

Pet Roll Call

Once again, we have a bit of a food chain residing as pets in our home. When my cat passed away a year ago now, it left a hole in our household food chain. Although it's not quite as balanced as it was when the cat was here, today we find ourselves with a small zoo nonetheless. Here is the roll call of pets in our house:

Charity – almost 11-year-old female Jack (Jerk) Russell Terrier / Australian Shepard mix with one blue eye and one brown eye. An extremely feisty but lovable loudmouth who doesn't hesitate to let you know what she wants, when she wants it. Will even growl for petting! World's worst puppy = World's best family dog.

Beesly – nearly 7-year-old cocker spaniel mix with extremely thick fur. We once shaved her and to our astonishment, she became a much smaller dog because her fur is so thick! She really likes it outdoors, and we call her nordic (of or pertaining to the north, where it's cold) because she doesn't seem to mind the cold at all – probably can't feel it through that blanket of fur! We adopted her from the humane society in March 2008, and we're SO glad! GREAT with kids and an extreme snuggler. The only problem we have with her is her nasty dog breath! Oh, and her uncanny ability to escape. She can open doors and can somehow (repeatedly, not just a fluke!) unhook her way off of 2 dog chains at the same time! Luckily for us, she always comes back.

Squawky – an 8-year-old Scarlet Macaw parrot. After living with him for 7 years, I do not recommend parrots as pets! He screams (and I mean ear-splitting) constantly – a repairman once asked us if we had a pterodactyl behind the door after hearing him scream. But he is beautiful and drops gorgeous feathers all the time. And having him has been an awesome learning experience for us and the kids. He can talk and is

very curious about everything. His vocabulary includes: hi, here kitty kitty, hi bird, and sometimes he just mumbles nonsense that sounds like human words. In his spare time, Squawky likes to watch The Price is Right and Animal Planet.

Oreo – one of our new rat additions. He is gray and white and smaller than Bobby Jack. He seems a little more curious and less picky about food than Bobby Jack. Had a close call with Charity this morning.

Bobby Jack – off-white colored rat who doesn't like his rat food. He enjoys many of the treats we've given him, especially junk food. Just after we got them, he was the snugglier of the two, but I think he was just tired from his journey home from the pet store because now he's as hyper and curious as his brother Oreo. They are 5 weeks old, and so far, we would agree that rats make great pets! They don't bite like gerbils and hamsters, and they don't scurry like mice. They are fairly clean animals who groom a lot, are very intelligent and easily trainable. I think one of the reasons they're not popular pets to have is because of their super-short lifespans, about 1.5-3 years only. ☐

Francis – the ladybug I found that became my new pet before I had the rats. I put him in a bug catcher, and then he went MIA. Good news – today I found him. Turns out, there was a little pocket in the bug catcher where he was hiding. I would check the bug catcher every now and then, and today I saw that he had re-emerged from hiding!

No Name – another ladybug I found in the house. I won't kill any bugs I find unless they're mosquitos – and how I enjoy killing those things! But any other bug I try to set free, and I just can't send ladybugs out into the Ohio wilderness to freeze to death. No Name is in a little container in the kitchen... I wonder what would happen if I put him in with Francis?

Mally – Ok, she's no longer part of our family physically, but we will always remember her. Since I mentioned her earlier, I thought I'd put her on the list. She was a 10-year-old inbred farm cat. My husband and I were in college, and we drove all the way out to a farm to get a kitten after reading an ad in the newspaper. By the time we got there, we wanted a cat so badly that we got one even though the owners said the mother cat had mated with a boy from a previous litter, which is how Mally came to be. Because of this, she was never 'quite right', and was always the size of a kitten. We named her Malice as a joke, but we always called her Mally. I was her world, and she hid from everyone else, prompting family and friends alike to joke about our "invisible cat". But she existed, I swear, and she was very sweet, at least with me. She liked to lie on my pregnant belly and would 'groom' my hair. I miss her a lot and wish I could get another cat, but I'm allergic. I was allergic to Mally, but there was no way I was going to get rid of her. I got her before any of my kids were born, and so I doted upon her and spoiled her while my husband was working in the wee beginning of our days together. For those of you who never saw her, here is my little cat:



Where's My Happy Little Guy?

My son (after having only daughters for the past nine years, it seems weird to say the word son) must be teething. He will be 6 months old on Sunday already, and for the last 5 days, he's been crying constantly. Yesterday was the exception, but 4 of the 5 last days, he's been crying nonstop – it's quite taxing for both of us. Mostly, the exhaustion comes because I just feel badly for the little guy – he used to be the happiest baby and smiled constantly. But after trying everything to cheer him up, sometimes I selfishly think about how hard it is on me as well. I can't imagine the pain he's going through, but in the mean time, I can't get anything done around the house – and leisure time? Forget it. It's hard to get anything done while holding him, and holding him offers one of the only ways to keep him from crying – sometimes even holding him doesn't work. Sometimes there is no choice but to put him down somewhere, like when I'm cooking for instance, and he's not happy anywhere right now... not in his playpen, his bouncer, his bouncy seat, his crib, the floor, nowhere, which means he is screaming, and it's a draining form of torture to hear a baby cry all day. The only reason I'm actually able to sit down and write this blog (YES! Leisure time after all!) right now is because he is passed out (after a crying spell) sitting on the couch next to me. He sometimes likes it there too, but that means I'm glued to the couch – can't leave a baby unattended on a couch of course. So I can sit here and type this blog, but I can't do things like tackle my accumulating clutter or begin the task of cutting Mt. Washmore down to size. Mt. Washmore is the never-ending, magically replenishing pile of laundry often found lurking in households with 2 or more kids – I have 4 kids, so our Mt. Washmore is taking on a life of its own. If we have any more kids, I'm afraid people who come to visit us will just arrive at the foot of a gi-normous pile of clothes where there once was a house and a family who lived inside.

I try to tell myself that things like backed-up laundry and clutter don't really matter in the long run. Heck, I'll probably even be bored and WISH I had lots more laundry to do once my kids are all grown and in school during the day. But just as I convince my brain that this is true, my feet stumble over something that's in the way and shouldn't be there – clutter or a basket of laundry to put away. Speak of the devil, the laundry buzzer just went off... if only my son will sleep through the transfer from the couch to his playpen so I can go fold it and put it away, thereby avoiding feeding Mt. Washmore.

HE DID! He's asleep in his playpen! But now the dogs are barking at the neighbor's cat again and WAAAAA, WAAAAAA!!! Those dogs have woken the baby again! Sigh...

I guess today will see yet another expansion of Mt. Washmore after all.

The Prize

In my previous post I was looking for the title of a song and the artist who sings it, and I promised a prize to anyone who could provide me with the info. Two readers and fellow bloggers, [justj](#) and derek, successfully completed the challenge. So what's their prize? A blog post of recognition, of course!

Alright, that's dumb. It's going to make sure that people never take any challenges I offer again. Isn't just knowing that you helped a friend enough? Of course it is, but you were promised a prize. Maybe I can treat your ears to a round of *Senorita Mas Fina* (that's the name of the song I was looking for in case you're wondering, and it's sung by Kevin

Fowler).

Just kidding! I won't make you listen to the song. It really seems like something only a country music lover would like – cheesy lyrics, hokey theme, obscene amount of twang – the kind of song I can really use to tease my friends who hate country music!

Well, thanks again derek and justj for playing and for coming up with the info I was looking for. And it's ironic, I did do searches myself, and I did come up with the name Kevin Fowler, but before I was able to listen to the song, I had to do something else (the baby has been crying for 3 days straight – teething), and I guess I forgot I was close to a result when my computer crashed. So thanks for helping me, and you will get more than the blog post recognition I had planned – I will have a real prize the next time I see each of you – something small, but maybe a little better than blog recognition and being made to listen to an extreme lesson in the country music technique of twang. Thanks for playing!

This Gringo Needs Help

From dictionary.com:

gringo [gring-goh] –noun, plural -gos. Usually Disparaging. (in Latin America or Spain) a foreigner, esp. one of U.S. or British descent.

Sorry – didn't mean to be disparaging, but I am of U.S. descent and I need help.

This post is an appeal to country music fans to please help me figure out the details of a country song I want. I don't know

the name of it or who sings it. It's an older song – maybe from the 1980's or '90's... I wouldn't even rule out the '70's. Just about the only lyrics I can remember are "...be your little gringo..." or something like that. The song is uptempo and sung by a male. If you can get me the name and artist of the song I'm looking for, you'll win a prize. Something tells me Carol might know this... or my dad... WHAT IS THIS SONG?

Is Winning The Lottery Worth The Ultimate Price?

As I was making lunch today, I heard the following fascinating story on the radio, so I had to look it up and read it for myself:

The following article is from baltimoresun.com:

DANBURY, Conn. (AP) – On the day that Donald Peters died, he unknowingly provided financial security for his wife of 59 years and their family.

Peters bought two Connecticut Lottery tickets at a local 7-Eleven store on Nov. 1 as part of a 20-year tradition he shared with his wife Charlotte. Later that day, the 79-year-old retired hat factory worker suffered a fatal heart attack while working in his yard in Danbury.

On Friday, his widow cashed in one of the tickets: a \$10 million winner which, in her grief over her husband's death, she had put aside and almost discarded before recently checking the numbers.

"I'm numb," Charlotte Peters, 78, said at Connecticut Lottery

headquarters in Rocky Hill.

Donald Peters usually bought the tickets for 10 weeks at a stretch, so the winning ticket he bought Nov. 1 for the Dec. 2 drawing was among several that Charlotte Peters put aside as she, their three children and two grandchildren coped with his sudden death.

"I was in the grocery store and I had it checked and they told me I was a winner," she said. "I had no idea how much it was."

She said she thought she had won \$6 million but was surprised to learn from lottery officials she'd won \$10 million.

Charlotte Peters has 60 days to decide whether to take a \$6 million pre-tax lump sum payment or stretch the winnings into 21 yearly payments of almost \$477,300 each.

She does not yet know what she will do with the money.

"I've always wanted a Corvette, but I don't think I'll buy one. I'll stick to a small car. I might go to Mohegan Sun," she said, referring to the casino in Connecticut. "I'm going to go home and sit and think."

The Peters children think their father would have appreciated the irony.

"He'd be very mad, he just passed away and she won a lot of money," said Brian Peters, one of the couple's three children. "He'd say, 'Figures!'"

Even though Mr. Peters was not aware of his "luck", in effect he paid the ultimate price to win the lottery. Was it worth it? Probably not. Any sane person would rather have his life, health, and loved ones rather than an extremely large windfall if there was a choice. Since that's a poll I'd rather not take, here is one about what you would do if you won a huge amount of money in a lottery.

[poll id="4"]

The Night Listener Returns

Regular readers of my blog know that I thought [The Night Listener](#) was a terrible movie. It stars Robin Williams as a radio show host who... you know what, I don't even remember. For a plot synopsis, click on the link above. I was actually surprised that an A-list actor like Robin Williams would do such an awful movie as *The Night Listener*, but he did. After sitting through a movie like *The Night Listener*, my husband and I are weary of Robin Williams. However, 3 of our friends and fellow tangents.org authors all agreed that *August Rush* is a good movie, so we checked it out. And you'll notice that the title of this post is called, "The Night Listener Returns", so uh-oh. But that was more of a joke, and now I've explained it, so let's get on with my review of *August Rush*.

Not nearly as bad as *The Night Listener*; I wouldn't even call [August Rush](#) a bad movie. At the very least, it was really refreshing to see a movie whose target audience was over the age of 18 that was absent any filth whatsoever. *August Rush* is a cute story, but I think the movie could have been done a heck of a lot better in some ways. The tale follows the life of a young orphan, an almost magical boy, named Evan Taylor as he "follows the music" to find his real parents. There were a few circumstances and events in the movie that weren't believable in any shape or form, and even if you suspended your disbelief, the cheesiness of other aspects of the movie was annoying. The storyline is intriguing, and the acting is not bad, but there are a few things that would have to change about *August Rush* in order for me to consider it a great film. To name just a couple of those things, I couldn't get

over the fact that this entire love story is based upon a one-night stand. Tactfully done – as I said, there isn't any filth in this PG rated movie, but still, knowing it's true love after just a one-night stand? Come on! And, I guess you'll have to see the movie to appreciate this, but would an abandoned theater really still have its electricity working? Doubtful. Like I said, just a few examples of what I perceived to be holes in the plot, but there are other things about the movie that could have easily been changed, improving the film's quality. Doing so would add much enjoyment and just plain common sense to this movie. And Robin Williams was not the shining star in August Rush either; that was left for Freddie Highmore who played Evan – he was also wonderful playing twins in the great movie [The Spiderwick Chronicles](#) – another highly recommended flick. Williams seemed almost annoying in his role as a musical outlaw with his multiple piercings and goatee. I flip-flopped between deciding if his character "Wizard" was a good guy or a bad guy. Maybe that was the point, I'm not even sure.

The actor who played Buford Benjamin Blue (Bubba) in Forrest Gump played a preacher in August Rush, so I was wondering if the line, "Run August run!" was a reference to the extremely famous line, "Run Forrest run!" from the Oscar-winning film based upon the Winston Groom novel, one of my favorite movies (one that I highly recommend). Or maybe it was the filmmakers' way of laughing at us for even thinking of an awesome movie like [Forrest Gump](#) during August Rush. Ok, it wasn't that bad... I did appreciate the sentiment. But my lack of suspension of disbelief just got in the way of me getting swept into the magic of the movie, I guess.

Sorry for those who disagree with me, but I'm still glad you recommended the movie; it was definitely worth a screening – thanks!

More Cuties

No, I'm not talking about the oranges called Cuties.



Have you heard of those? They're small oranges especially grown to be kid-friendly: less sour taste, seedless, and easier to peel and smaller than regular oranges. I've been wanting to try them for our family, but when I finally remembered to pick them up at Walmart, the bag I had hastily grabbed contained smashed and rotten fruit. What else is new – our Walmart always carries terrible produce. But this is not going to be a Walmart-bashing post. Tangents aside, I posted pictures of our new pet rat cuties in my previous post, so here are pictures of our real cuties. Here is our one little guy with his 3 older sisters:



And below are the oldest and the youngest kids in our family – they're 8.5 years apart. I wish I had blocked the sun before I took this picture!



You Dirty Rat(s)

According to Wikipedia.com, James Cagney never actually said the line, *"You Dirty Rat"*. The closest he got was saying "Come out and take it, you dirty, yellow-bellied rat, or I'll give it to you through the door!" in *Taxi*. But *rats*! That's not the point of this post.

Seems I couldn't resist adding to the Food Chain Gang – we've added two pet rats to our family, Bobby and Oreo – the kids chose the names. It was kind of an impulsive activity to do today, pet shopping, but it was not an impulsive decision, the type that should never accompany a new pet. We've been talking about getting a rat for some time now, but if it ended up being the wrong decision for our family, we didn't want to *be like rats leaving a sinking ship* and ditch the responsibility. So we've been thinking about it a lot, and today just seemed like the right day to do it.

Rats are friendly, intelligent, non-biting rodents who make great pets. Rat owners compare their companionship to that of dogs, believe it or not, and from what I've seen so far, I see what they're talking about. I think rats haven't caught on as pets because many people don't like the way their tails look,

and they still have a negative stigma from a few incidents of centuries past, namely the Black Death outbreak and the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. I did some research about both of these historical tales – not that they influenced my decision to get the rats as pets; the research was just for fun. But I found that the Bubonic Plague, aka the Black Death was most likely transmitted by fleas rather than rats. True the fleas would travel on the rats, but they more commonly preferred larger hosts such as dogs or cats and used rats when larger animals were unavailable. The Bubonic Plague was attributed to causing the demise of one quarter of the Earth's population of human beings at that time, it's hard to blame people for taking it out on rats. And the Pied Piper story is basically a legend that tries to explain the disappearance of over 100 children from the town of Hamelin in Germany just before the year 1300. Most likely, the children were recruited to newer European settlements, possibly by a man in "pied" clothing. In the legend, there is a rat infestation in Hamelin, and the Pied Piper leads the rats out of the town to a body of water where they all drown. The townspeople neglect to pay the Piper for his rat removal services, and he returns and leads their children out of town. Some versions claim they went to a cave, some say another village, and there are even a few versions that say the Piper had ill intentions toward the children – in one they meet a fate similar to the rats. I enjoyed some of the rat research I read and wanted to share it. If you want to continue the research on your own, I've added to the level of the cheesiness (and length) of this post by putting some common sayings involving rats in *italics* – try looking them up; the origins are interesting. But anyway, back to our new little friends.

When we were at the pet store, I didn't want any part of picking out the rat. I felt like they are only in pet stores to become snake food (which is why I won't join the *rat race* and work in a pet store, as much as I'd like to do the other work in the store), and I didn't want to have to see the ones

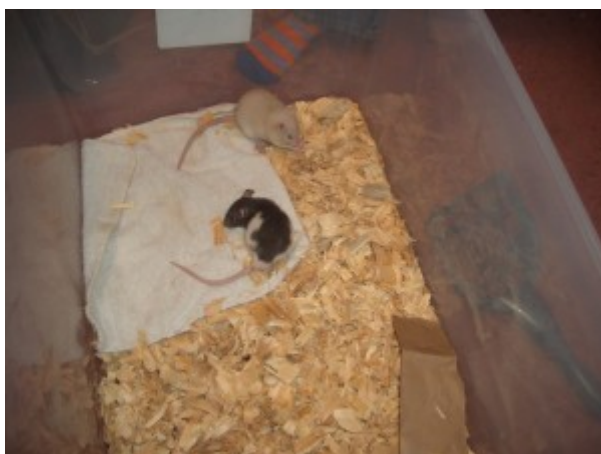
that wouldn't get saved. As it is, I went over there to take a glance, saw little Bobby, who was about to be put back in the snake food tank, and that's what prompted me to say, "Maybe we should get two." The pet store sent the rats home to us like this, a brown bag lunch for snakes, thus proving my point:



The rats my family chose for us are 4 week old brothers. They are adorable, incredibly tame, and I've already really bonded with Bobby. He cuddles me and sits on me and grooms himself – rats are actually very clean animals. The entire start-up for this type of pet set us back about \$25.

\$2.99 per rat + \$3 for bedding + \$9 cage + \$3 food (for about 3 weeks worth) + \$2 water bottle + tax. We are going to be resourceful about toys and use my kids' toys for the rats – we've already found that they like to crawl through these foam tunnel blocks they have. And we were very resourceful when making their cage as well. Instead of trying to decide between the \$19 glass aquarium and the \$24 hamster cage (I was concerned about the heaviness and the breakable glass of the aquarium and worried the rats would escape the cage), we opted for secret option #3 – a large \$9 transparent Rubbermaid bin with a lid in which we poked air holes. Overall, I'm very happy so far with the new pet decision, and my major concerns have not come to fruition which were: 1. that our Jack (Jerk) Russell Terrier mix would try to hunt the rats, and 2. that the kids would unwittingly hurt the rats. But our dog has not even noticed that the rats are here yet (she's almost 11 and

her sense of smell is failing faster than I thought – that makes me a little sad), and we laid down strict rules for the kids about handling the rats. I was also worried about having yet another chore to do around the house, but I was promised help from both of the enthusiastic new pet owners (there's a sucker born every minute). Here are the cuties – Bobby is the beige one and Oreo is the gray and white one:



Happy New Year!

Happy New Year! Holy cow, 2009 already! I hope you had a good New Year's. Ours was wonderul. We hosted a bash, which is always great so that we don't have to pack up the kids and all their luggage just to haul them out somewhere to stay until the wee hours of the morning. We played charades and other games and ate lots of yummy treats. Our kids – #2 and #4 in birth order – fell asleep way early. The older one stayed asleep all night, but wouldn't you know it – the baby woke right as we crawled into bed at 4 in the morning. I was able to sleep for a few hours, but that's more than I can say for my husband who woke with the baby. But then he got a short nap while I ambled downstairs to do some much needed cleanup from the party. After that, we were ready to drag

ourselves over to a friend's house for a New Year's Day chili feast – I'm told the beans bring good luck in the new year. More food, more fun, and we didn't plan on staying long but ended up getting home about 7 in the evening. I did miss the hockey game at Wrigley Field, but the Red Wings beat the Blackhawks anyway. I'm not a big hockey fan; I just thought it would be cool to see Wrigley all decked out for hockey. I wonder what they would have done if they had gotten some of that freak 60 degree weather again – how to maintain an ice rink in those conditions? Oh well, that's a tangent, good thing this site is called tangents.org

So the chili and rest of the food at our friends house was great, but I wish I could have enjoyed it more – seems I partied a little too hard the night before and felt a little tired and queasy come chili feast time. But it's my own fault – I should know that I'm getting older and can't handle the late nights (or early mornings for that matter) like I used to. But oh well – my friend did give me some delicious chili to take home, so hopefully it will be more enjoyable now that I was able to rest last night. Now I'll just have to get used to writing 2009 instead of 2008 all over the place...

Last Post of 2008!

Because I barely have time to fit in the writing of this current blog post, I can safely say that with 4 kids running around (Christmas break = parental nightmare) this will be my last blog post of 2008! What better way to go out then but to experiment with the new polling feature of tangents.org and make a New Year's themed poll? Enjoy, and have a very happy and safe New Year's celebration! Here's wishing you the best of luck in 2009! Check all that apply:

[poll id="3"]