

Windy City Classic

Back in the days when it didn't count, there was only one yearly face-off between the Chicago cross-town rivals, the Cubs and the White Sox. It was called a number of things, but when I was younger, I remember it being referred to as the Windy City Classic. No matter which side you cheer for, these games are important to every sports fan in Chicago. I even remember cutting school one year to attend...

But now that there is something known as inter-league play, there are 6 of these games a year, and they do count. Today was the opening game of one such series, and I am suffering through it. One of the rare Cubs games I've actually gotten to watch on tv this year, it has to be broadcast by Sox announcers, even though the game is being played at Wrigley Field and the Cubs are the home team. I cannot stand the Sox announcers. Not only do they stink as announcers (I would be rich if I got paid for every time they've said "south-paw" – some diversity in your subject matter, guys, please?), but they are on *their* side. So every time the White Sox make a play, even though the crowd is booing, the announcers get excited. And I won't even waste much time complaining about the shouts of "Put it on the Board!" I'm subjected to every time the Sox score runs.

There's a lot at stake for this series – both teams are in first place in their respective divisions, even though it must be noted that the Cubs have a much better record – but I'm not really minding the errands I have to run that will take me away from today's game. Watching the Cubs lose to the Sox is one thing if that happens, but hearing these horrible announcers rub in every homerun or lucky play the Sox make is a new brand of torture of which I'm glad to be relieved!

Another Infamous List

I mentioned my infamous listing a few blog posts ago – I make lists of everything; including (rarely) lists of lists to make!

This list is for physical things, rather than everything that will change with the addition of a boy. Obviously, things like potty-training, long car rides, and even every meal time will be different while taking a boy's eating habits into consideration in our household full of girls.

Things That Will Change When We Add a Boy to Our Household

No need for baby-sized headbands or barrettes

Boys need only 1 pair of shoes. Girls love shoes, so they need at the bare minimum, a pair of sandals, a pair of gym shoes, and a pair of dress shoes PER GIRL – our 20-month-old daughter already likes to try on shoes – just for fun!

Accessories like hats, socks, belts are all different between boys and girls things

Pillowcases, bedsheets, pillows, blankets

Hmm, so far I only have wardrobe changes listed... I'm sure there will be a lot more differences and I will start another list so I can compare while I'm actually living with the differences every day!

Little Women

We were privileged to get to spend an evening without kids to take in a local community theater's production of Little Women, the Musical.

I must be honest – the music in this musical is not my favorite. It has nothing to do with how it was performed or who sang it; it just seemed to me to be words set to random music. But I don't know much about singing, music composition, or even good theater for that matter. That being said, I will say that it's definitely a production worth seeing. The costumes and set were great, and the large cast of talented actors and singers seemed very cohesive and never crowded on the stage. The play took me back into civil war times, and I do like to see stories from this time period played out live. I was pleasantly surprised by a few of the characters' performances since they were people I've worked with before so I thought I knew what to expect – but a few of their performances were much better than I even expected, and yes, two of those people read or are closely related to people who are regular readers of this blog ☐

But I'm not being biased... I really was impressed. A few of the new people – performers who haven't done much or anything for this particular theater group – were surprisingly talented also, though I have to say at least one was not. And I might even say that the beautiful wigs almost deserve a curtain call of their own... but don't let the wigs steal your thunder, cast, because you can expect standing ovations from your audiences throughout the run of the show, I think. Overall, it was a nice evening out – the show part of the dinner and show anyway. I was so disappointed in my lack of a good meal last night that I composed this little ditty:

RIP – Maywood Restaurant in Montpelier, Ohio

They sold the restaurant but kept the name,
The tables and chairs are all that's the same.
The food quality's gone,
Bob's recipes too
It's a shame that my dinner
Tasted like old shoe.

It was once premium food
But now it's soured my mood.
Advice I would give:
Eat here if you dare
Since I traded gourmet
For mere Sysco fare.

The ditty tells the story – basically we had this awesome restaurant nearby with **very** high quality food that was always cooked by the chef-owner personally. I understand that people have to retire, but it is almost a crime that they still use the same name for the restaurant. I mean, with a food quality drop this severe, it's their duty to warn people before they are tempted to eat there! Too bad dinner didn't work out, but if the theater keeps putting on shows like Little Women, it will be enough of a reason to drive across the county to see them.

The Happening

We went to see the newest [M. Night Shyamalan](#) movie last night – The Happening starring [Mark Wahlberg](#) and [Zooey Deschanel](#). It's an end-of-the-world type movie, but what sets this one apart from the others is that neither the audience nor the characters in the movie know what is happening to the population and why. People just start acting strange – it

begins in parks, where crowds of people freeze in their tracks, and then they begin to slowly and methodically commit suicide. It's really creepy! I especially liked how little gore and there was and how tame the violence was, especially by today's standards and with all the death that was occurring in the movie. Before we went, I had read some bad reviews about it, but I didn't find it boring in the slightest as some of the reviews suggested. It was a gripping, intense, and interesting movie, not to mention effectively eerie. I don't want to give too much away, so all I will say is that I was hoping for more of a resolve and explanation at the end, but since I've seen other M. Night Shyamalan movies, I was also expecting even less closure than we received. He writes, directs, and produces his own movies; they are usually thought-provoking suspense films, often laced with twists – I recommend [The Village](#), [Unbreakable](#), and [The Sixth Sense](#) to try a few. Overall, I would say it was a really good doomsday-TYPE movie. Please don't think it compares to the movie called [Doomsday](#) – one of the most awful I've ever seen. But The Happening has an interesting premise, and it achieves fright without overdoing the gore, which is unusual for scary movies in this day and age. My one problem with the movie is Mark Wahlberg's acting – at times it's just awful! I don't know why he was cast in this movie, but at least he doesn't ruin it. Zooey Deschanel is good – didn't even see any glimpse of her character from [Elf](#) -and [John Leguizamo](#) has a strong performance as well. It is 90 minutes well-spent!

About the Zoo...

Oops, I forgot to mention a few things about the [Potawatomi Zoo](#) in South Bend, Indiana in my post the other day. Even though it was small and not very well taken care of from an

aesthetic point of view, we had some of the best animal encounters there – can't believe I forgot to mention them.

First, they have a white tiger, and he was right up against the glass. We could see his beautiful eyes and everything.

The African lions at this zoo have a small exhibit (but didn't seem to be unhappy in the slightest), which means we were able to see them pretty close up also.

The red pandas were very active and we got to see them climbing around. This creature is so agile, he made climbing branches of trees look like he was climbing stair-steps.

They had a baby Amur Leopard who was born in Decemeber and had just been put on exhibit 2 days before our visit. He was so cute and curious. He climbed all the way up the cage wall and tried to get on the ceiling, then he had a little trouble getting down, but he was so excited when he did it, and mom scolded him a little bit – it was awesome to see that kind of interaction.

So overall, it was a great zoo experience. A cute little zoo, even if it could use some touch-ups.

Jubilee Time

It's time for our town's annual summer fest; they call it the Jubilee. Every year I'm compelled to attend, even though I become more disenchanted with the whole affair as years pass. I just really like summer fest atmospheres, and I can't resist going when we live within blocks of it. It's fun to take all the kids there without having to pack up everyone in the car, spend a few bucks for gas to get there, or haggle over

parking. But as every cost in our economy rises, the Jubilee is no exception. And if the kids had lots of fun, it'd be worth it, but every year it seems the Jubilee finds ways to cut corners and disappoint my kids.

Take this year, for example. "Wrist band day" was on the first day of the carnival; a day when you buy a wristband for one "low" price (now \$16, up \$2 from the \$14 it cost last year) and it gets you on "unlimited" rides. I think they planned wrist band day on the first day of the carnival for a reason – before anyone could get to the carnival and look around to see that some of the usual rides are missing. Not only that, but for small children, because of height requirements, there are only about 4 rides they were able to use their wristband on. My 4-year-old is a little daredevil and wanted to ride everything, including the "Kamikaze", a ride that goes upside down. She was too small to ride that one of course, and I completely understood the rhyme and reason for that rule, however, when she got excited about the Ferris Wheel only to be turned away, I began to lose my patience. Seems the rules require that she ride with an adult, no problem there, my husband would have rode with her even though he's not crazy about ferris wheels... except that the escorting adult had to have 3 tickets to ride! And at \$1.50/ticket, we're talking about spending an extra \$4.50 *for one ride*, on top of the \$32 we had already spent on wristbands for my 2 daughters – just for my daughter to follow their rule and be escorted on the ferris wheel – no thanks. So after 2 disappointments, we went over to the other side of the Jubilee and found the "scrambler" ride, so my daughters went on it and had a good time. They got in line to go again, and 4-year-old Sammie was turned away because she wasn't tall enough – apparently she shrank while waiting in line to go a second time? Again, I'm all for abiding by safety rules, etc., but they need to adopt a uniform policy that will be in place the entire run of the carnival. Try explaining to a 4-year-old that she isn't tall enough to ride a ride that she just got

finished riding! We actually ran into the same problem at Disney World, but they were very sympathetic and understanding and offered us ride passes as compensation. And as if all this at the Jubilee weren't enough, my daughters have a favorite "ride" at the Jubilee every year – the funhouse. They actually usually have 2 funhouses, but for whatever reason, my girls have their favorite. So they're standing there on the steps of their favorite funhouse, waiting to get in, and the ride operator is trying to tell them something, and that's when I see the signs. "No wristbands or tickets. This ride is \$2" WHAT?!? Why would they do this? To make money obviously, but that funhouse had no one there all night, was it really worth it to disappoint all the kids who go there year after year and look forward to that funhouse? And like I said, since wristband night was on the first day of the Jubilee, we didn't have an opportunity to tour the grounds to see what would be included in the purchase of the wristband – regrettably.

Despite all the disappointments, my daughters took them all in stride and still had fun. We ran into some friends, so we decided to take one of their daughters home with us for a sleepover. Even though we had bought the wristbands that were good until 11, we just wanted out of there after all the disappointment and money wasting. I did get my Dippin' Dots, but the vendor forgot my root beer float this year ☹ I was pretty happy with the cookie dough that my husband got for me, and it was actually better than I remember. Not worth going back to the Jubilee for more, but still good. I think we're done with the Jubilee already this year. We usually go back Friday night for the karaoke contest and Saturday after the parade, but I think we can find something better (and cheaper!) to do this year. Next year, maybe we'll plan a vacation for Jubilee week and skip it all together!

The Mole Week #3

Watched this Mole episode a little late this week since the kids were rambunctious about settling down after an exciting week at Grandma's – turns out I hadn't missed much. I really liked the Fruit of the Luge challenge where the players divide into teams of 2, and one person is blindfolded and driving the pair on a luge. The other player is supposed to call out the types of fruits that are depicted on signs they pass on the luge course. When they are at the end of the luge course, they are not to talk, and the blindfolded player takes off his or her blindfold and picks out the fruit in the order the other player had seen it. Alas, a few teams ended up getting their points taken away since they broke a rule and chatted after finishing the course. But it was an interesting challenge; an aspect of this show that I really enjoy. Unlike the following challenge... something about the contestants running around Chile in underwear trying to find clothes. It was a stupid, pointless, sell-out challenge; something that once set this reality show apart from the others because they hadn't yet stooped to this level – what a shame.

But anyway, no one really stuck out at me as being that mole tonight. Paul kinda was, but then when he got angry during dinner, it didn't seem mole-like to be so upset. But if he is the mole, maybe that was part of his game, who knows. Clay always seems to be in the background, and if it weren't for last week's episode where he had only about one line to say throughout the entire show, I would think it's him. But because of last week, I can't picture them only showing the mole once during an episode. The blonde neurologist is looking suspect also – her name escapes me at the moment. I also think it could be Nichole, but the whole point of

Nichole is that she thinks she is so great at so many things when she really isn't so perfect because she's too busy being full of herself... I don't see how she'd have time to be the mole when she's so busy being so arrogant. And I definitely don't think the mole is Mark. There are a few people that just don't seem suspect to me, and Mark, Craig, the model and Bobby were 3 of those people. The model and Bobby are both gone now (YAY! I was getting so sick of Bobby's antics; he was not very likable), so I guess I was right about those two. So here is where I am so far:

POSSIBLE SUSPECTS:

Paul – My husband's top pick since the beginning. Tonight, he was standout mole-y to me, but he also doesn't seem smart enough to pull off being the mole... maybe just part of his act?

Alex – He's the guy who wins everything; every reality show has one. Usually they do pretty well and become finalists if not win the entire competition. I don't think he's the mole though, but he's more of a suspect than not at this point. It's getting on my nerves that he can speak such fluent spanish. I don't think they should have picked only one contestant with this ability when filming the show and doing the challenges in a spanish-speaking country.

Clay – I wish he wasn't so ignored last week, otherwise he would be my top guess again... he's just SO neutral seeming and in the background.

Kristen – the bike thing from last week made her a suspect... and she just acts generally mole-y; I can't really pinpoint it.

NOT ON MY SUSPECT LIST (yet)

Nichole – see above – the part about the being too arrogant to be the mole.

Craig – seems too genuine? I don't know what it is, but if this guy is the mole, he's good!

Victoria – Not only does she not seem very bright, but her

infatuation with Bobby just doesn't fit as mole behavior. It wasn't obvious enough to be present to throw others off, so I think it was genuine. And besides the other clues she's given, the fact that she would have a genuine crush on a fellow reality show contestant, especially someone like Bobby all point to the fact that she is too dim to pull off being the mole.

Mark – something last week had me convinced he is NOT the mole, forgot what it was, but it sticks with me enough to know that I still do not suspect this guy at all. Just seems too real I guess.

I guess after re-reading my contestant breakdown, my official mole guess after seeing this week's episode is Clay.

Chris' guess is Paul.

Jamiahsh can post his guess in comments.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE BEST!

Today is my husband's birthday! Poor guy, he has to work. It stinks that when you become an adult, you can't take the day off on your birthday. When you think about it, each person would get only one day per year, it could be easily proven when your day is and if you've already taken it, but I guess in larger workplaces, it wouldn't be very economical when there are lots of employees. Plus, it's not like you can take a break from every responsibility in life for a day – though that would be nice! There's no 'off' switch on the kids, the pets still need to be cared for, bills are due, errands to run... the list goes on... so why draw the line at having a day off work?

But anyway, my husband is going to take a half day off tomorrow so we can celebrate just the two of us; and we're both really looking forward to that – I just have to make it through today. I've had a terribly stressful day so far, but I shouldn't vent about it to my husband on his birthday... so instead I've recorded a time table of everything that's been going on in our house for the last hour. Normally, this wouldn't be that big of a deal, but since I'm now up going to the bathroom half the night and our kids spazzed about going to bed last night and kept everyone up late, today I was really looking forward to some downtime and maybe even a nap. I was hoping to just sit here and write a blog post or two, mostly about how wonderful my husband is on his birthday... but instead I find myself venting about the kids because they're being really needy. Not bad really, but I am so tired! I don't know how I'm ever going to find the energy to take them to the carnival tonight! So anyway, my hour that I've set aside to blog before lunch has gone something like this:

11:24 – getting youngest something to drink (*and there's been lots of stuff before this, this is just where I got frustrated enough to notate everything*)

11:27 – sat down again

11:29-11:34 – setting up youngest outside at the 'picnic'

11:34-11:38 – sat down to blog

11:38 – a request comes in for more Pringles

11:39 – After some discussion, it's decided that if they eat their sandwiches, they can have popsicles instead of Pringles

11:40 – whats this about giving their lunchmeat to the dog?!?

11:42 – About this time, I should be getting up to go take a peek out the window to see if I can determine the fate of the lunchmeat. But I have a big long day ahead of me, and it'd be nice if I could sit for a FEW mins! I will just have to trust the kids to tell me the truth. I have a bad feeling about this.

11:45 – The back door opens. This time it's the oldest with an update – "Sammie stepped on dog poop and she doesn't have

shoes on.” UGH – I make a quick note of the time in my blog and head outside to clean it up.

11:46 – turned the hose on right on my sock-and-shoed-foot while washing dog poop off of Sammie’s foot

11:51 – Friend shows up for help in carrying furniture – ringing the doorbell and making the dog go completely crazy. Shoot! I totally forgot he was coming today! Now my husband has EXTRA responsibilities on his birthday!

11:55 – UPS guy pulls up, dog still going crazy from friend stopping by

12:08 – Wow – have they really let me sit and type this for a whole 13 minutes?!? Uh, oh – back door opens again – “I have something in my hair.” – Guess who? Surprise – it’s the same kid who stepped in dog poop.

12:10 – bug detangled from hair

And the day is just beginning. So it will go on like this, and on, and on... So now maybe you have some insight as to why it takes me a good hour to write one blog post or get much of anything accomplished around here, really. But on to my birthday wishes for my hubby, since I only have 5 minutes left of my blogging hour.

So I have absolutely NO idea what to get him. I’d like him to have a gift to open, even though he says he doesn’t care. Everything he wants (and that’s not much, he’s not really into material things) he says he buys for himself and he’d be happier knowing that no money was spent on buying him any birthday presents. But the way I am, I like to give gifts; I like people to have something to open and to see them get gifts on their birthdays, so I feel badly that he doesn’t have anything. I was going to go out today and get something, but I really can’t think of anything to get him... I’ve had some good ideas in the past, but this year I’m at a loss... So I will just try to keep the kids good and out of his hair, which is actually much more difficult than it sounds for me right now. But my husband said earlier today that he wants to make

my day extra special and good. He woke up early with the kids (as usual) and had the dishwasher emptied and the kids' breakfasts cleaned up by the time I got up. Only the most wonderful man like my husband would go out of his way to make *my* day extra special on *his* birthday! And that's why I say Happy Birthday to the BEST!!!

Third Trimester Blues

Well, it's that time again, the lovely third trimester of pregnancy. It crept up on me really fast while I was waiting for the 'golden age' of pregnancy to kick in – the second trimester. Except that I never felt as great as they say you should feel during the second trimester, so while I was waiting, time passed on by and here we are in the third trimester. I guess I should be happy that the pregnancy is almost all over, but it's hard to look at it that way. This is the time when babyitis kicks into overdrive. The yearning to hold and sniff and care for the newborn baby becomes so overwhelming, it's intense. And then there's the lethargy and the grumpiness. I just don't feel like doing anything lately! It's really difficult to not be grumpy while chasing after kids all day when all I really want to do is sit on my butt and play video games. But if I were even to allow myself to indulge in some "doing nothing" time, I know I would be interrupted constantly by needy kids – kind of like when I sit down to type a blog post! And then there's the guilt... now that we're past the 85°+ heat wave, I feel like I should take the kids outside, but I'm just too tired! Besides, as much as I tell myself to let the housework go for a month or two, I still can't bring myself to actually let it happen. So by the time I'm done with my "dailies" (daily chores like laundry, meal making, picking up after kids, errands, etc), I have

barely enough energy for anything extra like my long-gone daily walks. This week, I have to unpack the kids from their trip to Grandma's, but at least I got caught up on laundry while they were gone and lucky for me, Grandma sent them home with literally only 2 pieces of dirty laundry – NICE! The kids had a lot of sleeping to catch up on, so they've taken naps today, and I've gotten a lot done, so maybe tomorrow or later this week we can get out and enjoy the beautiful weather. Our town's annual carnival is in town starting tomorrow, so I know we'll be up there once or twice. They have Dippin' Dots, ice cream super-frozen into little balls, and it's SOO good! It's my favorite thing to begin with, so during pregnancy, it's a MUST-HAVE!

The good news is that my mood seems to be improving. I actually wrote the beginning of this post weeks ago – I just haven't had time to finish it until now. And now that I'm finishing it, my feelings have changed a little. Instead of feeling the usual 'my-body-will-never-be-back-to-normal' frustrations, it seems like the birth of our baby is right around the corner; actually I have to start doing the weekly doctor visits already! And I feel less grumpy than I did a few weeks ago, and even less sore in my body, though physically even more tired. The difference is that instead of not feeling like doing anything, now I feel more like doing things, but I physically cannot because I am so huge. I have gained over 50 lbs with this pregnancy. Perfectly normal, I know, especially with the insatiable appetite I encountered between 3-5 months, but things like bending over to pick things up off the floor have become impossible. You wouldn't believe how long it takes me to put on lace-up shoes without help – which stinks because those feel much better on my aching feet than my sandals. And turning over in bed has evolved beyond the 3-point-turns into the 5+ point turns – I kind of have to scoot in a circle until I'm turned over... not fun for me; must be incredibly annoying to my bedmate – between me and our kids who wake up very early and sometimes

throughout the night, he doesn't get much sleep! And with all this fun comes the feeling of dread that I know labor is just around the corner... I sure hope this baby is easier on me than my second child was during labor... long story short, she took forever then came really fast, which meant that the 'window of opportunity' where I was supposed to get the pain medicine opened and closed too quickly for anyone to do anything for me, leaving me with a 'natural labor' – and NOT by choice! But kid #2 has been trouble from the time I could feel her kick right up until this morning's tantrum, so as I always say, hopefully she is one of a kind!

Fun in South Bend Indiana

Of all the places to find fun, who would have thought that middle of nowhere, IN would be such a sight? Every summer, we meet my mom there about 4 times to swap the kids. She'll take them for a week, twice a summer, so because South Bend just happens to be about as close to halfway for each of us to drive, that is where we meet. We used to meet at a Wendy's just off the expressway, but our horizons have broadened, and my husband and I have been venturing off the beaten path to discover new things to see and do in the area. We found a good restaurant called Eleni's with amazing gyros and saganaki, two of our favorite dishes. We also found an authentic Greek restaurant called Elia's right down the street, but oddly enough, they are almost never open. They have more exotic Greek food like stuffed grape leaves, moussaka, and baklava, YUM! Their food is excellent, though we've only been able to eat there once because of their strange hours and seemingly constant family vacations. After eating and getting the kids back from my mom, we headed to the [Potawatomi Zoo](#). The zoo is a really cool size, perfect for

our family of 3 small children and a now VERY pregnant woman. Not much walking to do at all, yet it has a good amount of animals, native and exotic, all types and sizes from lions, tigers, and bears, to monkeys, bison, alligators, parrots, and red pandas. I will have to mention that the Potawatomi Zoo did not seem very well-kept. A gardener in that place could have done wonders as there were many overgrown weeds, trees, and shrubbery, some even blocking what could have been better views of the animals! One tree was so untrimmed it was blocking a drinking fountain! But as I said, it's a very cute little zoo, and they reciprocate with our home zoo, the Toledo Zoo, so our admission price was free and they don't charge for parking. I was surprised to see that the zoo wasn't very crowded seeing as how it was a Saturday in June under 90°... That zoo could really use a Jack Hanna to fix it up and get the publicity rolling – I see a lot of potential for it, but it does need some work.

After the zoo, we had kids begging for 'one more fun thing' (remember, they had been used to the fun of Grandma's for just short of a week!), my husband whips out Mr. GPS, and apparently he has a phone book feature on him, so from your car, you can find gas stations, restaurants, and most importantly, fun places and attractions to visit!

So KUDOS belong to Mr. GPS this time! Instead of getting us lost and chuckling at us electronically, he led us right to this strip mall that was like a step back in time, it was really strange. It looked like it was right out of 1983. I don't know how to explain it – we should have taken pictures. It would have been a great place to film a movie set in the early '80's, took me right back to my childhood. Anyway, in this strip mall was a place called Mega Play. From the outside, it looked closed down – they really need to get themselves a big bright 'open' sign. But once inside, it was a huge space where they had tons of video games, pinball machines, indoor minigolf, bouncy castles and tunnels for the

kids, lots of ride-ons for toddlers, and right out of 1983 – a ball pit! The ball pit had a pyramid in the middle of it that the kids climb up with ropes and once they got the hang of it, they had a ball – cheesy pun intended. That pyramid gave me a flashback of playing on the same thing when I was little. I think they used to have them in KMarts, and my husband agreed. It was neat to see vintage video games and pinball machines also. The arcade ATARI games they had in one bouncy castle area were free to play – they had Kangaroo, Pole Position, Asteroids, and some shooting game I hadn't heard of. I walked over to the pinball machine area because days earlier, we visited this cool pinball shop in a suburb of Toledo. The guy started it as a hobby, but it grew into a store, and he had all kinds of pinball machines, new and mostly vintage. He had titles on display like Demolition Man, Star Wars, The Shadow, and Hercules (an older game – it was HUGE!). He even had this Looney Tunes racing game (not pinball) that was really vintage and one-of-a-kind... it was cool to see. I wonder if the pinball guy outside of Toledo is familiar with Mega Play? But anyway, back to Mega Play... it was a huge, wide-open strip mall space that had tons of games, ride-ons, and bouncy castles packed into it – lots of fun there, but still spacey so you didn't feel closed in. It was the exact concept my husband and I had in mind for our own business of the same type we started a few years ago. We ended up having to sell the business because it was too labor intensive for the time and staff we had however. Too bad Mega Play is all the way in South Bend, or we could challenge our putt-putt-ing friends to the mini-golf course ☐

After Mega Play, it was time to find something to eat, and before we knew it, we were out of South Bend and into the country. The kids started getting crazier and crazier, and we vowed to stop at the very next restaurant we found before someone passed out or went insane – and some of us were close to either condition! So, we stopped at a restaurant called Dakota's in Elkhart IN, and I highly recommend it if you're

ever out that way. They had the best cornbread, and their steak and cheese sandwich was simply AWESOME! They also have barbecue items, and they happened to have karaoke the night we went... it wasn't too intrusive though. They were in another room and we didn't even know it was karaoke at first until the audience began applauding. The DJ hosting the karaoke was singing a few songs also, and he was pretty good, so he actually sounded like a recording with a live quality. I don't how often they have karaoke there, but their food is great, prices reasonable, nice atmosphere, and the staff is amazingly friendly. Keep in mind I say this coming from a super-friendly town myself, so we're used to the usual chit-chat when we go out to eat – but people in Elkhart were *exceptionally* friendly.

Overall, not a bad place to spend a day – fun and very inexpensive to boot. Too bad with gas prices the way they are we can't consider South Bend for a normal day trip for our family – there is plenty to do! Maybe we'll wander around some more the next time we meet Grandma there in July...