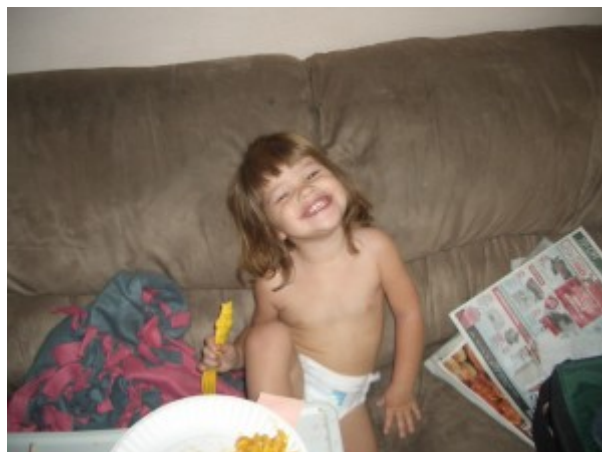


Me Want Cookie

Jamiahsh, a fellow blogger friend of mine, had a point when he noted that it's been a long time since one of my famous anti-Walmart posts. I hate the place, but as a mom of 4, I don't have any other options that compare to the time and money I reluctantly have to admit I save shopping at Walmart. It's just their dirty tricks that drive me crazy, and I've ranted about those long enough – if you're interested, flip through my blog posts and search for Walmart. Right now, I need to address my most current Walmart disappointment: no more free cookies for the kids.

Those of you who have kids know that Walmart used to give out cookies at the bakery as a sort of rescue for tiresome kids whose parents are taking too long with their shopping. I shop at Walmart once, sometimes twice a week. It is a familiar habit for my two-year-old to get her cookie at the bakery while we shop. If I'm lucky, it will keep her busy until I hit the dairy section. But the other day during my weekly visit to Walmart, imagine my surprise when the lady in the bakery said they didn't have any cookies. Not only that, she thinks they won't have them anymore, ever. She wasn't sure because the lady who usually handles the cookies (?) was on vacation. Sounds like a cop-out to me... I mean, is there really a lady who regularly handles the cookies? I think she just didn't want to have to tell this angel-face 'no cookie':



My daughter actually took it quite well... of course, I bought her a pack of donuts instead... It's not that I'm a softie, but I just don't think it's fair that a two-year-old should have to bear the brunt of a mega-company's policy change. They gave cookies every time before this, and she has had to sit in the shopping cart and be good and do her time, and now all of a sudden, no cookie? So I HAD to buy her a replacement treat, at least for this shopping trip. Maybe in the future, I'll try to prepare her ahead of time or just bring my own treat from home. But in the mean time, their little plan worked, didn't it? Lure all the housemoms over to the bakery to get free cookies for their kids... over time, they will grow to expect it, and then one day, no free cookies will cause them to *pay money* for something else for their kids – \$CA-CHING\$!

I admit it was a nice gesture on Walmart's part to offer the free cookies in the first place. Then again, we do spend enough over there; they should be able to afford it... But it was a nice little perk, and as I said, something for the kids to look forward to about shopping at Walmart... But in the end, it ended up being just another disappointment from our favorite big box retailer.

Our local non-Walmart grocery store still has free cookies for the kids, AND they're fresh baked... If I find more time and money, maybe I will make it a point to do more of our shopping over there...

How about your grocery store? Is it a small mom-and-pop-owned place or a big box retailer? Do they give free cookies to the kids?

Back to ()ELL...



The regular reader knows just what letter to place in the title parentheses to complete the picture of my day today. Some time ago I wrote about an experience at a school that left me passing over certain assignments for the next year. A couple of months ago took the challenge and subbed for that teacher again since most of those former ELL students were gone and was relieved that things had changed for the better, so when another ELL assignment popped up at that school I took it without a second thought. It was for a teacher I don't remember, but it shouldn't have been a problem. Well, we have second thoughts for a reason so taking the job without one was akin to famous last words like, "Nothing will go wrong; trust me."

So, at the beginning of the day I arrived and it was mentioned that it was a two-day assignment. What? *Two* days? I had to check my schedule again because I was sure it was only one day. The teacher, who was there but would be testing students, finished going over the plans with me and I went right to a computer. Yep- just one day. At that point I was actually hopeful there was a mistake and it was supposed to be two. By the end of the day I was glad it was not a mistake at all. For some reason the two-day absence was put in as two separate assignments- my guess being that the software they use cannot support multiple-day assignments as I have never seen a multi-day assignment posted. I had two such assignments a few months ago in this district, but it was put in manually as a different job number for each day which just serves to validate this theory. So apparently what happened was I got one day, another sub got the other day. I do hope she is up to it. Ironically, she was there today subbing for another ELL class, the one I had no trouble with earlier this year.

When going over the plans I was somewhat pleased to find that I would be covering three math classes. I expected the toughest would be 8th grade, so once that was over (it was the second class- 7th grade was the first) and things were still going, if not smooth, only slightly rough I thought it would be a pretty good day. The rough spot for 8th grade was really no more than the quick quiz at the beginning being anything but quick for a few students, making less time for going over homework and letting them get started on their assignment. So, after a two-period break I was ready for sixth grade math. Remember those famous last words? Ready- Uh-huh. This was the loudest and most complaining class I've had in the last couple of years with some boys who loved knocking over the books of each other while I wasn't looking. Sigh. They even complained when I didn't check in their homework. I mean, who complains about that?? Just take the extra day to have it done as a gift and keep quiet about it! Then the plans called for them to take a test which they had in their packets. Did you catch what was wrong with that sentence? In their packets. So what happens when some students couldn't find their packets and the teacher didn't leave behind extras? Well, I found out. I had three kids run to the office, which I only did because it was just down the hall, so someone in the office might take pity and make some copies for me. Then I found some students only had one of the pages. They had ripped the other page out, which had a prior assignment on the back. Back to the office? Not a chance- the secretaries suffered enough with the two runs (they only copied the first page last time) so I just marked down their names and let it go. I also forgot to thank them after school too when I checked out- oops. And throughout this there were some students who just would not stop talking. I needed this class *before* the two-period break, not after.

So after this class was a multi-grade language arts class. Needless to say, some of the 6th-graders from math were back for two more periods (block period). While not as bad as the

prior math class, it had its own challenges. 8th grade left after the first half to see counselors from their respective high schools they would go to next year, and that relieved some pressure but not all- remember 6th grade was still there and so was a very obnoxious 7th-grade girl who loved talking back and doing as little work as possible. After this class and a tutorial class (study hall) the day was finally over. Now I'm writing it up for you to enjoy too...

Checkup Time!

INSERT DISK HERE:



My son Christopher passed his 6 month baby checkup at the pediatrician with flying colors. If only adult physical tests were this easy – pass a block from hand to hand, pick up a raisin (which was promptly taken away because he's too little – where's the reward in that?), a turn of the head when your name is called... He has mastered all of it and is right where he should be developmentally. Except for one thing – sitting up. No I didn't forget the 'p' – he *has* mastered *spitting* up... haha. But he can't *sit* up unassisted yet, and he doesn't even seem to be close to doing so. The problem is that he

refuses to bend at the waist. If I can get him into a sitting position, (and that's a big IF!) he arches his back immediately and tries to stand. I tried to explain this to the nurse so she wouldn't think he is physically slow, but he lost points anyway. Never mind that he can use his legs to jump vigorously in his bouncer that hangs from the doorway, or that he can single-handedly pull and move a heavy dining room chair with his iron grip – he still loses points for not being able to sit unassisted. Oh well, if that's how they score it, that's how they score it. It's not like it bothers me at all; I actually find it amusing. I think he might be crawling and walking before he sits...

Other news from the doctor appointment is that he weighs 16 lbs. 13oz. which is in the 30 percentile for weight. An easy explanation of the percentile comparison is this: If you take 100 babies my son's age, 30 of them would be at his weight or lower and 70 of them would weigh more than he does. He is $27\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, which puts him in the 75th percentile for height. His head circumference is 45.2 cm which is exactly average. I think he is probably our most average-sized baby; our oldest was always small for her age and the two in the middle were huge – Disney was once in the 100th percentile for height! Just another example of how different kids are, even ones in the same family. My 4 children physically remind me of each other, yet it's so fun to watch their differences emerge as they learn and grow! Here are Disney and Christopher, my two youngest:



Giving The Customer What She Wanted

Today while at work, a young girl and her mother came through my line. The mother asked her 6 year-old daughter if she still remembered Morat from the Idol show. The little girl's eyes lit up and she very enthusiastically nodded her head. I could not pass up a golden opportunity to entertain a young fan so our friend from Liswathistan returned for a few minutes. He even asked if there was a song she would like to hear. She told Morat she would like to hear the "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." So Morat did his best and sang the song for the little people.

Morat just returned from Ton of Washing and see new owner America country. I also see Plumb Joe in other country for TV box or news web or something, I do not know what he do. But is Plumb Joe like the Bob from Idol show? They are both very strange people.

Ok... thank you, Morat. I just think it is wonderful that someone that young remembered a character from a show she saw when she was probably 4 years-old. Was he really that memorable?

You Live In Chicago If...

Even though I don't live in Chicago anymore (thank goodness because I'm not a big fan of crowds or traffic, two things

which help define the city!), I still appreciate the humor in the following forward sent to me by a relative who ironically also moved away from the Chicago area a few years ago. If you've ever lived in or near the 3rd largest city in the country, or even if you've just visited Chicago a few times, you will be able to appreciate the humor in the following one-liners:

If your local Dairy Queen is closed from September through May, you live in Chicago.

If you've worn shorts and a winter coat at the same time, you live in Chicago.

If you've had a telephone conversation using more Spanish than you thought you knew with someone who dialed a wrong number, you live in Chicago.

If "vacation" means going anywhere south of I - 80 for the weekend, you live in Chicago.

If you measure distance in hours, you live in Chicago.

If you have switched from "heat" to "A/C" in the same day and back again, you live in Chicago.

If you can drive 75 mph through 2 feet of snow during a raging blizzard without flinching, you live in Chicago.

If you carry jumpers in your car and your wife knows how to use them, you live in Chicago.

If you design your kid's Halloween costume to fit over a snowsuit, you live in Chicago.

If the speed limit on the highway is 55 mph - you're going 80 and everybody is passing you, you live in Chicago.

If driving is better in the winter because the potholes are filled with snow, you live in Chicago.

If you know all 4 seasons: almost winter, winter, still winter

and road construction, you live in Chicago.

If you have more miles on your snow blower than your car, you live in Chicago.

If you find 10 degrees "a little chilly", you live in Chicago.

It was some day

First one big cheer!! I finally got my truck back from the body shop. It looks great and I can't even tell a deer hit it. 1 week without my truck and driving around in a mid-sized car, grump, grump. Even though I have a mid-sized truck, I missed the higher ground clearance and view. What really surprised me, was that I missed the gas mileage. The car I was driving got around 20-22 miles per gallon, my truck on the other hand gets 25-28 miles per gallon. This is mostly highway driving, I'm sure the in-town driving is much less for the truck. Since I usually drive highway miles, that is what I need to measure. The 3+ extra miles per gallon made a difference in the driving I had to do last week.

For those who aren't in the know, I use my truck as a truck. If there had only been dents and dings on the body after the deer hit, I would probably have left it alone. But I was without my front driver side head lights, and that needed some attention. I was 1 week without my truck during the coldest/snowiest week of our winter. So it was a bit harder moving firewood and driving through deep snow.

The other part of my afternoon was spent with a Doctor. Turning 50 early next month has prompted my Dr. to want me to get all sorts of preventive procedures. Today was a meeting with the Dr. who will perform the first of many procedures. I

won't go into what will be involved in the procedure, just need to say I will be sedated through the whole thing and then need a ride home. I really don't like being driven anywhere, and it gets worse when I am in an incapacitated mode. My daughter should have fun!!! This will be the first of many such tests and procedures I will have over the next few years. Can't wait. ☐

Presidential Fodder For Letterman, ALREADY!?

I just marvel at the sight of witnessing an Inauguration Day on television. Actually being within miles of the actual ceremony must be exhilarating. The pomp and circumstance of the changing of power from one administration to another is just inspiring. Millions of people gathered at the Mall facing the Capitol Building (I heard an estimated report that there was 1 port-a-potty for every 400 people), a chilly day indeed unless you are wearing layers upon layers of clothing. The appearance of the three living past Commanders-in-Chief as well as their seconds in command preceding the oath is yet another traditional element of the passing of the torch. Of course, there was a small snafu involved in the ceremony, it was a moment or two behind. Is it in the 20th Amendment that the oath must be administered at noon?. It does state that the President's and Vice-President's tenures ends at 12PM on January 20th.

Poor President Bush was mocked so heavily by David Letterman (among other talk show hosts) in what seemed like nightly installments of Great Moments in Presidential Speeches. Mr. Letterman may well have his first moment for President Obama

even before he was even sworn in. The President-elect rushed over the Chief Justice in the recitation. I believe that this inadvertently caused Justice Roberts to slightly flub the second line of the oath. Probably the excitement of the moment.

I was impressed with the history making address of the new leader of our country. He pulled no punches and made it blunt that there is work to be done in the U.S. as well as abroad and that it would not be easy days ahead but necessary. I think the moment was made more profound when he alluded to the fact that 40 years ago, his family and others like him could not enter certain restaurants and be served; now he is now the leader of that country. A change has indeed come. Let us hope that the next four years are filled with a new spirit and new prosperity. I just hope that the president and his mother-in-law are on good terms. Of course, the White House is a big place.

Presidential In-Laws

In-laws have a bad stigma in our country, to say the least. From sayings like, "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your relatives" or "When you marry your spouse, you're marrying her whole family" to classic TV shows which depict the dreaded mother-in-law as a horrible threat or consequence for a character's bad behavior (The Honeymooners, Bewitched, The Flintstones, to name just a few), in-laws definitely have a bad rap. Scenes from these shows flooded my brain recently when I read the following article on cnn.com – seems even the leaders of the free world have had problematic situations with their mothers-in-law. The reason the article was published is because apparently Barack Obama's mother-in-law, wife

Michelle's mother Marian Robinson, might move with the new first family to Washington. So will Mr. Obama's situation be comparative to poor Harry Truman, whose mother-in-law refused to call him anything but Mr. Truman? Or will it be more like Dwight Eisenhower, who got along famously with his mother-in-law – in a good way? In recognition of Inauguration Day, read the following article for some interesting historical lessons about the complex familial relationships formed as a result of the union of two people:

From cnn.com, by David Holzel

(Mental Floss) – President-Elect Obama's mother-in-law will be moving to Washington with the first family, at least temporarily, his transition team has confirmed. Marian Robinson will be the latest in a line of presidential in-laws who, for good or ill, lived under the same roof as the president.

President Dwight Eisenhower and his mother-in-law, Elivera Doud, pose for pictures with some of the grandchildren.

President Dwight Eisenhower and his mother-in-law, Elivera Doud, pose for pictures with some of the grandchildren.

Here are four stories that confirm the old truism: While America can choose its president, the president can't choose his in-laws.

1. Ulysses S. Grant and 'The Colonel'

You would think that the Civil War was settled at Appomattox, and no question of its outcome would have been raised in the White House of Ulysses S. Grant, who, after all, was the general who won the war.

But you would be wrong, because living with Ulysses and Julia Grant was the president's father-in-law. Colonel Frederick Dent (his rank seems to have been self-selected) was an unreconstructed Confederate, a St. Louis businessman and slaveholder who, when his daughter Julia went to the Executive

Mansion early in 1869, decided to relocate there as well.

The Colonel didn't hesitate to make himself at home. When his daughter received guests, he sat in a chair just behind her, offering anyone within earshot unsolicited advice. Political and business figures alike got a dose of the Colonel's mind as they waited to meet with President Grant.

When the president's father, Jesse Grant, came from Kentucky on one of his regular visits to Washington, the White House turned into a Civil War reenactment. According to "First Families: The Impact of the White House on Their Lives", by Bonnie Angelo, Jesse Grant preferred to stay in a hotel rather than sleep under the same roof as the Colonel.

And when the two old partisans found themselves unavoidably sitting around the same table in the White House, they avoided direct negotiations by using Julia and her young son, named for the president's father, as intermediaries, Betty Boyd Caroli writes in "First Ladies": "In the presence of the elder Grant, Frederick Dent would instruct Julia to 'take better care of that old gentleman [Jesse Grant]. He is feeble and deaf as a post and yet you permit him to wander all over Washington alone.' And Grant replied [to his grandson and namesake], 'Did you hear him? I hope I shall not live to become as old and infirm as your Grandfather Dent.'"

The Colonel remained in the White House – irascible and unrepentant – until his death, at age 88, in 1873.

2. Harry S Truman and the Mother-in-Law from Heck

Harry Truman and Bess Wallace met as children. He was a farm boy; she was the well-heeled granddaughter of Independence, Missouri's Flour King. When they married in 1919, Truman was a struggling haberdasher, and Bess's mother, Madge Wallace, thought Bess had made a colossal social faux pas. Until she died in 1952, Madge Wallace never changed her mind about Harry Truman. Her Bess had married way below her station.

Madge had plenty of opportunities to let her son-in-law know it. The newlyweds moved into the Wallace mansion in Independence, and the three lived together under the same roof until the end of Madge's life.

When Harry Truman was elected senator, "Mother Wallace," as Truman judiciously called her, moved with her daughter and son-in-law to Washington. In the family's apartment, she shared a bedroom with the Trumans' daughter, Margaret. And when Truman became president, she moved with them into the White House, where she cast her cold eye on the new commander-in-chief.

"Why would Harry run against that nice Mr. Dewey?" she wondered aloud, as Truman was fighting for his political life in the 1948 presidential race, according to "First Mothers" by Bonnie Angelo. And when Truman fired Gen. Douglas MacArthur for insubordination, Mother Wallace was scandalized. "Imagine a captain from the National Guard [Truman] telling off a West Point general!"

In December 1952, shortly before Truman's term ended, Madge Wallace died, at age 90. For the 33 years they lived together, she never called her son-in-law anything but "Mr. Truman" to his face.

3. Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Mother-in-Law of the Year

If Truman's story sounds like the set-up for a film noir, his successor's relationship with his mother-in-law might have been a Technicolor musical.

Elivera Mathilda Carlson Doud, Mamie Eisenhower's mother, was "a witty woman with a tart tongue," Time magazine wrote, and Dwight Eisenhower thought she was a hoot. "She refuted every mother-in-law joke ever made," Time wrote. There was no question that she would join her daughter and son-in-law in the White House.

Ike called her "Min," the name of a character in the Andy Gump comic strip. Ike and Min "constituted a mutual admiration society, and each took the other's part whenever a family disagreement would arise," said Eisenhower's son, John. The New York Times observed, "The president frequently looks around him sharply, and inquires, 'Where's Min?'"

Widowed shortly before Eisenhower became president, Min spent the winters in the White House and summers at her home in Denver. It was while visiting his mother-in-law's home that Eisenhower suffered a heart attack in 1955. Two years later, in failing health, Min returned permanently to Denver. She died in 1960, at age 82.

4. Benjamin Harrison and the Reverend Doctor

Benjamin Harrison's father-in-law, John Witherspoon Scott, bore a double title: "reverend doctor."

Scott was born in Pennsylvania in 1800, did post-graduate work at Yale and took a professorship in mathematics and science at Miami University, in Ohio. He was also a Presbyterian minister and an outspoken abolitionist. The reverend doctor was rumored to have shielded runaway slaves in his home as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Whatever the truth, Miami University dismissed him for his anti-slavery beliefs.

He accepted a post at Farmer's College, a prep school in Cincinnati, where he became a mentor of a student named Benjamin Harrison. During his visits to the Scott home, Harrison became friendly with the reverend doctor's daughter, Caroline.

Young Harrison spent so many evenings at the Scotts' home that he got the nickname "the pious moonlight dude," according to "The Complete Book of the Presidents" by William A. DeGregorio. He and Caroline were married in 1853 at the bride's house. The reverend doctor officiated.

John Witherspoon Scott later became a clerk in the pension office of the interior department. He gave up the position when Harrison was elected president in 1888. A widower since 1876, Scott moved into the White House with his daughter and their family.

It was the president's custom to lead the family in a half-hour of Bible reading and prayer after breakfast, Anne Chieko Moore and Hester Anne Hale wrote in "Benjamin Harrison: Centennial President." When the president was absent, his father-in-law took his place.

Caroline Harrison died in October 1892, two weeks before her husband lost the presidential election. Her father died the next month, at age 92. An obituary described John Witherspoon Scott as "a man of wonderful physical vigor, tall, broad chested and well preserved mentally."

Boomp, Boomp, Boomp

Tonight was the first rehearsal for Meet Me in St. Louis (Louis). I wondered how the Louis was to be pronounced (Louis or Louie) and while reading the script it did not take long to discover which it was. In the very first scene, it is little precocious Tootie who makes it abundantly clear how it is. The first night was a rather informal introductory session between the "Smith Family Octet:" Tootie, Agnes, Lon, Rose, Esther, Mrs. Smith, Katie, and Grandpa Prophater. You will be able to see why Mr. Smith is not part of the group if you come and "meet me at the Fair." I tell you the music for the group will take some work as there is all kinds of out there harmonies, strange intervals, and KEY changes (the poor musicians). Definitely some work at the keyboard is called

for, but we did manage to get through the first four songs of the show (three involving the ensemble and one featuring the lead, Esther). We may have to be careful because it seems that the title song is reprised throughout a great deal of the show.

As for Grandpa Prophater himself, I foresee a great deal of makeup. The actress playing my "daughter" while not OLD is more mature than I. I have yet to meet the "son-in-law". I think the young people portraying the children will be fun to work with. "Lon" looks like he could be a college freshman. "Esther" has a youthful appearance and a wonderful voice. The two youngest "Agnes" and "Tootie" seem like they will be able to charm audiences.

I'm not entirely sure what the director envisions for Grandpa's appearance but I am reminded of that wonderfully gifted character actor Nackvid Keyd whose sole cinematic credit was as Mr Dawes, Sr. in [Mary Poppins](#). I frequently catch myself playing, replaying, slo-moing, rewinding, and fast forwarding his appearance in the bank everytime I watch the movie. It seems like a rather dull time will be had by all (HEHEHEHE). **KIDDING OF COURSE!**

This Town's Got Talent AND Faith

I already wrote about our 3D movie-going experience in my previous post, so I will skip that part of the weekend here, but I neglected to mention the cool restaurant we found because I didn't want to enlarge an already lengthy post...

Friday night after seeing My Bloody Valentine 3D in Maumee

Ohio, a suburb of Toledo, we noticed a restaurant across the street called Nick's Cafe who advertises breakfast all day. My husband and I are both Eggs Benedict connoisseurs – we really appreciate a great-tasting serving of Eggs Benedict, which is a breakfast dish consisting of English Muffin halves topped with Canadian bacon, poached eggs, and a layer of Hollandaise sauce. In our pre-parenthood days, we explored the country and sampled various versions of the dish along the way to our traveler's goals; whether they were destinations of business or pleasure. A requirement of great Eggs Benedict is homemade Hollandaise sauce, and by 'homemade', we (unlike many of the restaurants we tried) don't mean mixed up in the kitchen from a package. You need a double boiler to make it, and good Hollandaise sauce has nothing to do with a powder or a package. In all of our travels, we never found anything that even compares to the Hollandaise sauce at Uptown Cafe in downtown Arlington Heights, Illinois. We've visited numerous restaurants in our quest, and we've called some of them ahead of time, but even if you ask if their Hollandaise sauce is homemade, many will say yes, even if we don't agree on the definition of homemade. Such was the case Friday night at Nick's Cafe in Maumee, Ohio. They said their hollandaise sauce was homemade on the phone, but oddly, when we arrived, they wouldn't let us taste a sample. That was a first! Of the dozens of restaurants we've visited in search of the perfect Eggs Benedict, no restaurant had ever denied us a sample! On Friday night, my husband bravely ordered the Eggs Benedict at Nick's Cafe without trying the Hollandaise sauce ahead of time, and disappointingly, it was of the non-homemade, out-of-the-package variety. He did say that the Canadian bacon on the Eggs Benedict was great, but it unfortunately cannot rescue the dish if it uses packaged Hollandaise. So negative Eggs Benedict experience aside, the reason I would highly recommend this place is for their Mediterranean cuisine. And regular readers of my blog (and of those email forward all-about-you quizzes) know that this is my favorite type of food, therefore I am a huge critic. But

Nick's Place in Maumee has excellent gyros, Tzatziki sauce, and Greek salads. Gyros are only good when they're off the spit and even then, it's easy for them to taste too salty. Not the case at Nick's Place; if you like Mediterranean food, I **highly** recommend their gyros and Greek salads – incredible.

But I must move on to Saturday afternoon, when we took our kids to see the movie, [Hotel for Dogs](#). I've been waiting for this movie for months, which is probably why we didn't want to cancel our planned outing there on Saturday even though Kid #1 went off her rocker. Seriously, the kid went berserk and I was really tempted to give her "the talk", especially after I noticed a pimple on her cheek... (well, one of 'the talks' anyway – the one about womanly bodily changes – she's 9 years old and I would rather we talk about puberty stuff *before* it happens to her). But anyway, she'd probably be *mortified* if she knew I was posting this on the internet (what are mothers for?), so I better get off this tangent... After the episode Saturday morning, our oldest really didn't deserve to go to the movie, but it's difficult in a large family to not 'let the bad apple spoil the bunch'. Our younger girls had been very good all morning, so why keep them (or me!) from going to the movie? Our oldest was punished for the tantrum by having to go without a Kid's Pack (popcorn, pop, and candy) at the movies, and to her credit, she was mature about the consequences of her actions. However, soon after our arrival at the movie theater, the tide changed and our 2-year-old became the problem. I don't know why we keep trying to take a 2-year-old to the movie theater, but every time, it's regrettable. Actually, it's been this way since even *months* before she turned two... I guess we keep hoping that one of these times, she'll actually settle down enough to enjoy an entire movie without driving anyone crazy. So anyway, I'm trying to keep our 6-month-old busy and quiet while attempting to watch Hotel For Dogs and not disturb our neighbors, and my husband is busy with our handful of a 4-year-old, so next thing we know, our two-year-old is drinking my Mountain Dew.

Of course she loves it, but even *before* the Mountain Dew she's had a sugar-infused Kid's Pack, and now she's practically bouncing off the walls. She smiles and announces in a loud voice, "**I take clothes off!**", so now I'm trying to put my son back in his car seat so I can stop his sister from stripping off her clothes right there in the movie theater... Too late. She is down to her diaper by the time I get both hands free, so my husband covers her with a coat. For some reason, she's willing to wear nothing but a coat and a diaper in the movie theater, and somehow we make it through the rest of the movie without having to leave. So as for Hotel For Dogs, I liked it (I think – I actually didn't see much of it)... it's a cute, predictable fun movie, and if you're a dog lover, there's plenty of canine eye candy.

Following the movie, I went to a local talent show based upon the popular "American Idol" TV show. Some great friends graciously stayed with the kids, and my husband also stayed home to catch up on the work he missed last week during the 2-hour-school delay and the school closing we have on Friday and Monday. He works from home, and it's all I can do to keep the two little ones out of his hair every day – add the older two to the mix and all Hell breaks loose – any chance of getting anything productive done flies out the window. So, a strange occurrence at the talent show – me, myself, and I for a change. I did attend with friends, but it's not like I would bother Carol next to me with my philosophies on music or the tone of one's voice; that would be something to make my husband endure. And it was bizarre to simply sit back and listen and watch the show... For those hours, I had absolutely **not one thing** else to do besides enjoy the show... such a change of pace for me and much appreciated. Not that I would want to experience that all the time, but it was very nice for one night...

Adding to the relaxation for me was the spiritual tone of the evening. I had known the event would be sponsored by a local

church, but I didn't realize that we, the audience, would be praying to both open and to close the show; as well as the fact that the majority of the acts were religion-themed. As I said, for me, it was refreshing and relaxing, but I think they should properly advertise such a theme if they do this again next year. Less open-minded people may have been displeased. My dear friend and the entire reason I was a part of this concert experience in the first place, performed wonderfully and I was pleasantly surprised to be able to pick out her voice from the rest of the delightful group with whom she performed. Despite my best efforts to vote for them, however, they didn't win the competition, and the top prizes went to a drama group from the church who sponsored the event (!), a very talented violinist, and a well-known local talent who is only a Junior in high school but who has already been a vocalist with the Toledo Opera going on her 3rd year. Besides seeing and hearing my friend perform, my favorite part of the evening was when a boy who was part of the drama group that won burst into tears. Their skit was acted out to music, and it portrayed a young girl being bullied by 'temptations' but ultimately triumphing over sins and choosing Jesus. The group got a standing ovation after they performed and because they were from the church that sponsored the event, it was no surprise when they won first prize in the competition, but the kid asked the crowd, "I just want to know that everyone was moved – was everyone moved?" There was applause and verbal affirmations, and the next thing I knew, the kid had burst into tears and it slightly reminded me of the movie [Leap of Faith](#)... But it was sweet and real, and I was glad to be a part of it. Even though the talent show did a poor job of advertising the theme of the show; thereby the religion kind of snuck up on its patrons, it was a welcome and calming change of pace – at least for this member of the audience. And even though I wasn't aware that I needed it, the evening restored my faith while proving to me yet again what a great place it is in Northwest Ohio to raise kids – we have so much talent and so many opportunities here for our youth!