

Memorial Day Weekend

In honor of fallen US soldiers on

MEMORIAL DAY 2009



The dead soldier's silence sings
our national anthem. **-Rev. Aaron Kilbourn**

Despite the seriousness of Memorial Day and what it signifies, it is a day that is also known for kicking off the summer season in much of the United States – the season of swimming pools, backyard BBQ's, and days of school-less freedom for kids accompanied by the school-less dread cast upon many parents.

We had an action-packed but great Memorial Day weekend, beginning with a fun game night Friday night, and we stayed up too late. Saturday I slept late (though I still only got about 4 hours of sleep!), and while I was sleeping, the kids set up a garage sale and got quite a few customers – I wrote about this in a previous blog post. Saturday night we decided we would take the kids to experience the drive-in movie theater – best before the mosquitoes got too bad for the year (yeah right) and before it gets too hot out. We arrived at the drive-in early (I wrote about [this place](#) in another post as well; it's a drive-in movie theater that was built on a family's farm in the middle of the country), and we gave

Ladderball (amazing what a dangerous weapon two balls on a string can be when in the hands of children) and Cornhole a try, but the kids had way more fun rolling on the huge area of open grass. They delighted in petting the roaming farm dogs, and likewise – the dogs loved it too. Before the movie started, we spilled 2 of the 3 cans of pop we had brought for the kids, and then disaster really struck – the mosquitoes came out in full force. My oldest daughter, who has a propensity for attracting mosquitoes anyway, started getting eaten alive and screaming about it. Now the movie was starting – Oh, and it was Night at the Museum 2, something we really wanted to see. So we had to pack up our little “camp” and quickly pile into the van to escape the carnivorous mosquitoes. Once inside, it was hot and cramped. Luckily my son was asleep, but the rest of us were all in the back of the van with the seats down trying to stake a claim on a piece of steamless window so we could see the movie. More pop was spilled, and some blankies became unusable for the night, which of course caused more tantrums. There was about 20 minutes left in the movie when everyone settled down, and our 2-year-old fell asleep – 2 down, 2 to go! During the intermission between the movies, we found out that many of the mosquitos went away, and my husband and I moved outside while the girls laid in the back of the van. They did not see very much of Wolverine – our oldest didn’t make it past the opening credits. While we weren’t really interested in seeing Wolverine a second time, we did so anyway since we had already paid for it and we were now kid-free. It was such a nice night to sit under the stars and watch a movie, and it became perfect when a silent farm dog came over for some more petting, honestly, what could be better? From what I saw of it, Night at the Museum 2 is really funny. I definitely have to see it again, but from what I was able to hear, Hank Azaria is just hilarious! And I guess I need to back up so I can tell everyone about my husband’s extremely embarrassing moment. We had pulled into our spot at the drive-in facing the screen, and then we noticed everyone else was backing in

and lifting their hatches so they could sit in the back of their vehicles. Thinking this would be a good idea, my husband went to turn the car around while I stood in our parking spot. I looked over to see when he was coming, and that's when I saw our van backing over one of those posts they have at the drive-in – OH NO. Worse yet, I heard the sound of laughter as people laughed at my husband – I felt so badly for him! The good news is, he was embarrassed, but mostly he was relieved because at first he thought he had hit a person! So no harm done, even the pole was ok. But this explains why turning the car around again was NOT an option when we got chased into the vehicle by mosquitoes!

Sunday we went to church of course, and we continued the Fearless series by hearing the story of Joshua, all of which was fitting for Memorial Day weekend. After church, we decided to do something fun and met friends at the new great restaurant and shared Saganaki, which gained some new fans, I think. Then we ventured up to Michigan, where they have a little fun park place with go-karts and bumper boats. We had a blast! Then the kids fell apart a little bit and presented a perfect example of my husband's patented "trickle-down crab-onomics" theory. Even so, we had lots of fun, despite the invasion of frogs at the fun park – you heard me, FROGS!

I am afraid of frogs, and I don't know why. It's not really something I fear in my head rationally, but rather a "physical" fear. When I see frogs, my body reacts in any one or more of the following ways: shaking, screaming, crying, "heebie-jeebies" where I'll just get this creeped out feeling like something is behind me or going to crawl up my back or something. So anyway, on the way over to the bumper cars, there was a grate over a deep manhole that had a BIG green frog in it. That guy was creepy, but I actually felt bad for him – I hope they can get him out. They said next time it rains, the well should fill up and he'll swim out, but I don't know... I wanted to throw some bugs down there for him. And

then while we were bumper boating, there was actually a FROG IN the bumper boat pool! Luckily for me, this one wasn't too big, but it really freaked me out – looked like a shark or an alligator floating like that with its head above the water. Once I got over the initial frog freak-out, I was worried it would get smashed by a bumper boat. But it didn't, and the workers said they get frogs all the time. On the way home, we decided to stop by a large lake where we looked for more frogs, snakes, turtles, and birds, of which, we saw lots. But, we got home late AGAIN and didn't even stay awake through our rented movie, oh well.

Monday we decided to take it easy and stay home, especially since we had lots of stuff to put away from the busy weekend. And we also had to get all of our garbage out since we get one garbage day per month where we can put out anything we want, no matter how large it is. We had tons of garbage from when we cleaned out and re-did the spare room, but when I woke up, all the garbage was already out there and the house was picked up! What a nice surprise; hubby is the BEST! We decided to go out and get a grill to add to our backyard Eden since we got our fence and our patio set the other day. We went to Walmart and got the grill and some food, and had a cookout, which went pretty well – it was easier and cheaper than taking the kids to a restaurant, and they were better behaved outside than they usually are inside. Overall, another GREAT weekend – I am thankful for the beautiful weather we had all weekend too! Tomorrow it's supposed to rain, but hey, maybe the frog will be freed. A good thing, as long as he doesn't hop down to Ohio!

Here's hoping that your Memorial Day weekend was safe and fun, and hopefully you paused to reflect upon the entire reason we celebrate this time of year – to remember, honor, and be thankful to those American citizens who lost their lives fighting for our country.

WHERE IS THE RAT?!?

My daughters are having a garage sale today. They've been working it all by themselves (along with their older friend), and it's fun to peek out the window and watch them. They've gotten a lot of customers, and people are buying our old junk and popsicles and some have even donated money just because the kids are so cute. It kept them busy all morning, and things were going great until they went upstairs to get their bathing suits on because they were hot. That's when they noticed that one of our four pet rats was not in his cage! Where do you even begin to look for a missing rat in a house?!?

Not only that, but one of our dogs is a terrier mix and has been yearning to taste a pet rat. We needed to find that rat before the dog did! My oldest daughter is a worrier, so of course she started panicking about her rat – near hyperventilation and everything. I started to look for the rat, but then worse-case scenarios started running through my head – what if it got outside and we never found it? What if it was dead somewhere? What if the kids found it dead? What if no one found it dead and it stank up the house for weeks? What if we couldn't find it and it starved? I went to look under my bed (funny that I thought I saw something running across the floor this morning. I chalked it up to a hallucination caused by lack of sleep which happens to me a lot – I sometimes see my cat running across the floor, and she died over a year ago!), but then I realized that I wouldn't really WANT to find the rat under there. I'm not scared of rats in the slightest, but today I was not in the mood to look under my bed and have a rodent come running at me. As I was debating what to do next, my daughter found the missing rat

(Bobby Jack) in her sock drawer. Apparently the sock drawer was a “safe place” for Bobby since the girls have been putting him in there (!), and he likes it. Nevermind their poor, unsuspecting laundry maid who has rats running all over her work, sigh.

But the good news is the rat is safe and sound. Now we have to figure out how that happened in the first place. My two-year-old admitted to letting the rat out, but my husband thinks she is giving a false confession because she is usually scared to pick up the rats. Hopefully someone let him out and forgot about him and he didn't get out on his own. I am just thankful we locateed the MIA rat before the dog did!

Facing Fear

In church as of late, we are in the midst of a pastoral series called Fearless. I am enjoying this series because so far we have been able to study the Biblical story of David and Goliath and also the story of Moses and the Parting of the Red Sea – two stories I've certainly heard about, but hadn't heard the details or about how they relate to modern-day Christianity until now. Last Sunday at church, our pastor told of an amusing story during his Fearless series, and I thought I'd share it. Also in this service, the band accompanied an amazing Bossa Nova / Spanish-style vocal duet unlike anything I've seen in church so far – it was awesome! I can't reproduce the song unfortunately, but here is a summary of the pastor's fun story:

A beautiful village nestled on the bottom of a valley erupted in flames. All of the surrounding villages' fire engines came to fight the fire, but they all stopped at the top of the hill

on the road leading to the burning village in the valley, for they figured the village would not be savable and would only pose a danger to their own firefighters. A rickety old fire truck soon showed up from a distant town, and it didn't hesitate as it crested the hill and rode straight into the valley to fight the fire. The fire was extinguished, the village saved, and there was a grand ceremony of celebration. When the fearless fire department who put out the fire rose to accept their rewards and thanks, the fire chief took the stage. The mayor of the saved village asked him, "What are you going to do with your rewards and with your thank-you money?" The fire chief of that heroic fire department who fearlessly rode down the hill to save the neighboring town said, "The first thing we are going to do is to fix the brakes on that fire truck!"

The moral of the story? Here's my take: The "fearless" firefighters didn't even mean to go into the fire to fight it... But they did just that, and once they got down in the valley accidentally (because of the failed brakes on the fire truck), they faced their fears and conquered that fire, even though they didn't originally intend to and also despite their fears.

The story tied in nicely with our church's Fearless series. And our pastor told us that story, I think, to get our attention and to get us thinking... And that it did.

CUBS Vs Sox



I haven't had a chance to blog much, but a few posts ago in my "To Hellinois... .. And Back Again" blog series, I mentioned that I might be partaking in a "very exciting, awesomely fun event" to which I promised, "more on that later".

Now that the event is definite, I am bursting with excitement, so I will share – hubby got us tickets to see the Chicago Cubs play the White Sox LIVE! I've been wanting to go to a Cubs game for awhile (since our last visit to Wrigley in 2004), but last summer was out because I had a baby and unscheduled surgery from which I had to recover. So, June 28 at ~~Comisky Park~~ US Cellular Field, we will venture into Chicagoland once again to cheer on the Chicago Cubs while on the turf of the Chicago White Sox – AWESOME! My mom was nice enough to agree to watch all 4 kids for the day (and the eldest 3 for the rest of the week, BOOLYAH!), and the tickets for the BIG GAME arrived in the mail the other day.

They accidentally got thrown away in the garbage with the junk mail, but LUCKILY hubby was heads up and asked about the whereabouts of the tickets. That's when I realized that I probably had thrown them away – by accident of course! Good thing he asked when he did – the tickets were found not too near the bottom of the garbage and salvaged, thank goodness!

But anyway, I am looking forward to this event like you wouldn't believe. Not only is it **LIVE** baseball, but it's MLB, not AAA or AA. And it's the Cubs I get to go watch, and they're playing the SOX – their arch-rival (especially as far as I'm concerned – I HATE those White Sox!!!). So I would say yeah, even though it's not even 2 months after our last

Chicago visit, this visit will be well worth it! So watch for us – we'll be decked out in Cubs gear to be sure to properly invade the South Side Sox turf. The game is at 12:05pm local time on June 28 – the last of a 3-game series between the two teams, so it promises to be that much more exciting! It's scheduled to be shown on WGN, so if you get that channel, check it out, you just might see Taylhis and Co.!

GO CUBS!!!!



Misc Kid Updates

My 10 month old's physical appearance is about to change dramatically. Well, first, let me start here – he's been suffering from lethargy, crabbiness, diarrhea, and diaper rash lately. You seasoned parents out there know what I'm talking about – teething! Sure enough, the other day when we were playing and he was upside-down, I saw not one, not two, but THREE little tooth buds on his top gums. Poor little guy. So pretty soon, he will have a *mouthful* of teeth! I just hope that's the end of his awful diaper rash – he's been taking about 3 baths a day; it's one of the things that helps his sore little bottom. And being 10 months old, he's been doing all sorts of other things: climbing stairs, pulling things down, pulling himself up on everything... they grow so fast and it seems that his trouble is just beginning!

His 2-year-old sister, Disney has gotten a Dora the Explorer obsession from somewhere. She wants to watch Dora constantly, and it's so cute to hear her talk back to Dora on the tv – she is even learning Spanish as a result!

And today is their sister Sammie's birthday! She is officially 5! We already had her birthday party, but I think we will take her out to dinner and maybe to the store. She has been a little better behaved lately, but still not as great as she was a few months ago – her behavior comes in waves, I guess. At least we're not stuck in horrible-acting Sammie-ness as a constant any longer – there have been glimmers of hope! She is getting ready for Kindergarten in the fall and has been practicing writing her name. A note about this – she would have aced the writing her name part already if we had just named her "Maps", a word she writes over and over!

Taylor is 9 and almost ready to go to middle school next year. You read that right – where we live, kids go to the middle school for 4th-8th grades. She is VERY responsible with her school work and also when it comes to taking care of their 4 pet rats, so I think she'll do well in middle school. We have noticed an increase in her displaying a poor attitude – typical tween stuff, but I wish my child was somehow exempt. Is there an exemption card I can get for this?

So anyway, there's just been a lot going on with the kids lately, and I wanted to share some things before time passed me by and they moved out of the house before I had a chance to blog it. TIME FLIES!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SAMMIE!!!!

Tri-State Weekend

We were all over the place this past weekend. I guess it was the nice weather... wait, it rained Saturday!

It started with game night on Friday night – my intentions were to take it easy and end somewhat early so we could rest up for a big day with the kids on Saturday. It didn't end up that way – we began the weekend by staying up too late! But it was a fun game night, kind of a different crowd, so it was interesting to mix it up a little. Our new friend brought presents for the kids to game night, and I can't express enough gratitude – she basically saved game night! Our will-be-5-yr-old-tomorrow Sammie was in a mood, and seeing the new friend (the presents didn't hurt either!) actually got her out of the mood she would have otherwise stayed in all night probably – thanks Mary!

Saturday we were going to take the kids to the Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek, Michigan. My husband and I (and Taylor in her fetal days) went there in '99, and we loved the zoo. We found out it was only about an hour and a half drive from here, so we decided to check it out. An hour and a half drive doesn't seem like a long time if there's no traffic and the kids are good! Besides, an hour and half drive home after a busy day can sometimes (if we're lucky) cinch the deal and put all 4 of them asleep *for the night*. Well, anyway, it was raining on Saturday. And we didn't want to take 4 kids through an unfamiliar zoo in the rain. So we ended up at Crazy Pinz in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It's a place where they have arcade games, bowling, mini-bowling, mini-golf and the kids' favorite, Ball-0-City – a giant play area with levels and tunnels and balls to shoot at each other. I was really happy when my husband pointed out the Chicago Cubs game playing on the huge tv in the bar. So I stood over there and watched the Cubs wriggle out of a dicey situation – they had been winning 4-0 when all of a sudden, Houston scores 4 in the

9th and ties it up! They also had bases loaded, but the Cubs got out of it somehow and came back with a win in the bottom of a 9th! The bar at Crazy Pinz erupted in a cheer – Cubs fans everywhere! So we stayed there for awhile and then got home late but not too late for us to catch up on watching the season finales of our two favorite tv shows – Lost and The Office.

I guess I should save it for another post, so let's just say we were really happy with the finales of BOTH shows. Lost actually answered a lot of questions that were outstanding, and it can finally be seen how events are starting to come full circle for the characters. Something awesome occurred on the Office, well, it was alluded to anyway, but I think it was obvious what the next *development* is for the Pam and Jim characters. Ahem.

Sunday after church we decided to reclaim our Saturday plans and head up to Battle Creek to [Binder Park Zoo](#). Sunday was a gorgeous, picture-perfect day weather-wise, and it ended up being a great decision – it would not be fun to tour this zoo in the rain with 4 little kids. The zoo is mostly outdoor, and there is a bit of walking if you want to see the majority of the zoo. You climb aboard a (free) zoo tram that takes you 5 minutes into the wilderness, err Wild Africa as the zoo calls it. But whether it's the wilds of Michigan or the savannas of Africa, the view that awaits you when you arrive in Binder Park's Africa is breathtaking. Beyond the authentic-seeming African village is a wall, and beyond the wall:



Click the picture to see a larger version – those are zebras and Thomson's Gazelles grazing in the huge pasture. And a clutch of ostrich eggs (real?) on the edge of the exhibit (lower right middle of picture). The giraffes can go out there too, but they are usually over here:



where you can FEED them! It was a great day at a great zoo, and we even saw an animal I had never heard of – the Patagonian Mara. Fully grown they are about 35-40 lbs. (the one here at Binder Park is 9 mos. old and about half that), and they are rodents most closely related guinea pigs. At Binder Park, the keeper was in the cage with the mara, and she was jumping onto his leg and doing tricks for food – very cool. I didn't get the best picture; there was a tree in the way – again click for a larger pic, maybe you can actually see the mara:



The Binder Park Zoo also has a cute rabbit exhibit where the kids can crawl through a tunnel and end up “in” with the rabbits, a cool children’s zoo (housing the happiest Guinea pigs I’ve ever seen – the first time I’ve seen Guinea pigs that weren’t squealing with fright or freaking out), and a carousel, among other fun things. Here is my son on his first carousel ride:



And two of my 4 happy kids at the zoo:



And my other two riding a giant ant:



So... a great weekend, even if we were never home sweet home. I was going to share my pastor's story he told on Sunday, but this post is long enough, that will have to wait for another post! Until then...

Northwest Ohio Is Cracking Up!

So much for my blogging break – I had a pocket of time and blogged like a maniac the other day! I knew that would happen, as soon as I wrote about how blogging is going on the

back burner, I would find time for it again. That's actually part of the reason why I wrote the "blogging break" post! ☐ Not that I'm promising my 5 posts a week anymore, but I will do what I can – I do love to ramble on and on and on about everything while sharpening my typing skills!

Back to the point of this post. A few months ago, we noticed that our front porch is crumbling away to nothing! It's a rather large cement porch, and parts of it have started falling off, seemingly overnight! We called various construction places to get estimates, and according to them, it's a common problem around here this spring. Something about a moist winter, then it got really cold while there was a lot of moisture, so water that was in the cracks of the concrete expanded as it froze, causing things to crack and crumble. I've noticed it every where in the area – other houses, strip malls, parking lots. But it really stinks. I love my front porch, and it's going to cost over \$2,000 to fix it! It's kind of something that needs fixing asap before it gets any worse. Replacing it with a wood deck is cheaper, but I really love it just the way it is – well, before it started crumbling to bits anyway. The concrete where the garage meets the driveway is even worse, and I don't think repairing that was even in the estimate! Ah, the joys of home ownership!

One Of The Best Email Forwards Ever

I recently recieved a video via an email forward that I really enjoyed – that's somewhat rare because I get tons of email forwards and many of them are senseless garbage. But the few I've gotten that I've enjoyed have made all the other

ones almost worth it. The following video definitely falls into that category:

He Just Got Too Tired...

... to even eat his lunch!



When Squatters Go Bad...

SQUATTER [skwot-er] – *a person who settles on land under government regulation, in order to acquire title.*

Well, ok, so the official definition isn't exactly what I'm talking about. You may have heard the story that was in the news a month ago about the elderly man who couldn't get the stranger out of his garage. If you're wondering how such a thing could happen in our wonderful country, [read for yourself.](#)

Apparently occupancy rights laws suck. My dear friend is currently going through a situation as well. I will spare the details, but the reason I'm writing this is because I desperately want to help and I don't know how. I find it

amazing that there are other such stories in the news right now ([click here for another one](#)) – a side effect of the horrible economy, maybe? It's not so much the laws that are failing my friend, more likely it's the fact that she is too nice and generous and doesn't want to kick people out even if they are taking advantage of her generosity. I actually haven't talked to her about it in awhile, so hopefully the situation has improved – here's hoping!