

What The Truck?

I recently received an email forward containing pictures of trucks from Europe. These trucks are cleverly painted so that they can effectively advertise their contents. Check them out:





One Of The Worst True Crime Stories Ever...

Those of you who know me are aware that I'm a true crime buff. For all of you many (I hope!) new readers – I am a true

crime buff! I like to read about true crime, so I guess you could say that I have a hidden agenda when I ask my brother-in-law (the cop) how his job is going. A few years ago, there was an incredibly shocking crime in my brother-in-law's jurisdiction of which he was forced to be a part, and it was terrifying for the entire community.

In July of 2004, Anson Paape decided to have an 18th birthday party for one of his kids' friends named Michael Murray. The party was at Paape's home in what is normally a quiet suburb of Chicago, Illinois. For some reason, he decided to supply the teenage party-goers with alcohol. Even worse than that, he decided to round up some of the teenagers and take them down to his basement for a poker game. The reason I say that the poker game was worse than furnishing the teens with alcohol is because this was a poker game with a deadly twist – Russian Roulette. Paape distributed bullets to each of the teens, and the person with the winning hand was supposed to load his bullet, put the gun to the head of the player to their right, and pull the trigger. As if playing this so-called game (and with teenagers!) wasn't crazy enough, Paape decided to mix it up, and he kept changing the rules. When Michael Murray won the hand of poker, Anson Paape picked up the weapon, held it to Murray's forehead and pulled the trigger before Murray could even react enough to push it away. Michael Murray was killed instantly on his 18th birthday. The other teenagers fled the house, and tracked down some police officers who were on patrol. When they arrived at the crime scene, Anson Paape was nowhere to be found. He was gone for two days before finally being apprehended, and he was tried, convicted, and will spend probably the rest of his life in prison.

It's an insane story – it defies all reason. I can't imagine what this man was thinking. And what a tragic outcome. Not only did a young man lose his life, but Anson Paape's 5 children are now without a father. They were also witnesses

to the horrifying event, along with other teenagers at the party that night. It's just so sad.

The reason I'm writing about this is because I remember when this happened. My brother-in-law had to work overtime to help man the SWAT trailer they had to set up while Paape was on the lam. I think everyone in Chicagoland was relieved when they caught him.

Potty Humor

I had to share this funny little story because something our almost 5-year-old daughter Sammie said the other day had my husband and I in stitches. She calls out from the bathroom – “Dad! I have to go poop but I can't... Oh, nevermind!”

Hmmm, now that I'm reading it, it's not quite as funny. I guess you had to hear her little 4-year-old voice call it out. Kids are so adorable with their bluntness. And I'm just glad that Sammie was able to solve her own problem!

Meet Me In St. Louis

I've certainly heard of the musical Meet Me In St. Louis, especially being a fan of the late great Judy Garland, but I had never before seen it until last night. A great friend played the role of Grandpa, and we were delighted to have the opportunity to watch him age some 40 years and to be able to return to the stage.

First, I'll begin with the venue. The play was performed in a historical building in Hicksville, Ohio called the Huber Opera House. As I learned in the director's introduction before the show, the Huber was originally built by a wealthy man who wanted a place to stage-test his plays between Chicago and New York; I'm thinking some time in the late 1800's; not exactly sure on that. I do know that one of their stage curtains was created right around the time *Meet Me in St. Louis* takes place – 1903-04, and the gorgeous curtain depicting angels in a boat was hanging last night in all it's glory. The Huber is simply gorgeous. I especially enjoyed seeing the pictures of it from the 1990's and how far it's come since then. The owner of it at that time decided to trash the place when he found out he was going to lose it, and trash it he did. The place was an utter disaster; they even went so far as to rip one of the opera balconies from the wall. Apparently downtown Hicksville was not a place you wanted to be after dark at that time (coming from the 'burbs of Chicago, that's particularly amusing to me – I mean, Hicksville Ohio dangerous? Yeah right!), and the city wanted the Huber torn down. Some very dedicated individuals earned a lot of money and worked their butts off to restore it and give us back the beautiful theater it is today – and I was lucky enough to be able to see a show in it.

As for the show itself, I will say that *Meet Me in St. Louis* will never be one of my favorite musicals. The cast and crew of this particular production did a wonderful job, but I just can't identify with a cast of characters who randomly break into song at the strangest moments and whose greatest conflicts in life include relocating and deciding who to take to the local dance. That being said, I still had a great time. I really enjoyed being transported back in time, and it was both interesting and refreshing to see how much respect children had for their elders back then. My friend Jamy was awesome as Grandpa, and I don't think I'm being biased. He definitely stood out as one of the better singers, and I was

even surprised to see that Grandpa Smith is a much better dancer than Morat Notboratnichkov – one of the other characters I've seen Jamy portray on stage. The little girls in the play were simply adorable, and adding to the fun of the evening was bumping into a couple of friends whom we didn't know were going to be there. Overall, a fun evening out away from the kids, and I even learned a thing or two, which I'll share below. Congratulations Jamy on a job well done!

Random Meet Me in St. Louis Trivia

– Ice cream cones and cotton candy were introduced at the 1904 World's Fair which was in St. Louis. I thought it was really neat that they chose to serve these as intermission refreshments last night at the Huber.

– The 1944 movie Meet Me in St. Louis starred Judy Garland, but at first she refused the role because she was tired of taking childish roles. After a talk with director Vincente Minnelli, she was convinced to take the role of Esther Smith, and it became one of the favorites of her career. Judy and Vincente got married and had a daughter, Liza Minnelli, who went on to become an award winning actress and singer; earning an Oscar, a lifetime achievement Grammy, two Tonys, and an Emmy award throughout her career.

– Two single recordings from the movie Meet Me in St. Louis became hits by Judy Garland before the movie was even released: The Trolley Song and Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.

– During the shooting of the large dinner scene (where one of the older sisters receives a long distance call from her beau in New York), Margaret O'Brien caused mischief on the set. She would change the cutlery around and put two napkin rings beside a plate. The prop man would say, "Please, Maggie dear," when he would liked to have shaken her.

And Speaking Of This Horrible Economy...

A thought occurred to me the other night – didn't Barack Obama promise to bring the troops home from the dangerous Middle East if he became President? Well, it's been more than 6 weeks since he's taken office, and I haven't even heard any talk whatsoever about troops coming home. I realize these things take time, but like I said, it doesn't even seem to be in the planning stages as of yet.

And then I was thinking, what happens when they DO come home, and now we have thousands of able-bodied Americans who just served our country only to come home to find out that there are NO JOBS for them? What will that do to the unemployment rate? And pardon my ignorance, but when do people in the military get paid? Are they receiving paychecks right now while they're serving, or do they get paid when they come home or both? If they get paid from the government when they come home, that will complicate matters also since the government will suddenly be responsible for paying thousands of soldiers.

I'm not saying that the President is keeping the troops overseas to procrastinate the employment problem. But the fact remains that he *promised* he'd get them home and ASAP. And there is also the fact that the job opportunities are shrinking at a rapid rate. I normally don't get too political, but I haven't heard any of the analysts on tv talk about what to do with the troops for employment should they return to the United States, so I thought I'd throw it out there.

And it needs to be said how incredibly thankful I am to not be

personnally affected by the struggling economy. My husband is self-employed and successful, and I haven't even thought about going back to work myself yet since my kids are still very little. My family and friends seem relatively unscathed as well; although I did see my former neighbors in the newspaper the other day for foreclosure. What a shame; they were nice people. Here's to hoping the economy improves – and fast!

Springing Ahead

Tonight is the night we change our clocks for Daylight Savings Time. I guess we're ending Daylight Savings – or maybe we're starting it. I don't know and I don't really care. All I know is that I will be losing an hour of sleep. Ok, it's not THAT bad; I do like when the sun stays out later, although there is no sun in the weather forecast for the next few days... But I loathe the idea of losing a precious hour of sleep. If I remember correctly, the time change throws the kids into a tizzy for a few days every year until their bodies readjust – something else to look forward to.

So anyway, this should serve as your reminder to change those clocks – no excuses about being late to church or theater meetings tomorrow! And yes, you must flip the clocks forward, not backward. Remember, it's SPRING ahead, FALL back. And try not to fret about losing that hour of sleep. As Jay Leno said last night referring to this horrible economy that only seems to be getting worse:

“After losing your job, your 401K, and your house, losing an hour of sleep seems like nothing!”

Have No Fear, Polyp Man Is Here!

You heard read me right – I did say Polyp Man. Found this amusing picture in the newspaper the other day and I couldn't resist posting it:



It's a little goofy, but hey, whatever works to raise awareness to help people detect and combat colon cancer. If Polyp Man saves lives, more power to him. I do have a little sympathy for the guy in the Polyp Man suit though; he looks like he feels ridiculous. Is being Polyp Man a resumé builder I wonder?

Multi-Tasking

Because being a Stay-at-home-mom (SAHM to laypeople) is my current profession, I am required to multi-task on a daily

basis in a way some people have never experienced. My “pay” (bringing up healthy happy children who turn into independent, admirable adults) is by no means immediate, and it also depends upon my ability to multi-task. Consider the following 2 scenarios most SAHM’s must endure on a daily basis (and these are just 2 of MANY!): Can I fold and put away a load of laundry while planning and preparing a nutritious lunch for 4 kids while simultaneously managing “surprise” but necessary tasks that appear; like changing diapers, washing hands, and refereeing any arguments that break out? Can I accomplish buying everything I need at Walmart while staying within our family’s budget AND concurrently fulfilling the needs of my two youngest children in a timely enough fashion to be able to pick up their older sisters at school at the time I’m expected?

Man, when I put that all on paper it sounds difficult. And sometimes it is, but most of the time, I do it without thinking because I love and treasure my family. But if you know a SAHM and she seems like an airhead or like she’s not-so-bright or even a little bit loopy, just remember everything that must go through her mind on a daily basis, then multiply that by how many kids she has... It just might provide enough explanation for her scatter-brained behavior!

Gee, being a SAHM-of-four sure makes my working-mom-of-one days look easy. Back then my multitasking consisted of paying bills and doing paperwork while I sat in traffic... And although my current lifestyle is much more hard work than I’ve ever had before, it’s that much more rewarding also, and I wouldn’t trade it for the world!

Ahh... A Relaxing Baseball Game And A... LOSS?!?

I had a really stressful day yesterday. The kids went completely crazy at night – was it a full moon? I didn't check. Even if that was the case, other little things kept going wrong also. Little things – things that really shouldn't matter. Except that when those little things are added up, they equal *one bad day*. So I thought I could beat my stress by looking forward to watching some BASEBALL on TV. Yes, that's right, I said BASEBALL on TV! And it's only early March – we haven't even changed the clocks yet!

I just happened to look on tvguide.com yesterday to see if I could look forward to a new episode of Lost, and I noticed that my favorite baseball team, the Chicago Cubs, were set to play their cross-town rivals, the Chicago White Sox and it was going to actually be on tv in our little corner of NW Ohio! Even though it's only spring training, that brightened my mood considerably since it's been MONTHS since I've gotten to watch baseball. With the way my day was going, I was sure something would go wrong – the tvguide had made a mistake and we didn't get it, Vegas (where the game was played) would disappear into a sinkhole, something like that. But 10:00 finally rolled around, and the game was on! AND, the teams were putting in their starters rather than their scrub players, which meant real, actual baseball to watch! So I felt better; I relaxed and sat down to watch the game, and of course, that's when my two middle children (the trouble-makers of the brood these days) decided to start fighting. So it wasn't peaceful, but I did get to watch the game. And it was a good game – the Cubs were down, but then they tied it up, but of course the Sox came back to win. A disappointing outcome for such an otherwise great game. But the good news is, it was only spring training so who cares who won!

After the game I left WGN on the tv, and I was treated to an episode of the old tv show Alf. Remember Alf? It was a sitcom from the 80's about a family who discovers an Alien Life Form (ALF), and takes him in to live with them. Alf is a furry wise-cracking puppet with an affinity for cats (to eat!), and the family must keep him secret so he doesn't get taken away. Alf was a huge fad in the 80's; there were toys, lunchboxes, a cartoon spinoff, you name it. After the Alf episode, on came the Steve Wilkos show (he's the former bodyguard from the Jerry Springer show who now has his own trashy talk show – I wrote about this in a previous post, probably because of my disbelief that they would actually give this guy air time). And that was my cue to hit the sack for my lovely 4½ hours sleep. So far, today has been a little better, although our trouble-making 4-year-old is at school. Tonight I'm looking forward to a brand spankin' new Office episode – YIPPEE! But first I have to get through a few boring meetings. Sure hope I don't doze; I am awfully tired!

Doubt

We saw the Oscar nominated film [Doubt](#) the other night. Normally, I like to see as many of the major Academy Award contenders before the awards show airs as it did a few weeks ago, but it's usually not possible to see every single one in time. Even though it didn't win any of the 5 Oscars for which it was nominated, the buzz that surrounded Doubt was so intriguing that we decided to check it out.

For a movie being based primarily on dialogue, it is very fast-paced. I was never bored, which is something I can't say about a Good Will Hunting, an Oscar winning movie we watched last week. Good Will Hunting a long movie, so it took us two

nights to watch it, and I fell asleep both nights during the movie. Not that it was a horrible movie; I don't know much about it – I was sleeping!

Ok, back from the Oscar tangent, back to Doubt. This movie is based on a stage play, and the author of the play also wrote the screenplay and directed the film version; which I think is very important so nothing was lost in the translation between stage and screen. The story is compelling; it's about a Catholic school in 1964 where the principal, a nun brilliantly portrayed by Meryl Streep, suspects the priest is having an inappropriate relationship with the school's only African-American student. Amy Adams portrays Sister James, a naive freshman nun who is caught in the middle of the conflict. Amy Adams is one of the actors from this movie who was nominated for an Oscar, and it's understandable when you see what a far cry Sister James is from Adams' purse-selling ex-cheerleader Katy on *The Office* or the character Leslie Miller from her first film, the teen beauty pageant spoof *Drop Dead Gorgeous* from 1999. Phillip Seymour Hoffman was excellent in *Doubt* also; hardly recognizable from the 1990's roles where I saw him previously in the movies *Twister* and *Leap of Faith*. It's easy to see how Viola Davis received her Oscar nomination for *Doubt* as well – she had lines in just one scene in the entire movie, but her performance was excellent, however short on screen time. You win some and you lose some, which explains how those 3 actors walked away without their Academy Awards. Inexplicable, however, is how Meryl Streep did not win an Oscar for *Doubt*. True, I haven't seen *The Reader* with Kate Winslet, the actress who won the Leading Actress Oscar instead of Meryl Streep. I did see *Changeling* with Angelina Jolie who was also nominated, and judging by the phenomenal performances of Streep and Jolie and the fact that Winslet was the winner, I might just have to see *The Reader*. I loved Angelina Jolie in *Changeling*, and I'm not usually a fan of hers, so that says something. I loved Meryl Streep in *The Devil Wears Prada*, but honestly, I used to think Hollywood had a strange habit of

sucking up to Meryl Streep. How can she be THAT good, I would wonder... until I saw Doubt. She IS "that good".

I can see where this movie would make an excellent stage play. But after seeing 4 of the most talented actors out there portraying the lead roles on the big screen, who would even want to be compared to that by staging a live theatrical production of Doubt?