

Drifter

I really like this song our church worship band has been playing lately. Enjoy Drifter:

Right Out Of Flipper

Came across this inspiring animal story, and since I haven't had the time to blog about any of the (mostly yucky) personal issues going on right now, I thought this would make a nice feel-good post. I'm still working on that Florida trip diary, really, I am!! But in the meantime, here is a story about some dolphins who saved a dog's life. This happened in Marco Island Florida, where we took our wonderful honeymoon almost 12 years ago.

[Dolphins Save Dog](#)

Monkey, Er, Ape See – Ape Do

To take a break from the vacation unpacking, I took the little ones to the zoo a few weeks ago. We had a great time – oh how I love winter zoo visits! There aren't many people around, and the animals can act like the animals they are instead of worrying about the hoards of visiting humans. Well, most of the time it's cool to see the animals acting like animals, unless they are doing disgusting things like the gorillas last week – don't watch this if you are squeamish, but I have to publish it because of how embarrassed the gorilla seems about her behavior. I felt so badly for filming her after she tried to hide that I turned off the camera, and that's when she got up and went and sat behind a post – out of my view. Why would she do something so gross if she is embarrassed by it?

WARNING: it's VERY gross!!!

The chimp was another story! His name is Harvey, and he is a senior citizen chimp – he just had his 52nd birthday, which is quite a milestone for a chimpanzee. Despite his age, Harvey is quite playful and has a penchant for young kids. When we walked over in front of Harvey's window, he was sitting in the corner wearing a sparkly lei, presumably from his birthday party which had just taken place days before.



When he saw us, he pulled off his lei and came over to his window to see the kids and play:

These videos were taken almost a month ago, and I've been trying to get back to the zoo, but my oldest child has decided that the zoo is "boring" – her words, *NEVER* mine. In fact, I'm wondering if I need a DNA test – how could someone with my DNA find the zoo boring???

During the week, I'm so tired and have so much to do that just writing this blog post is quite a challenge – I'm having a towel thrown over my head by my 2-year-old as I write! I think I fell in love with Harvey that January day, and I miss him!

Hambone Award Contender

Have you ever heard of the Hambone Award? It's a prize given out by Veterinary Pet Insurance, the nation's largest and oldest pet insurance company. Each month, the company selects the most unusual claims and chooses a monthly winner to vie for the yearly prize – the Hambone Award. Don't worry, all the contenders are pets who survived their ordeals. Last year's winner Ellie, a Labrador retriever from California, went to the emergency room after eating an entire beehive. She vomited large piles containing hundreds of dead bees, but Ellie was not harmed by the dead bees nor by the pesticide that killed them.

When reading suburban Chicago newspaper The Daily Herald's online headlines, the following caught my eye, "Owl Vs. Chihuahua", and that's where I read about Chico the Chihuahua's brave fight against a Great Horned Owl. Chico's owner was taking him for a walk in the wee hours of the morning, when a Great Horned Owl swooped out of nowhere (owls are silent flight birds) and picked up poor Chico, intending

him for his late night snack. Chico and his owner won the tug-of-war, and Chico won the VPI 'most unusual' story for the month of January, beating out such claims as a Labrador retriever that ate a marijuana cookie, a Golden retriever that swallowed a 5-inch barbecue skewer, a mutt that got wedged between banister bars and a Boston terrier who collided with a skier. If you'd like to read the other entries and be part of the public voting in September, you can go to the [VPI Hambone Award's website](#).

Oh, and how did the Hambone Award get its name? There was a dog insured by VPI who got himself trapped in a refrigerator and ate an entire Thanksgiving ham before he was discovered. He was treated for a mild case of hypothermia whereupon he fully recovered.

A Different Sort Of Homecoming

Before I publish my vacation diary, I would like to say a few words about some unexpected feelings I encountered upon returning home. Ending a vacation is always a chore, and for an in-the-process-of-being-reformed-worrywart like me, it's easy to get caught up in dreading the negatives that accompany getting back to normal life; ie, returning to a cold climate, laundry, unpacking, etc. Thanks to my growing relationship with God, I've been learning to embrace positives more easily, and I could not be more grateful for the opportunity for such a wonderful vacation and for the fact that we made it there and back safely.

But when we did return home, the welcome committee seemed a

bit small. The greetings of family members left behind (read: pets) seemed to be missing something, and the house seemed more empty than I had remembered it. Then it hit me: this was the first homecoming we've had since our family dog passed away last year.

I had noticed it on vacation, and in Florida it was actually an unexpectedly freeing feeling to not worry about a loved one left behind. Don't get me wrong; I love the pets we still have, but no one will ever take Charity's place. I used to feel such a hole in my heart when we went on vacation and left her behind that it gave me an extra motivation to hurry home. But this time, our homecoming celebration was short-lived: we greeted pets and they greeted us, and there was no one around to hold a grudge like Charity used to do when we left her behind. No one was miffed about getting left behind, in fact, I wonder if the dogs even really noticed...

It's been over a year since the last time I saw her, and I still miss her a lot.

Cutest Bunny Ever!!



Our kids had two snow days off school this week, so what

better activity for a family full of animal lovers than to visit the pet store? You can see where this is going... we went looking for 1 baby rat, and we came home with 2 baby rats and a bunny. One ridiculously cute bunny as yet without a name! There have been a lot of contenders, but we just haven't found any perfect ones yet. The leading ones so far are Tigger, Snow Bunny, and Arcy. Arcy is like a feminine version of R.C. which stands for Ridiculously Cute. I really like Tigger even though we THINK she's a girl bunny, but when I tried calling her Tigger it didn't click. Here's a video, and more suggestions are welcome in the comment box below:

And the new rats:



Florida 2011

Well, I've been back in town from a glorious family vacation to Florida for a few days now, and realistically, I guess I could say that I'm getting back on track. But catching up is going so slowly, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed and like I'll never be done. But you know what? With 4 small children in the house, I NEVER feel caught up on the to-dos, even when I don't leave town, so what does it matter if I took a week and a half off? It was great! Eventually I'll get around to posting an in-depth trip diary – these have come in such handy when I go back to find the name of a restaurant we visited or certain info about the trip; it's fun for reminiscence purposes too. For now, I will just post a small run-down of the 20-hour drive from Florida to Ohio which illustrates the dramatic temperature decrease we endured between the south and the north. There will be more to come later, I promise, so please don't forget about me and my little blog.

Sat Jan 22:

Orlando FL = 58 degrees at noon

GA / FL state line = 48 degrees at 5:20pm

Atlanta GA = 34 degrees at 10:15pm

Sun Jan 23:

Chattanooga, TN = 24 degrees at 12:30am

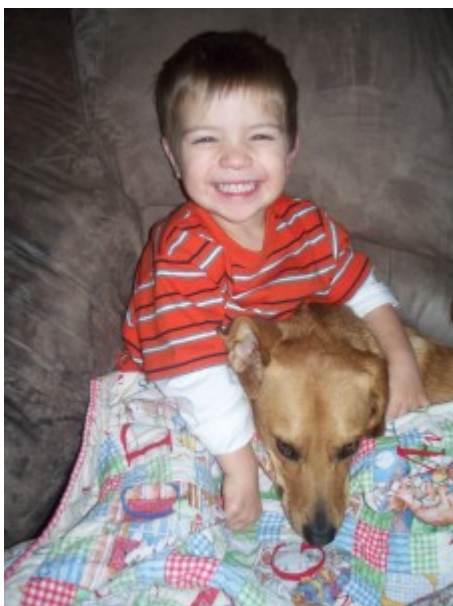
TN/KY border = 18 degrees at 2:45am

Van Wert/Paulding County borders, nw Ohio = NEGATIVE 8 degrees at 7:45am

BRRRrrrrrrr!!!!

The Dude Is Growing!

My son had his 30-month ($2\frac{1}{2}$ years for you laypeople) check-up at the doctor today. All is well, though he wasn't very cooperative for the student doctor in training when it came to getting his nose and ears checked. And he had to get a shot, which of course was sad to witness. Unlike his 3 brave older sisters, he did cry, but he got over it quickly and proudly showed off his "owie" for the rest of the day. The little dude weighs 29.2 lbs. and is 2 feet and 10.5 inches tall.



A God Story

I love coming across God stories. Real life anecdotes which display the way God works in our lives, God stories can be experienced by Christians and non-Christians alike; it's just a matter of recognizing them and taking the time to be thankful and appreciate them.

I was at our babysitter's house last week picking up my kids, and there was a little girl cuddling a dog. Being an animal lover, I had to say hello to the cute little furball and find out her name and age. The little girl's father said he didn't know the pup's age because they had found her, and then he said, "I have to tell you the whole story." So he begins his story, not knowing me or that I am a Christian who appreciates God stories. His story went something like this:

"My wife left me; she left me and the kids and even took our dogs, so these poor kids lost their mother and their dogs. I kept telling them I would get them a dog, but I had lots of other things to work out too. So for Halloween, we went to one of those 'trunk or treat' things at a church, and there was a little girl walking around inside the church with a puppy in her arms. I thought, something doesn't seem right there – why is this little girl walking around a church with a puppy, so I asked her about the dog. "We're not even sure what we're going to do with her – we just found her outside." the little girl told him. "Well," I told her, "my kids have been looking for a dog." We took home the little puppy, and she was mangy and starving, just skin and bones. We didn't estimate her to be more than 10 weeks old at that time, and she has been a part of the family for the last few months. She is thriving physically, and she has helped provide some of the healing the kids needed as they spent Christmas without

their mom."

After hearing the story, it was magical to see the little girl cuddle her puppy. It warmed my heart to see them together, knowing that God brought this little puppy into the lives of a family who needed her – and brought a family into the life of an ailing little puppy who needed them as well. God works in wonderful ways, and being a witness to it is awesome – you just have to stop and look around; He is always there!

FIVE MORE DAYS!!

Only FIVE more days until we leave for a family vacation to warm sunny Florida!! Making this one even better than most are extended family and friends that are able to meet us down there. The kids (and us!!) could not be more excited!!!

I just have to figure out how to get 6 people and all the stuff that goes along with 2 adults and 4 kids into a mini-van and keep us sane for a 20+ hour car trip and one again on the way back... Every time we take a big vacation I worry about it, every time it goes better than I could have imagined. Not going to make that mistake this time; I am just SO appreciative and happy to be going! Thank you God for blessing my family with such a fun opportunity for some togetherness!!!

Much work ahead of me this week, but the most fun kind of work: preparing-for-a-vacation work!!!

CAN'T WAIT!!!