

Skipping Christmas

As a kid, I was a very avid reader – I would always read myself to sleep. Somewhere in my 20's though, I lost sight of my reading hobby; I guess that's when I got too busy and too tired to lie in bed awake at night and read. During my last pregnancy, however, I started reading before bed again, and it's something that I really enjoy, even though I often get too tired to make it through more than a few pages per night.

When I recently began reading again, I started by reading mostly non-fiction; it was really fun for me to unwind at night and learn something at the same time. I read a book about an Afghan girl who stepped on a land mine, lost her leg, and fled the Taliban by coming to America. I read a book about a family that bicycled across the country – they had kids who were 13, 11, and 3 years old, and they made it from New Jersey to Colorado on their bikes. There was also the book about the Burnham's; they were husband and wife missionaries who were held hostage in the Philippines for almost a year. The wife wrote a book about their daily struggles as hostages – it was fascinating. Then I switched to a few fiction books by Christopher Pike, an author best known for his young adult horror novels. I read those as a teen, so as an adult, I decided to try his novels for adults – one I really liked and one wasn't so good – *Falling* and *The Blind Mirror*, respectively. I then started a book about the plight of Terri Shiavo, a woman who collapsed in the early 90's and suffered brain damage. Her case was in the national spotlight because her husband insisted that she would have never wanted to live hooked up to machines while her parents disagreed. The governor tried to help, and even the President of the United States tried to step in, but ultimately Terri's right to live became just another case in the courts and her husband won. Her feeding tube was removed and it took her almost 14 days to slowly starve and dehydrate to death. The

case fascinated me at the time, and I found this book about it written by Mark Fuhrman of the OJ Simpson murder trial fame. Except that I'm having trouble reading the book since it's about a rather dark and depressing subject, and that's not really how I want to unwind before bed. Though I did learn something interesting from Mark Fuhrman: according to him, a coroner is an elected official who doesn't even necessarily have to have a medical degree. Hmmm...

A friend recommended the author John Grisham, and the other day I ran into the library, trying to be very quick since the family was waiting in the car. His books looked so large and lengthy and intimidating, so I grabbed the smallest one I saw called *Skipping Christmas*. I began to read it, and it's about a family called the Krank's who decide to skip Christmas one year. That sounds familiar, I thought, and after a quick trip to imdb.com, I discovered that the awfully panned movie of 2004 called [Christmas With The Krank's](#) is indeed the movie based upon John Grisham's book, *Skipping Christmas*. So far the book is ok, but nothing that keeps me looking forward to reading it or anything. I have Grisham's only work of non-fiction on hold at the library, maybe I'll get up there today to get it because maybe I'm sick of fiction and it's time to go back to non-fiction... I hate to admit it, but I really like to read true-crime books before bed, mostly about murder. True, murder is a dark and depressing subject, but not in the same way as the story of Terri Shiavo; it's hard to explain. And it sounds kind of strange, but true-crime books are the ones I seem to be drawn to and I can't watch true-crime on tv in bed anymore – too many nightmares for my husband and I. One of the best true-crime books that I ever read was *The Stranger Beside Me* by Ann Rule. If you don't know, Ann Rule is a famous true-crime writer, and this book was extra-fascinating because it chronicles her relationship with the famous psychopathic serial killer, Ted Bundy. Ann Rule was actually friends with Ted Bundy – they met working at a suicide hotline together. The book chronicles their

friendship while working at the hotline, while the murders were taking place, and after Ted was caught – very interesting read, and crazy that one of the most famous crime writers had a friendship (unrelated to her ever writing a book about him) with one of the most prolific serial killers of all time.

Why I Loathe School Fundraisers

It's that time of year again – back to school already! For the most part, this means good news for me as it clears out half of the foot traffic around here during the day. And since my oldest 2 are school-age and also the ones who are constantly misbehaving lately – Whoo Hoo for back to school time!

But back to school season also means it's time for school fundraisers, and my oldest daughter brought one home on the *second* day of school! They really couldn't wait until the second week of school at least? Because of how busy we've been around here between the new baby, my husband being in a play and his health scare, I set the fundraiser order form aside until the night before it was due when I reluctantly sent out an email seeking fundraiser participants. We actually did pretty well; better than I thought, actually, so I have to thank those of you who ordered stuff. But I have to come clean and say I did not order anything from my own daughter's school fundraiser. I just could not find anything I needed or even wanted for quadruple what it *should* cost.

My nephew sent me an email about a week later seeking participants for his first school fundraiser, so for him I was

a little more motivated to order something. Since the kids get credit for the number of items they get people to order versus how much is spent, I started looking for something inexpensive I could order. I began by trying to think of any gifts we might need for people sometime soon. No luck – we have a basement full of stuff my husband got from overstocked wholesalers that is just waiting to be gifted away. Next I tried looking for a small kitchen gadget I could use, even if it was only once in a blue moon. I found a can strainer – a plastic disk with holes in it you put over cans to drain the water out. It was \$5 – outrageously expensive, of course, but I could justify it for my nephew's first attempts at fundraising for his school. This wasn't so hard, I thought as I clicked on the shopping cart to check out. Except that all of a sudden, I was spending \$11 instead of \$5. And there was a text box on the webpage that told me that \$2.20 of my order goes directly to his school. They were trying to make it sound like a good thing, but \$2.20 out of \$11? And I'm spending \$11 on a 4 inch piece of plastic with holes in it? It really is easy enough to just use the can lid to strain whatever is in the can – and now I couldn't even justify buying an over-priced item "for a good cause" since the school was only getting \$2 of my money! Ugh, back to shopping on the fundraiser's site...

Have you ever had to shop for something you didn't want? It's actually quite difficult. We had a similar experience after our new baby was born. Someone got him some clothes that were the wrong size, so we ended up with a bunch of Kohl's store credit. My husband and I spent almost 2 hours in the Kohl's trying to figure out what we wanted; it was really difficult for us. Kohl's is not our type of store – we love bargain shopping, and even though it was "free" store credit we were spending, it was hard to justify their expensive prices on things we barely needed. We ended up with 2 candle warmers and an electric razor for my husband. He can grow a beard in a matter of days, and this razor cut his shaving time

drastically. The candle warmers are pretty cool too – you put candles on them and still get the scent, but without the ‘something’s burning’ smell or the danger of the open flame – a must-have if you like candles and have 4 little kids running around. So anyway, where was I before the Kohl’s tangent?

Oh, yes, trying to shop for things you don’t need... Like I said, I could justify the \$5 for the can strainer, but when it climbed to \$11 (especially because only \$2 went to my nephew’s school), I had to explore other options. I considered a ‘dip kit’ for \$6, figuring I could use it at one of the many game nights we host – then it would double as a conversation piece as well – but shipping on every item was \$6. Since the dip instructions read, ‘just add mayonnaise and sour cream’, I couldn’t justify \$12 on a packet of powder, again with the school only getting a measly \$2. So anyway, over an hour later, I finally found a good solution – a magazine subscription. Sure, I was now spending \$15 instead of \$12, but there were no shipping fees which meant the school got \$8 of my money. With 4 kids I barely ever have enough time to read the daily newspaper, so I don’t really know what I’m going to do with all the *US News and World Report* magazines that will soon be piling up around here. But hey, my kids already have a subscription to *Highlights* and my husband’s not really into magazines, so what else was I supposed to do? The subscription to *Parents* magazine was actually cheaper, but as I’ve said many times before to people who try to borrow me books about parenting – at the end of a long day full of changing diapers, cleaning spills, refereeing fights, and serving meals for people to reject, the last thing I want to do to unwind is read about kids! So I figured I could maybe save time – instead of surfing the ‘net at night reading news stories, I could bring my *US News and World Report* up to bed and start my reading time a little earlier so I don’t stay up too late.

But the point of this long rambling blog is this: I hate

school fundraisers. I hate asking people to spend their hard-earned money on them, I hate ordering from them, and I hate the way they're set up. Don't get me wrong – I was more than happy to order from my nephew, especially because it's his first one; I find that kind of cute. Nevermind that little voice in my head that says, "but he's only in *Kindergarten* and they're already making him sell things!" But lucky for me, my sister only has 2 kids. Can't say the same for us -our family's fundraiser victims will get hit up a whopping 4 times a year! Not only that, but when the kids are in different clubs and activities, those are also prime targets for fundraising opportunities. My daughter brought home a newsletter just today that said her Girl Scouts fundraiser will be starting in a few weeks... ugh, here we go again. So even if we don't have any more kids and say each of our kids is in only 1 club or activity that does a fundraiser (girl scouts does 2 if you include selling cookies) – that's now a minimum of 8 times per year I have to hit up my family and friends. And that 8 times a year will probably all be overlapping in the autumn months! It is my hope to someday be able to put aside enough time to attend the PTO meetings and urge the implementation of a new fundraising system – one where not so much money is wasted on the company that is hired to actually do the fundraiser. Until then, maybe I will just buy stock in one of these fundraising companies that are preying on our children's schools... in a struggling economy, something tells me that is one type of business that isn't hurting!

Getting To Know Me – Some

More

Got another 'getting to know you' quiz via email the other day. Since I still fill these out for some reason (don't really know why I do this – haven't my friends already learned all these things about me?), I figured I might as well post it on the blog. And this one prompted me to add a new category to my blogging also – fun forwards. Of course now I have a bunch of posts that should go into this category, but I'm not about to go back and re-classify all my posts.

44 ODD Things about you! If you opened this, FILL IT OUT!
Learn

44 things about your friends, and let them learn 44 things about you!

Send back to me and to several more friends!

1. Do you like blue cheese? yes
2. Have you ever smoked? yes
3. Do you own a gun? no
4. What flavor Kool Aid was your favorite? mountain berry
5. Do you get nervous before a doctor appointment? depends what it's for
6. What do you think of hot dogs? like em – especially Nathan's
7. Favorite Christmas movie? Elf, Christmas Vacation
8. What do you prefer to drink in the morning? water or iced tea if I'm tired
9. Can you do push ups? dunno
10. What's your favorite piece of jewelry? wedding ring
11. Favorite hobby? reading
12. Do you have A.D.D.? I just might
13. What's one trait you hate about yourself? impatience
14. Middle name? Marie
15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment? OUCH (my almost 2-year-old is doing my hair), is it too hot to cook pizzas at

the party?, what will we do with 3 pizzas if we don't cook them?

16. Name 3 drinks you regularly drink? iced tea, water, beer

17. Current worry? husband's health

18. Current hate right now? my kids' inability to appreciate things

19. Favorite place to be? anywhere alone with Chris

20. How did you bring in the New Year? pregnant

21. Where would you like to go? Madagascar

22. Name three people who will complete this? Jamy (already did), Vickie, Megan

23. Do you own slippers? no

24. What color shirt are you wearing right now? red

25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? yes

26. Can you whistle? yes

28. Would you be a pirate? what does that mean? I've got a parrot...

29. What songs do you sing in the shower? whatever is on the radio

30. Favorite Girl's Names? Taylor, Samantha, Disney

31. Favorite boy's names? Christopher, Jonathan, Michael

32. What's in your pocket right now? don't have pockets

33. Last thing that made you laugh? The Nerd

34. Best bed sheets as a child? Snoopy

35. Worst injury you've ever had? getting cut open at the last minute to have a baby

36. Do you love where you live? YES

37. How many TVs do you have in your house? 5 + a few that don't work

38. Who is your loudest friend? Lisa H.

39. How many dogs do you have? 2

40. Does someone have a crush on you? yes

41. What is your favorite book? Monkeys on the Interstate by Jack Hanna

42. What is your favorite candy? chocolate

43. Favorite Sports Team? Chicago Cubs, Chicago Bears

44. What song or songs do you want played at your funeral?

Canon in D – more appropriate for a wedding, I guess, but it's my favorite classical piece... it's not like I've thought about this!

TAKE LIFE ONE DAY AT A TIME. HAVE A GREAT ONE

The REAL Bambi and Thumper

I'll admit I got these super-cute animal pictures from an email forward... they are just too cute... The skeptic in me says, are they real? I looked on snopes.com and didn't see anything, but in this age of photoshop, you never know. If they are photoshopped, the creator did an excellent job... Let's pretend they're real and that these animal buddies have such a wonderful friendship that it spanned at least 2 seasons as the pictures suggest – they're too cute not to believe it!





Optical Illusion Personality Test

This is pretty cool. Watch the video and figure out which way the lady is spinning. According to the video, if you see the lady spinning to the right, your right brain dominates and your thinking is black and white and fact-based. If you see her spinning to the left, you are more creative and open to seeing “gray” areas. Even if the personality assessment part is a bit off, the illusion is still cool to see. Check it out:

Sounds simple, but for some people she keeps changing direction. I saw her spinning counter-clockwise; I guess that would be considered left, but I could force myself to see her spinning in the other direction if I tried – weird! Once you've established which direction you see her spinning, try to get your brain and eyes to switch it on you if you can!

Mystery Alaska

With Alaskan Sarah Palin's eye on the White House and all the northern exposure in the media lately, we decided to pull out one of our old favorites the other night and watched the 1999 movie [Mystery Alaska](#). It's a pretty good movie and obviously has lots of replay value, at least for us, because we've seen it lots of times. It was interesting watching it this time since I think this is the first time we've seen it since we've moved into a small town, and the movie is all about small town living. The main difference between Mystery Alaska and my small town is the climate, of course.

In Mystery, residents' lives seem to revolve around hockey (and sleeping around, but don't let that give you the wrong idea about the movie. Every small town has its sordid secrets). Boys in Mystery grow up with the "goal" (pun intended) of getting to play in the famed Saturday Game. [Hank Azaria](#) plays a former Mysterian who left town because he was never good enough to play in the game. He becomes a writer for Sports Illustrated instead, although his success in the real world does not make him feel any more acceptance in Mystery, even if he does arrive in a helicopter. He gets the brilliant idea to bring the New York Rangers to Mystery to play the Saturday Game, and well, you'll have to watch the movie to see what happens. As in any small town, there is a

bit of drama, and the movie is successful with its character development as it follows the lives of the most popular residents of Mystery. [Russell Crowe](#), who is not normally one of my favorite actors, is pretty good in this movie as the family man / town sheriff who is growing too old to play in the Saturday Game and must face some tough decisions about what is best for his family versus what is best for Mystery and the integrity of the Saturday Game. [Burt Reynolds](#) is excellent as the no-nonsense judge who also struggles as he raises his teenagers. In fact, perhaps the funniest line of the movie is said to his character by his wife. She is consoling their teenage daughter, and he wants to know what's wrong. "Walter," his wife says, "if you don't leave, I swear I'll tell you!" If you have kids, especially teenagers, you can appreciate the truth and the humor in that line, more so if you see the movie and know the daughter's issue to which she is referring.

Even if you don't like hockey, this is an entertaining film with dramatic moments interspersed with comedy. Its one shortcoming is the fact that there is too much adult content for it to be considered as a family film. However, adults will enjoy the fine performances by the large ensemble cast which make Mystery Alaska a well-rounded, heart-tugging and entertaining film – definitely recommended by this blogger!

Armed Robbery – With a Twist

I'm a sucker for interesting news stories, and the following caught my eye. An armed robber attempted to knock off a store but was chased down the street by some flying bullets and the gun-toting store owner. The owner of the store ended up facing more serious charges than the robber for shooting a gun

on a busy street, and he skipped bail and hasn't been seen since. Because he didn't show up to testify against the robber, there was no choice but to let the robber go free... except for the fact that he is an illegal alien, so he's facing consequences for that. And did I mention that the store owner is also an illegal alien as reported in a previous news story about the incident? Crazy story, read it for yourself here:

Crystal Lake, Illinois – *Efrain S. Castanon got lucky earlier this year when he managed to escape his foiled attempt to rob a Crystal Lake business without getting shot by its gun-toting owner.*

The South suburban man got lucky again Monday when that owner, fleeing from his own set of criminal charges, failed to appear in court to testify against him.

This time instead of bullets from owner Rafael Diaz, luck allowed Castanon, 39, of Worth, to evade a possible prison sentence as part of a deal with McHenry County prosecutors.

Under the deal, Castanon was sentenced to one year of non-reporting probation after admitting guilt to unlawful restraint and attempted theft stemming from the failed Jan. 28 holdup of Novedes Veracruz in Crystal Lake.

He also received a six-month jail term, but that is time served since his arrest in January.

Diaz's absence Monday left prosecutors with little choice by the deal they cut with Castanon, Assistant McHenry County State's Attorney Mary Baccam said in court Monday.

"Rafael Diaz has fled the jurisdiction and is unavailable to testify for the state," she said.

Castanon initially faced up to 15 years in prison after authorities charged him with attempted armed robbery,

attempted aggravated robbery and attempted robbery in connection with the holdup.

Police said Castanon was one of three men who entered the store about 3 p.m. that day armed with a gun and attempted to tie up owner Rafael Diaz and his wife while robbing them.

Diaz, authorities said, broke free, retrieved a handgun he kept in the store and chased the would-be robbers out, firing numerous shots in their direction as they fled along a heavily traveled section of Route 14.

Two of the men escaped in a car and have not been found since, but Castanon was left behind and arrested by police.

Because he fired at the men as they ran away down a busy street, authorities charged Diaz, 54, of Crystal Lake, with aggravated battery with a firearm, a felony more serious than those faced by Castanon.

Diaz posted a \$10,000 bond after his arrest and hasn't been seen by law enforcement since. A \$125,000 warrant for his arrest was issued in April.

Although Castanon is a free man as a result of his plea deal, he could remain locked up in the McHenry County jail on a hold by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Spinach and Strawberry Salad

My friend Shirley is compiling a recipe book for our community theater group and says she's short on salads. Since I have to type this recipe into my computer to email it to her, thought I'd share it with you on my blog... just in time for strawberries to go out of season. Oh well, enjoy anyway!

Spinach and Strawberry Salad

makes 4 servings

1 – 5 or 7 oz. package of baby spinach or baby romaine

2 cups sliced strawberries

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled goat or feta cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup pine nuts, toasted

Combine greens and strawberries, add balsamic vinaigrette dressing and toss gently to evenly coat. Sprinkle each serving with cheese and nuts. Here is a recipe to make your own balsamic vinaigrette dressing from scratch:

Balsamic Vinaigrette Dressing

1 Tablespoon balsamic vinegar

3 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 Tablespoon chopped fresh basil leaves or 1 teaspoon dried basil, crushed

salt and black pepper

Whisk vinegar and olive oil in small bowl. Add basil and season with salt and pepper.

I Am SpongeBob, Married To A SpongeBob

Yet another email forward struck my fancy... this one's a personality test to determine which cartoon character you're most like. With 29 points, I am SpongeBob SquarePants, and my husband got 31 points, so he is also SpongeBob. Not sure how truthful this is, but fun to take the little quiz. I know, I

should get a life... but what about the person who sat and mapped out this whole personality test?

This is fun.

Everyone has a personality of a cartoon character. Have you ever asked yourself what cartoon character you most resemble? A group of investigators got together and analyze the personalities of well known and modern cartoon characters. The information that was gathered was made into this test.

Answer all the questions (only 10) with what describes you best, add up all your points (which are next to the answer that you choose) at the end and look for your results.

Do not cheat by looking at the end of the e-mail before you are done .

Then forward this to all your friends (including the person who sent it to you) and change the subject of this message to what character is you.

1. Which one of the following describes the perfect date?

- a) Candlelight dinner (4 pts.)
- b) Fun/Theme Park (2 pts.)
- c) Painting in the park (5 pts)
- d) Rock concert (1 pt.)
- e) Going to the movies (3 pts.)

2. What is your favorite type of music?

- a) Rock and Roll (2 pts.)
- b) Alternative (1 pt.)
- c) Soft Rock (4 pts.)
- d) Country (5 pts)
- e)Pop (3 pts.)

3. What type of movies do you prefer?

- a) Comedy (2 pts.)
- b) Horror (1 pt.)
- c) Musical (3 pts.)
- d) Romance (4 pts.)
- e) Documentary (5 pts.)

4. Which of these occupations would you choose if you only could pick one?

- a) Waiter (4 pts.)
- b) Professional Sports Player (5 pts.)
- c) Teacher (3 pts.)
- d) Police (2 pts.)
- e) Cashier (1 pt.)

5. What do you do with your spare time?

- a) Exercise (5 pts.)
- b) Read (4 pts.)
- c) Watch television (2 pts.)
- d) Listen to music (1 pt.)
- e) Sleep (3 pts.)

6. Which one of the following colors do you like best?

- a) Yellow (1 pt.)
- b) White (5 pts.)
- c) Sky Blue (3 pts.)
- d) Dark Blue (2 pts.)
- e) Red (4 pts.)

7. What do you prefer to eat?

- a) Snow (3 pts.)
- b) Pizza (2 pts.)
- c) Sushi (1 pt.)
- d) Pasta (4 pts.)
- e) Salad (5 pts.)

8. What is your favorite holiday ?

- a) Halloween (1 pt.)
- b) Christmas (3 pts.)
- c) New Year's (2 pts.)
- d) Valentine's Day (4 pts.)
- e) Thanksgiving (5 pts.)

9. If you could go to one of these places, which would it be?

- a) Paris (4 pts.)
- b) Spain (5 pts.)
- c) Las Vegas (1 pt.)
- d) Hawaii (4 pts.)
- e) Hollywood (3 pts)

10. Which of the following people would you prefer to spend time with?

- a) Someone smart (5 pts.)
- b) Someone attractive (2 pts.)
- c) Someone who likes to Party (1 pt.)
- d) Someone who always has fun (3 pts.)
- e) Someone very sentimental (4 pts.)

Now add up your points and find the answer you have been waiting for! Put your cartoon character's name in the subject line and forward it to your friends and back to the person that sent this to you.

(10-16 points) You are Garfield:

You are very comfortable, easy going , and you definitely know how to have fun but sometimes you take it to an extreme. You always know what you are doing and you are always in control of your life. Others may not see things as you do, but that doesn't mean that you always have to do what is right. Try to remember, your happy spirit may hurt you or others.

(17-23 points) You are Snoopy:

You are fun; you are very cool and popular. You always know what's in and you're never out of style, you are good at knowing how to satisfy everyone else. You have probably disappeared for a few days more than once, but you always come home with the family values that you learned. Being married and having children are important to you, but only after you

have had your share of fun times.

(24-28 points) You are Elmo:

You have lots of friends and are popular, always willing to give advice and help out a person in need. You are very optimistic and always see the bright side of things. Some good advice: try not to be too much of a dreamer. Dreaming too big could cause many conflicts in your life.

(29-35 points) You are Sponge Bob Square Pants. You are the classic person everyone loves. You are the best friend that anyone could ever have and never wants to lose. You never cause harm to anyone and they would never not understand your feelings. Life is a journey, it's funny and calm for the most part. Stay away from traitors and jealous people and you will be stress free.

(36-43 points) You are Charlie Brown:

You are tender, you fall in love quickly but you are also very serious about all relationships. You are a family person. You call your Mom every Sunday. You have many friends and may occasionally forget a few birthdays. Don't let your passion confuse you with reality.

(44-50 points) You are Dexter:

You are smart and definitely a thinker. Every situation is fronted with a plan. You have a brilliant mind. You demonstrate very strong family principles. You maintain a stable routine but never ignore a bad situation when it comes. Try to do less over thinking every once in a while to spice things up a bit with spontaneity.

Now don't spoil it! Have some fun! Change the subject of the e-mail to the name of your cartoon character and send it on.

Unforseen Side Effect Of Hurricanes

With all the storm activity in the Atlantic Ocean lately, I've been especially interested in hurricanes. I've lived a lot of places, but since I've only resided in the midwest, I've never witnessed a hurricane firsthand. Well, that's not entirely true. There was a hurricane a couple of years ago (I forgot its name unfortunately) that ventured up to our corner of Ohio. By the time it got here, it had been over land for quite some time which had reduced it to nothing but rain, lots of rain. It was really no different than any other rain we've gotten, except that I had been watching the radar, and I knew that it had been a hurricane in a past life – that made it special to me; I really enjoyed it.

Anyway, last night, the baby decided to wake up right as we were going to bed, so I was stuck watching tv while I fed him. And it's strange, because I really used to enjoy tv, but that's changed for me recently. Maybe it's because we are so busy all the time so I got used to not watching tv... I don't know what it is. All I know is that I used to be the kind of person who could be happy watching anything on tv – I could find something that would entertain me at any time of the day or night. Not so much anymore. I still like tv, and I love watching my favorite shows (like The Office – almost time for new episodes!!!), but “junk tv” as I call it (reality shows, documentaries, etc.) isn't so appealing anymore. My point in detailing all of this is to explain how interesting I found some random documentary I caught last night on the History Channel while I was feeding my son.

The documentary was about giant snakes, specifically pythons, and how they are starting to become a threat to people in Florida. What I found most fascinating about this is the fact that these snakes are not indigenous to the United States, but

in 1992, when Hurricane Andrew hit Florida, many pet stores and homes that had kept these animals as pets were destroyed. Baby pythons were released into the wild and because of Florida's tropical climate, especially in the Everglades, these animals now have a wild population that is thriving. On the show, they had pictures of one snake that had swallowed an adult human whole. They weren't sure if the pictures were real or a hoax, and unfortunately I never found out because my son let me go to bed before the show was over. They also had pictures of a snake that had swallowed a 6-foot-long alligator whole, but it had ruptured the snake, causing his death. In the words of a snake expert on the show, "snakes can digest anything" – it's just that the alligator probably clawed the snake open. But you could see the outline of the alligator in the snake – it looked like an alligator colored like a snake – it was bizarre.

I may have to find this documentary again so I can watch it when I'm not half asleep. But it's really interesting to me that because of a hurricane, Florida now has another fearsome reptile lurking in the Everglades. I'm sure that was the last thing on people's minds after Hurricane Andrew wreaked its havoc 16 years ago – I bet this scenario didn't cross anyone's mind. Who knows what unforeseen side effects we'll see from Hurricane Katrina in a couple of decades? One can only imagine...