

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE BEST!

Today is my husband's birthday! Poor guy, he has to work. It stinks that when you become an adult, you can't take the day off on your birthday. When you think about it, each person would get only one day per year, it could be easily proven when your day is and if you've already taken it, but I guess in larger workplaces, it wouldn't be very economical when there are lots of employees. Plus, it's not like you can take a break from every responsibility in life for a day – though that would be nice! There's no 'off' switch on the kids, the pets still need to be cared for, bills are due, errands to run... the list goes on... so why draw the line at having a day off work?

But anyway, my husband is going to take a half day off tomorrow so we can celebrate just the two of us; and we're both really looking forward to that – I just have to make it through today. I've had a terribly stressful day so far, but I shouldn't vent about it to my husband on his birthday... so instead I've recorded a time table of everything that's been going on in our house for the last hour. Normally, this wouldn't be that big of a deal, but since I'm now up going to the bathroom half the night and our kids spazzed about going to bed last night and kept everyone up late, today I was really looking forward to some downtime and maybe even a nap. I was hoping to just sit here and write a blog post or two, mostly about how wonderful my husband is on his birthday... but instead I find myself venting about the kids because they're being really needy. Not bad really, but I am so tired! I don't know how I'm ever going to find the energy to take them to the carnival tonight! So anyway, my hour that I've set aside to blog before lunch has gone something like this:

11:24 – getting youngest something to drink (*and there's been lots of stuff before this, this is just where I got frustrated enough to notate everything*)

11:27 – sat down again

11:29-11:34 – setting up youngest outside at the ‘picnic’

11:34-11:38 – sat down to blog

11:38 – a request comes in for more Pringles

11:39 – After some discussion, it’s decided that if they eat their sandwiches, they can have popsicles instead of Pringles

11:40 – whats this about giving their lunchmeat to the dog?!?

11:42 – About this time, I should be getting up to go take a peek out the window to see if I can determine the fate of the lunchmeat. But I have a big long day ahead of me, and it’d be nice if I could sit for a FEW mins! I will just have to trust the kids to tell me the truth. I have a bad feeling about this.

11:45 – The back door opens. This time it’s the oldest with an update – “Sammie stepped on dog poop and she doesn’t have shoes on.” UGH – I make a quick note of the time in my blog and head outside to clean it up.

11:46 – turned the hose on right on my sock-and-shoed-foot while washing dog poop off of Sammie’s foot

11:51 – Friend shows up for help in carrying furniture – ringing the doorbell and making the dog go completely crazy. Shoot! I totally forgot he was coming today! Now my husband has EXTRA responsibilities on his birthday!

11:55 – UPS guy pulls up, dog still going crazy from friend stopping by

12:08 – Wow – have they really let me sit and type this for a whole 13 minutes?!? Uh, oh – back door opens again – “I have something in my hair.” – Guess who? Surprise – it’s the same kid who stepped in dog poop.

12:10 – bug detangled from hair

And the day is just beginning. So it will go on like this, and on, and on... So now maybe you have some insight as to why it takes me a good hour to write one blog post or get much of anything accomplished around here, really. But on to my birthday wishes for my hubby, since I only have 5 minutes left of my blogging hour.

So I have absolutely NO idea what to get him. I'd like him to have a gift to open, even though he says he doesn't care. Everything he wants (and that's not much, he's not really into material things) he says he buys for himself and he'd be happier knowing that no money was spent on buying him any birthday presents. But the way I am, I like to give gifts; I like people to have something to open and to see them get gifts on their birthdays, so I feel badly that he doesn't have anything. I was going to go out today and get something, but I really can't think of anything to get him... I've had some good ideas in the past, but this year I'm at a loss... So I will just try to keep the kids good and out of his hair, which is actually much more difficult than it sounds for me right now. But my husband said earlier today that he wants to make my day extra special and good. He woke up early with the kids (as usual) and had the dishwasher emptied and the kids' breakfasts cleaned up by the time I got up. Only the most wonderful man like my husband would go out of his way to make *my* day extra special on *his* birthday! And that's why I say Happy Birthday to the BEST!!!

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## **Birthday Wishes To The Best**

Since he so kindly listed several of us in a post proclaiming us as THE BEST, I thought it only fitting to return the favor. I'm sure I have said most of this in previous entries, but it bears repeating. He is just the best director, co-actor, playwright (well the only one I have known personally... but he is a darn fine one), source of encouragement, and most of all, friend that anyone could ever ask for. It is really astonishing that I have known him for only about two years but it seems like forever (and I mean that in the best possible sense). I met him at auditions for our theatre's production

of *Grease* and I remember the first thing he said to me. "I know you from somewhere." I was working at Wal-Mart at the time. "That's it."

During the course of the show's run, he made a point of asking if I was going to audition for the next show, *The Odd Couple*. I really was not sure because I had not done a non-musical show in years. It really did not take long to decide after I spoke with my other source of encouragement that very night about it. She told me that if I did not she would hunt me down and kick my posterior (not that word but I try to run a family-friendly blog here). Anyway, I was cast in the role of Vinnie to my great satisfaction and I was told by the actor who played Felix that I stole some of his thunder. And my involvement with the theatre only increased.

Chris has just been so great to work with through his excellent direction and professionalism. I have been privileged to be cast in two shows that he has written himself: *The Clinic* and *Idol Night at the Karaoke Place* (the second one... which I know some people get tired of hearing me go on about as well as allowing our Liswathistani friend contribute to this blog for time to time). As well as his direction and roles in *School House Rock* which was memorable for several things not the least for it being my first lead part ever. I know it sounds silly but every time I have been in a show and Chris and his wife are not involved, it is like there is something missing (something I guess I need to get away from).

Much more important is his role as a great husband, father, and friend. His family has always come first and he is not afraid to share time together with his family and his friends on our weekly game nights. After all, he is a big kid at heart himself. So... Happy Birthday, my friend and may you have many more.

.. whatever age you may be.

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# Lights, Let there be lights

I'm running the light board for our community theater's upcoming performance. It has been a challenge to get the stage lit just right. First when we were setting it up 2 spots were burned out, and we didn't have any replacement bulbs. Now these aren't bulbs you can go down to your local hardware store and pick up, no they have to be ordered. I'm not even sure where to order one of them. I've never seen its kind before.

Anyway, we are getting it together, but there is still a spot on stage that I can only call cold. It just seems a little darker than the rest of the stage. I'm trying to figure out if a bit of color in that area would help, but I'm not sure at this point. I guess I'll have to go back early tomorrow and check again. Oh well.

The show went much better tonight. Pace was very good, and the lines were almost there. The songs, well they sounded good to me. I'm no singer, and I'm no judge of singing. I can't tell a flat from a sharp, a good note from a bad, except when I see the face of the singer cringe. There was no cringing tonight, so it must have been good.

It is absolutely amazing how a show comes together so quickly. They are worked on for weeks, and that final week of rehearsals you can really see the shows start to jell. A lot more fun watching from the outside. I know from experience, it isn't as much fun for the actors, until everything falls into place.

Here's to more place falling tomorrow.

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# Third Trimester Blues

Well, it's that time again, the lovely third trimester of pregnancy. It crept up on me really fast while I was waiting for the 'golden age' of pregnancy to kick in – the second trimester. Except that I never felt as great as they say you should feel during the second trimester, so while I was waiting, time passed on by and here we are in the third trimester. I guess I should be happy that the pregnancy is almost all over, but it's hard to look at it that way. This is the time when babyitis kicks into overdrive. The yearning to hold and sniff and care for the newborn baby becomes so overwhelming, it's intense. And then there's the lethargy and the grumpiness. I just don't feel like doing anything lately! It's really difficult to not be grumpy while chasing after kids all day when all I really want to do is sit on my butt and play video games. But if I were even to allow myself to indulge in some "doing nothing" time, I know I would be interrupted constantly by needy kids – kind of like when I sit down to type a blog post! And then there's the guilt... now that we're past the 85°+ heat wave, I feel like I should take the kids outside, but I'm just too tired! Besides, as much as I tell myself to let the housework go for a month or two, I still can't bring myself to actually let it happen. So by the time I'm done with my "dailies" (daily chores like laundry, meal making, picking up after kids, errands, etc), I have barely enough energy for anything extra like my long-gone daily walks. This week, I have to unpack the kids from their trip to Grandma's, but at least I got caught up on laundry while they were gone and lucky for me, Grandma sent them home with literally only 2 pieces of dirty laundry – NICE! The kids had a lot of sleeping to catch up on, so they've taken naps today, and I've gotten a lot done, so maybe tomorrow or

later this week we can get out and enjoy the beautiful weather. Our town's annual carnival is in town starting tomorrow, so I know we'll be up there once or twice. They have Dippin' Dots, ice cream super-frozen into little balls, and it's SOO good! It's my favorite thing to begin with, so during pregnancy, it's a MUST-HAVE!

The good news is that my mood seems to be improving. I actually wrote the beginning of this post weeks ago – I just haven't had time to finish it until now. And now that I'm finishing it, my feelings have changed a little. Instead of feeling the usual 'my-body-will-never-be-back-to-normal' frustrations, it seems like the birth of our baby is right around the corner; actually I have to start doing the weekly doctor visits already! And I feel less grumpy than I did a few weeks ago, and even less sore in my body, though physically even more tired. The difference is that instead of not feeling like doing anything, now I feel more like doing things, but I physically cannot because I am so huge. I have gained over 50 lbs with this pregnancy. Perfectly normal, I know, especially with the insatiable appetite I encountered between 3-5 months, but things like bending over to pick things up off the floor have become impossible. You wouldn't believe how long it takes me to put on lace-up shoes without help – which stinks because those feel much better on my aching feet than my sandals. And turning over in bed has evolved beyond the 3-point-turns into the 5+ point turns – I kind of have to scoot in a circle until I'm turned over... not fun for me; must be incredibly annoying to my bedmate – between me and our kids who wake up very early and sometimes throughout the night, he doesn't get much sleep! And with all this fun comes the feeling of dread that I know labor is just around the corner... I sure hope this baby is easier on me than my second child was during labor... long story short, she took forever then came really fast, which meant that the 'window of opportunity' where I was supposed to get the pain medicine opened and closed too quickly for anyone to do anything for

me, leaving me with a 'natural labor' – and NOT by choice! But kid #2 has been trouble from the time I could feel her kick right up until this morning's tantrum, so as I always say, hopefully she is one of a kind!

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## Fun in South Bend Indiana

Of all the places to find fun, who would have thought that middle of nowhere, IN would be such a sight? Every summer, we meet my mom there about 4 times to swap the kids. She'll take them for a week, twice a summer, so because South Bend just happens to be about as close to halfway for each of us to drive, that is where we meet. We used to meet at a Wendy's just off the expressway, but our horizons have broadened, and my husband and I have been venturing off the beaten path to discover new things to see and do in the area. We found a good restaurant called Eleni's with amazing gyros and saganaki, two of our favorite dishes. We also found an authentic Greek restaurant called Elia's right down the street, but oddly enough, they are almost never open. They have more exotic Greek food like stuffed grape leaves, moussaka, and baklava, YUM! Their food is excellent, though we've only been able to eat there once because of their strange hours and seemingly constant family vacations. After eating and getting the kids back from my mom, we headed to the [Potawatomi Zoo](#). The zoo is a really cool size, perfect for our family of 3 small children and a now VERY pregnant woman. Not much walking to do at all, yet it has a good amount of animals, native and exotic, all types and sizes from lions, tigers, and bears, to monkeys, bison, alligators, parrots, and red pandas. I will have to mention that the Potawatomi Zoo did not seem very well-kept. A gardener in that place could have done wonders as there were many overgrown weeds, trees, and

shrubbery, some even blocking what could have been better views of the animals! One tree was so untrimmed it was blocking a drinking fountain! But as I said, it's a very cute little zoo, and they reciprocate with our home zoo, the Toledo Zoo, so our admission price was free and they don't charge for parking. I was surprised to see that the zoo wasn't very crowded seeing as how it was a Saturday in June under 90°... That zoo could really use a Jack Hanna to fix it up and get the publicity rolling – I see a lot of potential for it, but it does need some work.

After the zoo, we had kids begging for 'one more fun thing' (remember, they had been used to the fun of Grandma's for just short of a week!), my husband whips out Mr. GPS, and apparently he has a phone book feature on him, so from your car, you can find gas stations, restaurants, and most importantly, fun places and attractions to visit!

So KUDOS belong to Mr. GPS this time! Instead of getting us lost and chuckling at us electronically, he led us right to this strip mall that was like a step back in time, it was really strange. It looked like it was right out of 1983. I don't know how to explain it – we should have taken pictures. It would have been a great place to film a movie set in the early '80's, took me right back to my childhood. Anyway, in this strip mall was a place called Mega Play. From the outside, it looked closed down – they really need to get themselves a big bright 'open' sign. But once inside, it was a huge space where they had tons of video games, pinball machines, indoor minigolf, bouncy castles and tunnels for the kids, lots of ride-ons for toddlers, and right out of 1983 – a ball pit! The ball pit had a pyramid in the middle of it that the kids climb up with ropes and once they got the hang of it, they had a ball – cheesy pun intended. That pyramid gave me a flashback of playing on the same thing when I was little. I think they used to have them in KMarts, and my husband agreed. It was neat to see vintage video games and pinball

machines also. The arcade ATARI games they had in one bouncy castle area were free to play – they had Kangaroo, Pole Position, Asteroids, and some shooting game I hadn't heard of. I walked over to the pinball machine area because days earlier, we visited this cool pinball shop in a suburb of Toledo. The guy started it as a hobby, but it grew into a store, and he had all kinds of pinball machines, new and mostly vintage. He had titles on display like Demolition Man, Star Wars, The Shadow, and Hercules (an older game – it was HUGE!). He even had this Looney Tunes racing game (not pinball) that was really vintage and one-of-a-kind... it was cool to see. I wonder if the pinball guy outside of Toledo is familiar with Mega Play? But anyway, back to Mega Play... it was a huge, wide-open strip mall space that had tons of games, ride-ons, and bouncy castles packed into it – lots of fun there, but still spacey so you didn't feel closed in. It was the exact concept my husband and I had in mind for our own business of the same type we started a few years ago. We ended up having to sell the business because it was too labor intensive for the time and staff we had however. Too bad Mega Play is all the way in South Bend, or we could challenge our putt-putt-ing friends to the mini-golf course ☐

After Mega Play, it was time to find something to eat, and before we knew it, we were out of South Bend and into the country. The kids started getting crazier and crazier, and we vowed to stop at the very next restaurant we found before someone passed out or went insane – and some of us were close to either condition! So, we stopped at a restaurant called Dakota's in Elkhart IN, and I highly recommend it if you're ever out that way. They had the best cornbread, and their steak and cheese sandwich was simply AWESOME! They also have barbecue items, and they happened to have karaoke the night we went... it wasn't too intrusive though. They were in another room and we didn't even know it was karaoke at first until the audience began applauding. The DJ hosting the karaoke was singing a few songs also, and he was pretty good, so he

actually sounded like a recording with a live quality. I don't how often they have karaoke there, but their food is great, prices reasonable, nice atmosphere, and the staff is amazingly friendly. Keep in mind I say this coming from a super-friendly town myself, so we're used to the usual chit-chat when we go out to eat – but people in Elkhart were *exceptionally* friendly.

Overall, not a bad place to spend a day – fun and very inexpensive to boot. Too bad with gas prices the way they are we can't consider South Bend for a normal day trip for our family – there is plenty to do! Maybe we'll wander around some more the next time we meet Grandma there in July...

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## **Murder on Friday the 13th**

With the kids out of town and Friday the 13th upon us, we found it to be the perfect time to break out a game we found at the thrift store months ago – a Murder Mystery Party. After a check to make sure all the contents were there, we started inviting friends to attend a murder mystery party at our house:

***Dear Name of Character Here,***

**Hart's untimely death casts suspicion on us all. The police report has already been filed (see enclosed). We must meet quickly in order to solve the murder and clear our good names.**

**Hosted By:**

**on Friday, June 13 at 6:00pm**

**Please RSVP by Wednesday, June 11**

**Please bring a dish to share – no poison**

We sent this email to each guest along with the police report detailing the homicide. We began with our game night

regulars, then when some of them couldn't make it, we tried to cast accordingly. The casting, by the way, just happened to work out perfectly. Originally, we were going to have to make a male character female, but once we switched some things around based on which guests were coming, it all worked out. And in retrospect, the swapping male for female thing would not have worked well at all! My husband and I were originally going to be the married couple, but those characters were a few decades older than us, and the characters we did end up playing had a secret infatuation with each other, so we were both pleased to discover this in the course of the game. Unfortunately, when my turn came to come up with a 'formal accusation', evidence dictated that I point my finger at my husband, aka, secret crush, but that's how you play the game. Each guest came in costume and character and stayed that way for the roughly 3 hours we played the game. All in all, a lot of fun, and we've already had several people who were disappointed that they couldn't make it. So, we'll have to scour the thrift stores and / or the internet in hopes of finding another one of these Murder Mystery games to play... providing we can get all (almost 4!) kids out of the house for an evening again... hmmm, that might be the REAL mystery!

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## Leaking Trains

Recently there was a news item about a train that spilled its cargo – with a twist. Instead of the usual hazardous chemicals that spill from trains like hydrochloric and phosphoric acid, acetone, liquid soap, antifreeze, fuel, coal, and herbicide; this particular train spilled its contents of tallow, also known as animal fat. Unlike other hazardous spills, this one was dangerous in a different way than possible human ingestion of chemicals. The fat on the roadway

caused it to be slippery which led to numerous car crashes. To make matters worse, apparently the rush-hour vehicles got the tallow on their tires and tracked it around the entire area, causing more complications in cleanup. And you thought rush-hour traffic was aggravating enough all by itself!

### *Animal Fat Leak Wreaks Havoc For Commuters*

ELMHURST, Illinois – An eastbound Union Pacific freight train carrying a load of animal fat sprung a leak as it passed through DuPage County Friday, dousing intersections between Elmhurst and Lombard with the slippery goo.

Police departments in the area reported numerous crashes that occurred as a result of the substance, also called tallow.

Tallow is the rendered form of beef or lamb fat. It is used for soap, cooking and bird feed.

Hazardous materials teams from various fire departments were sent to numerous sites trying to determine the best method to deal with the spill, said Union Pacific spokeswoman Donna Kush.

“We’re incredibly sorry for the trouble this has caused, but more importantly we’re working on a cleanup solution and we’re working as quickly as we can,” she said. “The hazmat officials are out there to ensure it’s handled correctly.”

What seemed to work the best for roads where the fat had spilled was sand to soak up the goo and provide motorists with traction, said Metra spokeswoman Judy Pardonnet.

Crews continued to add sand to the roads throughout the evening, she said.

Kush said there appeared to be a “heavy concentration” of the spilled fat in the Lombard area. Police officials in Elmhurst said they were working on several accidents as a result of the leak as well. Kush said the leak spanned miles.

Because cars carried the fat over all three sets of tracks, all trains were running at walking speed between Elmhurst and Lombard, Pardonnet said.

Commuter trains were running about 30 minutes late at the start of the evening rush hour.

Some trains were delayed as much as two hours initially, she said.

Saturday train traffic was expected to be normal, she said.

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## A good Father's Day

I only got to see one of my 4 daughters today. I did get calls from the other's and my granddaughter in Florida. So it was a good day. My eldest is waiting to take her old man to dinner, but since I was working on a play, it will have to wait. I am glad to be doing the lighting for "Little Women" at the [Williams County Community Theater](#). If you have a the time to see a show in the next couple of weeks, give this one a shot. Our little community theater does a very nice job on all the shows, and this one will be no exception. If you read this blog, stop by the light booth and say hi to the guy with the beard. That will be me. I'm still trying to reach the many lurkers here, you know who you are...

My youngest has a small role in this. Theater is one thing I share with my two youngest daughters. I'm glad we were able to do that. Running the lights gives me a chance to see her every performance.

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# Putting It Together (OOPS...Wrong Show)

Well with less than a week before opening night of [Little Women](#), I must say it has come a very long way even in just the last two rehearsals. Thursday night's practice did not go well at all (but I have been involved in worse. As our director stated today, it was indeed time for a wake up call. The cast is all wonderful and very professional, but in my opinion the time has come for the jitters to start in for everyone and just need to be reminded that the hard part is over and the fun can begin. We are all ready but it is not time to take that preparedness and have fun, relax, and just do it. This afternoon was actually the first time we had everything in place (cast, musicians, props, set placement, and everything else involved in a theatrical production... including lighting... THANKS [justj](#) and Carol). The first act took an hour-and-a-half to complete and the second act just under that. Although I have never seen a production of this show, from reading the script, sitting in rehearsals, etc. I do not see how it can possibly be much shorter. There is very little in set changing so nothing to be done there. But with repetition over the next 3 evenings (we do have an audience on Thursday night for final dress) it will all come together. My big faux pas occurred when Mr. B came and actually PUSHED me downstage to be where I was supposed to be during one of my brilliant scenes, but he did mention that he cracked up at my final stage position (but I will not give that away for those who do not know). I will not forget where I am supposed to be from now on. Nor will I comment on my costume for the show that is a return to some costuming I have undertaken in past productions (and it does need to be altered not the least for a draft I felt). But I do

get to play an evil villain □ which everyone so loves to hate but am “so good at” (and the last three are NOT my words).

[Little Women \(Collector's Edition\)](#) 

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## Time travel again

In talking with friend, and of course responses to my other post on time travel, I am recalling more movies and TV shows that involved some sort of time travel.

I'm going to get the various STAR TREK shows and movies that had some time travel in them out of the way now.

I'm just pulling these off the top of my head, so I'm sure I miss one or two (or more), I'm going after my favorites, not all of them (There were many).

Since I had to stop watching the ENTERPRISE show when it moved to cable only, I can't comment much on the time traveling adversary that was in that show. The last season I saw, had Captain Archer looking at a view of the future... I didn't see anything after that and I don't know what happened.

In Star Trek the original series, there were many time travel shows, some with the Enterprise sling shotting around a star or the Sun to go into the past. Others with other agents that allowed them to visit the past.

Of them all my favorites are “Assignment Earth” with Agent Gary Seven. I assumed that this may have been setting up a spinoff show, but I don't recall anything coming from that.

And the “City on the Edge of Forever”. Going back and changing history based on saving the life of one person. Was this a show to say how important the acts of one could be, or a

morality show to say we should not delve into things we don't comprehend?

That's enough of the TV shows, my favorite time travel STAR TREK was the Star Trek IV – The Voyage home. Lots of funny stuff in that one. Russian on a US Aircraft Carrier (the Enterprise) during the height of the cold war. Spock with the whales. Scotty giving the engineer the formula for Transparent Aluminum, or trying to talk to the computer. Just a fun show.

Of course the Next Generation got into the act of time travel. I don't recall as many of those so I guess they didn't make much of an impression on me. But the First Next Generation movie used the "NEXUS" to travel around time? Of course Kirk was brought to the future to save the day. Then in the Star Trek Next GEN: First Contact. The new Enterprise fights the Borg and goes back in time to the first Faster than light travel from Earth. I found that show very interesting in spots, but generally don't like shows with the Borg. Just my preference.

One of my favorite time travel Star Treks has to be on Deep Space Nine "Trials and Tribble-ations. Some of the crew from Deep Space Nine go back in time and interact with the original Star Trek Series, Trouble with Tribbles episode. Worf's line about the Klingons on the space station is worth watching it one more time...

Since I can't travel backward in time, only forward at a set speed, I guess that's enough for now. I was just a blogging fool this evening.