit that I was pleasantly surprised with the Hannah Montana movie – plenty of stuff in this one for the parents as well as the tweens and even the stripping two-year-olds. But the movie wasn't as plot-less as I had hoped – in other words, we didn't get home until 2:55 – just 20 short minutes before we had to leave for a class we had signed up for through church. So for the next 20 minutes

we scrambled around – letting dogs out, repacking diaper bags, changing diapers, etc. We arrived at our class pretty much on time, though a bit exhausted, thank you very much!

The class was great! We learned a lot about our church – their beliefs, their history, as well as their foundations for building a relationship with Christ – a very well-spent 3 hours. And we got to meet other couples at our table too – which is memorable for me because they were surprised to learn we had 4 kids – and I quote, “You don’t look old enough to have 4 kids!” NICE!

Following the class was a great dinner of homemade pasta provided by a local chef. Following the delicious dinner was a tour of the north campus of our church – we worship in the south campus, so it was nice to learn the ins and outs of the north campus – so awesome! Our oldest daughter was so excited to show us where her Sunday school was held, and their rooms for youth were VERY impressive! There was a room with a stage for youth productions, and it even had backstage areas, which is almost more than I can say for one of our community theater’s stages, haha! Also, there was a game room with multiple foosball tables and ‘carpet ball’ – something new to me, but a game I’d definitely like to try! One of the youth rooms had state-of-the-art stage lights and restaurant-style booths for kids to ‘hang out’ in... Overall, it was a fun evening, and I learned a lot. But, as became common for today, we had to rush from the church class in order to be home in time for the community theater’s play reading committee meeting and my much anticipated Cubs game. I was looking forward to this game for days. It was a long series (most are 3 game, some are 2 game, this one was 4 game) against the Cubs rival – the St. Louis Cardinals, with whom the Cubs are vying for first place. The game was at night, which is rare for a Sunday, so I was VERY excited about rounding out my weekend with such a game. But alas, the darn rain had its way, and the game was postponed. So only play

reading meeting to look forward to for me – at least I didn't have to rush the meeting and kick people too hard to leave my house since there was no Cub's game! And for once, I think we actually achieved a lot at the play reading committee meeting. Probably because of the fact that there were only 4 of us in attendance – but hey, maybe that 's what needs to be done in order to achieve something... too many people get in each others way, I guess. It will be interesting to see what the absent members think of the decisions the four of us made while they were absent – I hope the decisions stick!

In summary, a great, if extremely exhausting weekend. Come on now, would I have it any other way?

A wet, snowy journey home

It seems as if yesterday I skipped over Saturday morning, so I guess I will go back to it before skipping ahead to Sunday. Saturday morning several of us met at Ritzy's (did I get that right?) for breakfast. For those who weren't there, they somehow interpreted a party of 12 as a party of 20, so here were five tables put together in a C shape. Most people sat together, but Jamiahsh and I kind of sat alone on the opposite side, though in my defense there was only one seat between C and I. The eldest girls and their cousin Austin had some fun being little animals under the table. The look on J's face when he was caught unawares one time was priceless- sorry J! ☐

Following breakfast (oh yes, the food was good) L's family bid farewell and headed out. The rest of us headed back to C and L's house. The girls invited J and myself into their room to play with their pet rats. Now, I never had rats growing up, but we did have hamsters, gerbils and guinea pigs at various

times so I was familiar with rodent pets and didn't freak like the preschool teacher mentioned in T's blog. I was happy when they didn't relieve themselves on me during this playtime as often happens with rodents. After we had enough of the rats, T took us into their closet and showed us some Viewmaster (R.I.P.) slides on the ceiling using their projector. Call me old-fashioned, but I think the whole point of the Viewmaster was lost by using the projector, that of the images in 3D. I think we went through their entire library. Finally, T and S put on a puppet show for J and me, during which time I was called away and we finished organizing our fun activity- see previous blog entry.

So... Sunday rolled around and I got up and showered, then went to Mickey D's for a small breakfast before church. Too bad for me it was 10:28 and they had just closed breakfast. I'm I the only one who thinks anything before 11AM should be considered breakfast? I must be in the minority, else why would McD's have changed to 10:30 so long ago and stuck with it? So breakfastless, I headed to the house. Fortunately I had bought a box of Crunch and Munch at the dollar store the previous day. That worked.

We headed to their church, which I had to admit was pretty nice. I'm not sure I liked their pastor's preaching style, but that's probably because I'm used to my own pastor constantly on the move while he gives his sermons. I did enjoy the worship time though. Following this service T, who had gone to children's church was waiting for us- apparently grade school kids can be trusted to be let out on their own, or maybe their teachers were still watching, I don't know. The younger ones still needed to be retrieved from their rooms though. After church, we headed to a hotel by the turnpike for brunch. There was no waiting time to be seated as there were plenty of seats, but there was definitely some waiting to get the food. I would have to rate this meal lower than Saturday's breakfast unfortunately, but at least I could eat

as much as I wanted since it was a buffet.

Back at the house again, C and L pulled out their Office board game and we played. Unfortunately, I learned that seeing every episode only once, including deleted scenes for seasons 2-4, did not mean in any way shape or form that I would remember the details. I did manage to get three Dundies, though once by a complete guess and once because C pretty much gave the answer away (thanks!). L won the day though, but even C earned more than me even though he took the harder ("regional manager") questions while I barely managed the "assistant to the regional manager" ones. Oh, well. Finally, they had to do some cleaning for the meeting that night and I bid my farewell. This, however, doesn't end the post...

As most of my readers here are well aware, Sunday was a day of rain, starting after brunch. For much of the trip driving was fine, but as it got later it started coming down pretty hard. The worst parts were the trucks- just approaching one would cause a torrent of water to be unleashed onto the windshield from their wheels. Passing them was a nail-biting experience. Remember- the speed limit for trucks is 15MPH less than for cars until Illinois. Speaking of Illinois, when I got there- you think I'm going to say traffic, don't you? Well, traffic can be a hassle, but I lucked out. While there were some traffic spots, for the most part it was fairly light for suburban Chicago. Maybe people just weren't driving because of the sleet. That's right- the rain turned into sleet and snow. Wonderful. No longer was it a nail-biting experience just to pass a truck- now just driving was problematic. But as I said, traffic wasn't bad at all and I did manage to make it home in one piece. Next time I think I will check the weather report before I leave, even if it might mean having to leave earlier.

So, that was my weekend, how was yours? ☐

Trickle-Down Crabonomics

Sunday is usually my favorite day of the week, but our last one ranks low on a list of my favorites. First, the kids started out the day by being terrible. Our 4-year-old Sammie was excited to see the snow – all 20 flakes of it that fell that morning – and she asked her still-half-asleep parents if we could go sledding. My husband groggily mumbled yes, apparently thinking she was saying something else. Later when we were up and about, I told him what he had agreed to, and so we then had to find something else comparable in my daughter's mind to sledding. Giving them an outside toy, we bundled the 3 oldest kids and sent them outside, the oldest of whom wanted to stay inside – which began *her* downward spiral. She went outside reluctantly, but as soon as she came in, she threw a major tantrum about who-knows-what. This set off the other two – our toddler was upset because her almost-9-year-old sister was acting totally out of her mind, and our 4-year-old... well, I guess it's just that she never misses an opportunity to act like a nut. My husband dryly called it "Trickle-Down Crabonomics", which I find the perfect term to describe the volatile cause-and-effect relationship between siblings in a large family.

Somehow, we were ready to leave the house for our favorite Sunday brunch, and we were only 7 minutes past schedule, not bad. The kids cheered up in the car, and they were good during the entire meal, but unfortunately, I can't say the same for the quality of the food. It seems our favorite brunch has gone down a few steps in quality, to say the least. They used to feature an all-you-can-eat brunch buffet with delicious selections that varied from the usual scrambled eggs and bacon usually featured at these things. They even

had a little table with chicken nuggets, peanut butter and jelly, and pizza for the kids. They had a make-your-own-omlette bar, which had a variety of ingredients, from spinach and feta cheese to onion and green peppers. Our favorite was the pasta bar – the chef makes fresh pasta right in front of you, and the alfredo is simply delicious – something even all the kids agreed upon. We've been visiting this brunch for about a year now, and slowly over time, there's been a downgrade in quality. At first it wasn't that noticeable – cloth napkins going to paper, the end of the kids' table, little things here and there. But now, it's down to a line of silver servers containing things like scrambled eggs, bacon, biscuits and gravy and a make-your-own omelet bar with about 4 ingredients: one kind of cheese, bacon, mushrooms, salsa. No more onion, no spinach, no feta... and certainly no pasta bar, our favorite part. And I never even got to try the marinara. Well, anyway, that's enough about that – another victim of this economy, I guess. I know their menu is based upon the number of reservations they get, so maybe if the reservations somehow increase, so will the quality of the food again.

So after the disappointing buffet – which usually means I don't have to worry about cooking the rest of the day since we're all so full, this was not the case today – it was time to watch one of the biggest Chicago Bears games in recent years. It was for first place and against their rivals, the Green Bay Packers. The Packers scored more than 12 times as many points as the Bears did, and my kids weren't very good during the game, so it was difficult for their father to even watch the slaughter. Our 2-year-old fell asleep early, which we thought was a good thing, but she was woken up by her oldest sister during the battle we had about her cleaning the bathroom that was trashed during the sleepover she had had Friday night. So now we had a late-napping toddler, and we spent the rest of the day fighting about the bathroom with our oldest. Next thing I know, it's time for bed for everyone,

and we never even got any parent-alone-time, ugh.

Oh, well, just because the day wasn't all I was looking forward to still doesn't make it a "bad day". It was a weekend, which means family day, and I don't think those could ever be bad... not like yesterday when I got to Walmart, unloaded two little kids, did some shopping and realized I forgot my credit card. Had to set my stuff aside, bundle up the kids and go out to the car, but it wasn't there either – it was at home. So after re-loading the kids, going home, and re-unloading the kids at Walmart, I was more than a little irritated, not to mention *extremely* rushed now because I had to get to the school to pick up my oldest. So no, I didn't get all the shopping done, I was late to pick up my daughter, but at least I got her to Brownies on time. Then I went to my meeting for 20 minutes, then left for a Brownie patches ceremony, then back to my meeting, kid in tow... it was a hectic day, and I'm glad today is date night so I can spend some quality time alone with my husband and unwind. Only problem there is that no housework gets done on date night, so big surprise, I'm behind yet again, sigh... But then again, you probably guessed that based upon my lack of blog posting!