

Food Chain Gang

I should probably explain where the title of my blog comes from. It's actually a title I picked out years ago as I was musing while doing housework one day. I thought, a story about our household should be called, "The Food Chain Gang". At the time, we had a few more pets than we have now, completing the chain. Back then, we were the happy owners of 2 dogs, a cat, a parrot, and a little marsupial (animal with a pouch, like a kangaroo) called a sugar glider. The sugar glider and the cat have since crossed the "Rainbow Bridge" which some people call pet heaven. And, if you're a regular reader, you've read that we've added a new dog to our family in the last month. But the new dog doesn't exactly complete a food chain, so I just felt the need to explain why my blog is called "My Food Chain Gang" even though we are down to 3 dogs and a parrot.

As an animal lover, I would love to add even more pets to our menagerie, however, it's just not practical right now. We have 1 dog with some terrier (terror!) in her, Jack Russell to be exact, and she will "hunt" any kind of small animal we bring into the house. So, my dreams of owning a rat or 2 or 3 will have to wait at least a few years, hopefully more, since the "Jerk" Russell mix is only called that in jest – she is our baby. My husband and I adopted her before we were married and before the kids were born. And before you judge me, do the research – rats actually make very good pets! Unlike many of their rodent cousins; hamsters, gerbils and the like, rats are actually pretty clean, very smart, and they are even friendly and cuddly!

Since I already mentioned wanting a rat, which many people think is a crazy pet, it should be no surprise when I say with sincerity that if I didn't have small children, I would have a pet alligator. Again, a little bit of research will tell you that alligators are almost nothing like (in behavior) their

fellow crocodilians. They are actually quite docile and easier to handle than you would think ***if you know what you're doing of course*** – stress that point. I know some about handling alligators, though I've only held small to medium sized ones, and I have never even owned a reptile, so needless to say, this is not an option for me right now... but maybe someday!

I would also like a tortoise, but with 4 kids, 3 of which will be under the age of 5, I do enough cleaning up around the house as it is – don't need a tank to clean! Plus, we are very lucky to be able to afford some mini-vacations now and then, and any more responsibilities for the pet sitter might put her over the edge ☐

I have always wanted a goat, and now that we live in the country, I can see how easy it is to get one – you can just open up the paper, call a number and buy a goat. But I don't think the neighbors would appreciate what our lawn would look like. Something tells me our quiet residential neighborhood near the heart of the downtown of the city would not be a good place to house a goat.

I would love another cat someday, but I'm allergic. And it all but broke my heart when I lost my beloved cat earlier this year... I felt very guilty that I couldn't really pet her or spend time with her as much as I (and she) wanted because of my allergies.

And talking about cheap farm animals reminds me of another realization I had after moving to the country – baby chicks and ducks are really cute AND very cheep, err inexpensive! But again, our Jerk Russell would just try to eat any kind of animal like that. She STILL likes to hunt the parrot when he flies in the house, even though he's taken a nip at her more than once with his huge beak!

And I would LOVE my own parrot – I've always wanted an African

Grey, ever since I was really little and read a wonderful book by the same guy who wrote the movie, "The Water Horse". The author is Dick King-Smith, and his book, "Harry's Mad" is just a wonderful story for kids about a boy and his pet parrot. But while I'm on the subject of parrots, let me talk for a minute about pets NOT suitable for families. Parrots sure are beautiful animals, and they're lots of fun when they talk, laugh, and imitate, but they are also very moody and unpredictable. Most are not cuddly, and if they are, it's usually only with one person in the household, and they will resent every other person who gets in their way. Which is what happened with our parrot – he has bonded to Daddy, that's his "mate", and the rest of us cannot touch him, OR ELSE we have to deal with the rath of a beak that is strong enough to snap a broomstick in HALF! Parrots are VERY loud – and there is no relief from their noise. Their scream can rattle your eardrum, and is almost always guaranteed to make a small child cry. And, they scream to have fun! It's not just when they are upset or want something, so if you think you'll be able to quiet a screaming parrot, guess again! Luckily, ours is about to celebrate his 7th year with us, so through lots of growing pains, we've learned how to make it work in our house. Parrots can also be very dangerous, so just like any other animal, kids need to have constant supervision around parrots. Overall, as the owner of a parrot, I would HIGHLY recommend another pet choice to anyone with kids in the house.

I wouldn't recommend a sugar glider as a pet either. Ours was "used" – we actually found her at a garage sale – and that is a testament to how often people think it'd be cool to have one of these only to decide later they're too much work. They are intelligent, social animals, so they require lots of attention. However, they are also nocturnal, so you have to be available at night to take them out of their cage to play. Light will actually damage their eyes, so taking them out at night in a specially under-lit room is required. They can be nippy, smelly (they excrete an odor to mark their territory),

and can even make loud noises all night that keep you awake. And they require a special diet of fresh fruits and vegetables also, which can be inconvenient and expensive.

So anyway, now that I've recommended all the pets that AREN'T good for families, I would say that the standard dog or cat IS great for families. Obviously, there is a lot to take into consideration when shopping for one of these, and I won't go into that this time... if you really need some good advice about why humane societies are a better choice than pet stores and what to look for while choosing a pet, see my previous post called, "3's a Crowd?".

So, now you know where the title "My Food Chain Gang" came from. Maybe someday, I will add to the chain and have a real zoo to call my own. But for now, I will stick with the gang we have – everybody knows their place in the chain and gets along great!

Trouble spelled C-U-T-E

Disney, our youngest-for-now, got into some trouble today. She went "missing" for about 10 minutes while I was making lunch, so I started thinking to myself, hmmm, she must have fallen asleep somewhere. So, I went to search for her and found this:



I went to the store and bought some toilet paper today. I had it on the stairs waiting to go up, and apparently she found it and thought it would be fun to play with. It was no big deal, as far as how much trouble toddlers usually get into. And, when I think about it now, the fact that I thought she was sleeping when she was “missing” really says a lot about what kind of baby, err, toddler she is. When my middle child was that age, if she went “missing” and the house was actually quiet, we knew there was going to be REAL trouble – and there always was. Our middle child went through a – how to put this eloquently – a ‘playing with poop’ phase. She would wake up in her crib, take off her diaper, and paint with the contents of her diaper, all while we thought she was still asleep so there was little we could do to intervene before it happened. We even had to postpone opening Christmas presents one year because we had a huge poopie painted mess to clean up before we could see what Santa brought. Good thing big sis was really patient about that one. Our oldest child,

Taylor, was kind of like Disney as a baby – never any real trouble. In fact, she also had a toilet paper incident – see flashback photo below, note the stream of toilet paper behind her:



So anyway, Disney is a very sweet and mild-mannered child. In fact, she really likes to play with my glasses and my Chicago Cubs hat, but she will only ask (yes, that's right, she asks) to play with them when I'm not wearing them. And unrolling toilet paper is her idea of trouble – for now anyway. She is nearing 2, so I am anticipating more trouble from her, but so far, this is it. I just hope kids don't come in any sort of behavior pattern. Meaning, our first and third have been exceptionally good, our second is a HANDFUL (putting it mildly), so the fourth would be...

I'm not going to jinx us... we're hoping for the best. I don't know if I can handle another poop player!

Important Car Shopping Tip

We bought a new car back in November, and we're very happy with it. But I have to admit, there is a feature I forgot to check when car shopping – how is the reception for WGN radio AM 720? Translation: will I be able to catch the Cubs games being broadcast all the way from Chicago?!?

Luckily for me, the answer is yes! Since baseball season was over when we bought the car, it didn't occur to me to check for this very essential feature in a vehicle. But today, the radio's ability was tested because as the family errand-runner, the only way for me to be able to catch any of the Cubs game was in the car between picking up kids from school, taking them to and from piano lessons, the library, etc. Not only did the Cubs game come in, but it was even better than the lousy reception our old Ford mini-van picked up last year.

So BOOLYAH! Now I am even happier with the new car and also ecstatic that I got to hear the Cubbies avoid a series sweep by the Milwaukee Brewers today. To quote Harry Caray, CUBS WIN! And to quote a friend named Morat, Everyone Wins! Ok, everyone wins who doesn't drive a Ford that is...

□

Forehand to Forehead – And

Then Some

And now for some youtube fun:

VIDEO 1: [Bloody Tennis Tantrum](#)

WHO: Mikhail Youzhny, a professional tennis player

WHAT: Tennis racket vs. forehead

WHEN: Monday, March 31, 2008

WHERE: Sony Ericsson Open – Key Biscayne, FL

WHY: ??????

COMMENTS: If you are bored by tennis, the real fun starts about 30 seconds into the video. Make sure you listen to the announcers' commentary on the incident – hilarious!

VIDEO 2: [Drunk Hamster](#)

WHO: Someone's poor (?) hamster

WHAT: repeatedly doing flips

WHEN: Not important

WHERE: The Hamster's cage

WHY: Is he really drunk?

COMMENTS: I don't condone cruelty to animals, of course, but this is so funny... And he seems to be doing it because he really LIKES doing it. He doesn't seem to be getting hurt. The theme song works well with the action.

Video 3: [The Price is Right April Fool's Day Joke](#)

WHO: Drew Carey and Rich Fields vs. a contestant named Lisa

WHAT: A contestant bids on a fake showcase

WHEN: April Fool's Day 2008

WHERE: Los Angeles, CA

WHY: April Fool's Day prank

COMMENTS: I can't believe the contestant didn't get the joke earlier... guess she was distracted by being on tv, that happens. Wish I could hear what the audience was saying during the prank! Were they giving her bids, telling her it was a joke, what?

When “Good” Towns Go Bad

I guess it depends on what you would call a good town. A place we used to live called Naperville Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago, was once considered a good town. It had lots of fun things to do, relatively low crime, good schools, and lots of money. It was never my ideal place to live, however, because it was always way too crowded and had way too much traffic for my tastes. But I never considered it a *dangerous* place to live... until yesterday. Being from the Chicago area and having friends and family who still reside there means I maintain an interest in keeping up with their local news. Yesterday I came across the following newspaper article about a murder that was committed in the neighborhood where we used to live: Man Shot, Killed in Naperville

In a city the size of Naperville (about 10 square miles, with a population of over 140,000 people), this incident might not appear to be as shocking to the normal reader as it was to me. However, having lived in this neighborhood only about 7 years ago, I can't believe how much it has changed. We lived in a small townhome; it was very nice and backed up to a

school. It seemed like the perfect picture of suburbia at the time. It was VERY over-priced for what I would expect to pay for a 1.5 bedroom where I live now, (we paid \$1380 rent a month, and our place was not more than 650 square feet), however at the time I thought it was worth it because it was a "nice" area and close to family in a place I thought would be safe to raise kids. Needless to say, I was wrong on that account. In the article about the crime, the newspaper drew a nice little map. Turns out the victim (who had an arrest record himself – not that I'm judging, just noting) lived not more than 2 blocks from our old home. The victim's body was found 5 blocks from our old home. We used to take our daughter for walks around the area all the time; there was a Walgreens we used to walk to right near where the body was found. Readers who posted in the comments section of the story say how the area has become "seedy", and in the article itself, they state that the victim's home was a "high traffic area". All of this adds up to a place where I would NOT want to raise kids, let alone pay through the nose for a small place to live, only to have to worry about protecting my family from the violent crime that seems to have invaded the area. Some might say this is an isolated incident; they can say "this can happen anywhere." That IS true. Anything can happen anywhere. However, one can now say that it can happen anywhere, but it DOES happen there.

It truly makes me thankful every day that we've now found such a wonderful place to call home; away from the city and its crime, pollution, and expenses, not to mention how superficial and just downright unfriendly the residents of a town like Naperville can be. It's baffling to me that they charge EXTRA to live in a place like that! It makes me feel really good knowing that when my kids grow up and want to raise children of their own, they will have the option to stay in the wonderful town where they grew up. I did not have that option, since I grew up in a town next to Naperville, and it is no longer a good place to raise children. If my kids want

to spread their wings and fly away to explore the world and see what else is out there, that is fine. I will miss them of course, but I am quite confident that if all else fails out there, they will always have the option to return to the place where they grew up to live safely and prosperously. Country living is not for everyone, I guess, but I don't think I'll ever understand those who choose to pass up utopia for city life ☐

April Fool's – Not Over Yet!

Yet another April Fool's Day surprise awaited us when we got home tonight... seems the newest addition to the family is a little jokester. Our dog Beesley, who we've had for almost a month now, is an escape artist. We have a little mud room in the back of the house that leads to the garage, and if we don't lock the dogs out of it, Beesley can push open the door leading to the garage and escape. Apparently, tonight was one of those nights when we forgot to make sure the dogs were locked out of the mud room because when we got home and opened the garage to pull the car in, out runs Beesley. We corralled her into the car, and that's when we saw it – a HUGE mountain of garbage in the middle of the garage, along with several smaller hills of doggie-doo. Seems during her great escape into the garage, she decided to tear apart the garbage that was in there waiting for garbage day. Of course, being a family of 5, we have lots of garbage, including lots of dirty diapers. Seems little Beesley had herself such a feast that she immediately had to add doggie-doo to the mess without waiting for us to come home and let her outside to do her business. Compounding our luck had this happening on a Tuesday, which is only 2 days before garbage day, so we had just about as much garbage out there as was possible.

I've been trying to convince Hubby that we need to buy one of those mega garbage cans just to store our garbage in until garbage day ever since the local squirrels discovered we have a parrot who discards nuts into our garbage. They sneak into the garage constantly and tear little holes in the garbage bags to get at the nuts. But at least they're dainty about it, which is more than I can say for Beesley. It's just difficult to justify spending money on something that you're going to put garbage into – it's like literally throwing money away... or the reverse actually, but still... maybe now we'll be able to justify that expense a little better. April Fool's – Beesley style – YUCK!

And a side note about April Fool's Day from our local paper. No one knows how April Fool's Day came about. There's a theory that it originated when the Gregorian Calender was adopted in the 1500's. Seems there were a few folks stubborn about adopting the change of New Year's Day from April 1 to January 1, so others made fun of them, pranked them, and sent them on fool's errands, hence the origin of April Fool's Day. That is just a theory however, but equally amusing and NOT just a theory is how the country of Scotland celebrates April 1st. Apparently Scottish April Fool's Day jokes often focus on the buttocks and the day is known as Taily Day. According to our local paper, the "butts" of the Taily Day jokes are known as April "Gowk" which is another name for Cuckoo bird, and it's believed the ole "kick me" sign gag originated with these Scottish customs. I think I'll stick with good old April Fool's Day, thanks, though this year in our house, I guess you could call it Taily Day!

April Fool's!

Another April Fool's Day is upon us unfortunately. I usually escape the day unscathed, but this year, that is not the case. Seems some clever "hacker" decided to "get" us tangents.org bloggers with false threats of blog erasures...

I did not think it was funny. Maybe I'm not a good sport, but the joke hit where it hurt – how many valuable documents; including pictures, diaries, even my oldest daughter's electronic baby book, have I lost due to computer malfunctions? I'm not saying my blogs are valuable, but I have spent lots of time on them. They've also essentially replaced my family diary I was keeping since I now put most of my kids milestones in my blogs...

But I guess most people get a kick out of the day. Drew Carey even got into the spirit today on The Price is Right. They put in a joke showcase and were going to make some poor lady bid on a trip to Lebanon or someplace! I was half-watching, wish I had seen the whole thing, it seemed hilarious. But anyway, I hope others are better sports than I, and they find the blog prank funny. And I'm sorry to the gleeful jokester who really wanted to have some fun at my expense before I spoiled it. Maybe I'm just a spoiled sport because I can't think of any good pranks myself. But now that I know the playing field is wide open and I have a whole year to think about it, stay away from me this year and WATCH OUT for me next year ☐

Better Late Than Never?

Came across this news story after linking to the one about the hugely tall spire they're going to build in the Middle East:

[First Wedding Dress Shop for Pregnant Brides ONLY Opens](#)

I agree with the people who posted comments at the end of the article – what is the world coming to when maternity wedding dresses are seen as a normal need to fulfill in the buyer's market? Should we be happy that these women are getting married rather than staying single? What about the fact that they might be rushing into marriage just for the sake of getting to buy a pretty dress, or more likely, because it's becoming extremely socially acceptable, which will surely raise the already obscenely high divorce rate? And why are they bothering to make these maternity bridal gowns WHITE?

All I can say is, thank goodness this article isn't about the good old USA – but then again, we probably have an American maternity bridal store chain or two or three already.

Defunct TV Part II

Since my first post about defunct tv was SO lengthy, I had to omit some of my favorite tv shows from yester-year which were so great they warrant a mention and another post.

[The Bozo Show](#) – If you grew up in Chicagoland, this show was an icon. Some people in Ohio have told me it was on tv here too, but I know it just wasn't the same as growing up with Bozo next door. First of all, EVERYONE you knew went to see the Bozo show live. The girl I went with was put on the

waiting list when she was in utero, and we were 9 or 10 years old before her mother finally got the tickets that allowed us entry into the show. But I'm just glad I got the experience, and I'm even more glad that I was old enough to remember seeing Bozo live – it was really neat. I was really scared of a character named Wizzo though, and I hoped he wouldn't be there on the day I was... Ironically, I don't remember if he was in that episode or not. My husband went to a Bozo show taping of course, since he was also a Chicagoland kid, but neither of us were on the Grand Prize Game. There were other characters on the show, mainly Bozo's clown sidekick, Cookie, and also a puppet dog named Cuddly Duddly. I think I'm going to have to dig out the tape of the show I was on, just for memories... So was Bozo aired nationally? Since it was so hugely popular in our area, it's hard to say; it's not like there was an internet back then or like I traveled a lot or had pen pals as a kid to ask. I would guess so, since lots of people have heard of it, but I'm sure it was nothing like the phenomena it reached in Chicagoland.

[Land of the Lost](#) – Saturday morning tv at its finest. This was a live show about a family who was transported back in time to contend with all kinds of prehistoric creatures like dinosaurs, etc. While looking up the show on imdb, I learned that there were 2 versions. One that aired from 1974-76, and one from 1991-92. I will dismiss the 90's remake since I wasn't a big fan. But as for the original, I barely remember it but I know that I LOVED it! I must have watched it in syndication however, because I was not around to see it from '74-'76. But, when I saw the photos and synopsis of the episodes, I know that's the show I watched and loved. Interesting note – they are currently make a [movie version](#) due out next year starring [Will Ferrell](#) as the dad! I am a big fan of Will Ferrell's. I think he is great in almost everything I've seen him in; he's always funny and surprisingly versatile. He stars in one of my favorite Christmas movies of all time, [Elf](#). So I am anxious to see

what they do with this remake of a classic tv show for our generation. I think the movie is slated to be a comedy, but with Will Ferrell as its star, that's no surprise. I wonder if they'll do what they did with the [Brady Bunch](#) movies and make it a satire of the tv show? It was very effective and funny when they did it in the Brady Bunch movies, but it would seem difficult to pull off for many tv shows without being too over the top. With the cheesy sets and special effects and costumes of the '70's Land of the Lost, satire might be a good avenue to explore for the movie remake. It'd be cool to see the movie set in the 70's – well, the family gets sent back in time, but if the family were still from the '70's... Guess we'll just have to wait until 2009 to see!

[The Littles](#) – A catchy theme song which began, “We are the Littles...” It was an awesome Saturday morning cartoon (which of course spawned into toys, lunchboxes, books, and even a few movies) about a family of small people with pointy ears and tails who lived within the walls of a Bigg (literally, this was the surname of the family!) family's house. The plots revolved around Tom and Lucy Little, a brother and sister who tried to keep their dopey aviator cousin Dinky out of trouble along with their Grandpa Little. The Littles had rigged up their own little world within the walls of the Bigg's home which they entered through a light socket, and it was neat to see how they used normal size objects to make things they needed. They would often enlist the help of Henry Bigg, the human regular-size kid who lived in the house, since he was the only human to know about the Littles. Cute show – I could probably find it on [youtube](#) or somewhere like that if I looked.

[Shirt Tales](#) – Adorable little animal characters who began as a line of greeting cards were turned into a cartoon. Their shirts would display different sayings to express their feelings; such as Hug Me, Cuddly, or Dig Me (worn by a mole).
A really cute cartoon which aired on the USA network as part

of its Cartoon Express, of which Pac Man the cartoon was also a part; see below.

[Pac Man](#) – A cartoon based upon the popular video game. I don't remember much about it, but I know I liked it, and it didn't last long. I think if I were to see this cartoon today as an adult, it would be dumb, whereas Shirt Tales might be cute. I haven't checked youtube, but they both just might be there; it seems likely.

Fever Pitch

Originally this post was called "CUBS WIN!!!" And I followed it up with: gee, I sure hope I'm not jinxing anything by posting this. And as I was typing that, the dang Brewers scored 3 runs! Now that I've changed the title of the post, the awful half-inning ended and the Cubs are now up with a chance to save the game and have one man on base. Unfortunately for me, I will have to miss the finale and seeing if the Cubs pull it off because I can't suspend my entire life for baseball, as much as I'd like to. I already rearranged my schedule around this game today, and wouldn't you know it, there were not one, but TWO rain delays, which is why the Cubs are still playing and why I have to miss the end of the game because my poor family has gone without dinner long enough! So, hope for me and for the Cubs that they pull this off – I must say it's starting to look good with 2 men on now and NO OUTS – this game has reached a fever pitch as their pitcher is starting to choke and walk Cubs out the wazoo.... OH MY GOSH – FUKUDOME JUST HIT A 3-RUN HOMER TO TIE THE GAME!!! My daughter can stand in the rain waiting for me to pick her up, can't she? It's opening day! Is there an emoticon for fingers crossed?!?!?