

# How Much Of A Party Can We Take?

Last night, I accompanied my mom as she drove the bus to the band show at the county fair. I essentially took Dad's place but have not gone to the show for a number of years (if memory serves, the last time I went, it ended up being cancelled because of rain ;) ) We arrived and went along the grounds to get a ribeye sandwich, kettle fries, and the essential chocolate shake.

There were seven bands in all. They each gave fine performances; however, a few things made me shake my head. It seemed to me that at least three of the schools had changed their "Fight Song" to the one made popular by **THE** preeminent university of the state... home of **The Best Damn Band In The Land**. Also, a certain Party Rock Anthem (made famous last year by the group whose acronym will not be reprinted on this blog) was played by no less than four bands! Honestly, the song may be contagious but really... I believe that I was turning green by the third rendition (and **NOT** from envy). I asked the director of my alma mater's band when she was going to introduce the piece in their show. Thankfully, my band did a Bon Jovi tribute show. The event ended nicely with three of the bands joining for a final number.

During the show, we received a phone call informing us that Dad's blood pressure had once again bottomed out and was being transported to the hospital. Mom and I finally were able to make it there around 9:30. Around 11, we were informed that he was once again dehydrated and had developed a urinary tract infection but after he had been treated was going to be taken back to the nursing home where he better start drinking up.

He's ready to come home (as anyone would be) but he has to learn to take care of himself or it will be that much harder and longer ☐

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# Feelin' Groovy

I can honestly say that I AM feeling better today than I have for a while. I was able to stand throughout my entire voice lesson without feeling the need to sit. Maybe this thing is not going to take a year to fully heal after all. But if it does, I can deal with it. Someone asked when I was going to be in another show. It just dawned on me that I COULD have tried out for the role of FDR in *Annie*... no walking involved and he does get to sing and harmonize during the White House reprise of "Tomorrow." AH, well...

I am a step closer to replacing my blown Sunfire. "Big" John and Edy are in the process of looking for a new auto and they know I am in the market for a good, reliable mode of transportation. I went to their house this morning and checked out the '02 Honda SUV (a compact SUV). Definitely a car that has been well taken care of and very nice, full of bells and whistles. During my test drive, I commented to Big John that there was no "ka-chunk ka-chunk" as I approached a stop sign as there is in the car I currently drive. I have been told that it is "nothing to worry about" but somehow...

Back to my latest lesson... I am thinking my list of songs I have been working on is about to be edited. There are some songs which I do not think I am going to have performance ready anytime soon and there are others that I have been looking at which will take no time at all... one of which we ran today. Plus, by the end of my first song, I was on my feet! Much better than sitting on the chair.

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# A Year Full of Ups And Downs

2010... What a year! So much happened that I do not know where the time went! It started off LAST January when I received my first two awards for acting in *You Have the Right to Remain Dead* (as everyone's ill-fated, lovable, hammy narrator... Harnell Chesterton) and for bringing the Grinchi Scrooginess of Mr. Henry F. Potter to life in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Even my best friends gave up a Bears' playoff game to share in my moment as well as family!

I can't even fathom the reality that I had limited myself to only two plays this year. I tackled my first lead role in the three person DRAMA, *Miracles*. I hope that Dawn and Rebekkah share in my belief that this play was one of the best shows I have ever been a part of. Thank you Beth for pushing for this show to be done and spreading its important, powerful message.

Chris next challenged me to seek out a new vocal coach. I had wanted to find one ever since Emily passed; however, I was uncertain as to whether I could find one as determined to help me in what I need to do. Thank God, he helped me find Kathrine. I could not ask for a better coach. I just adore people who know where your talent lies and are willing to guide you with suggestions on how best to cultivate them. Over the years I have had and continue to have some of the best!

I also became a board member of a new theatrical group in which I get to spend more time with my friends and help to bring *The Wizard of Oz* to the stage next summer. I also had my first byline when I reviewed the company's production of *(Cr)Oklahoma!* last summer.

My final performances of the year came in the Mare helmed production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in which I played a dual role as Barrymore, the caretaker of the Baskerville

estate and as the doomed Selden who met a rather grisly demise. Each production lends some challenge as well as fun working with old friends and making new ones.

The fact that I only limited myself to two shows this past year allowed me to do some very cool things with my friends.

In July, we went to Cincinnati to the zoo and then to Kings Island. I had not been to one of my favorite parks in several years and to go and be treated as V.I.P.s was extraordinary.

Not to mention the multiple game nights (from which I just opened 2011), chats in person and via I.M.ing. Just good times!

Of course a year is not all roses. On January 5, we lost our beloved Aunt Carol to cancer. Gone long before her time but held on longer than many thought she would. And more recently, my brother separated from his wife. I think that ultimately with the help and guidance of prayer and the love of family and friends striving forward yet remembering the special times only make us stronger.

So as we bid farewell to 2010, wrap up the holiday season and look ahead to the new year, I wish all of you the very best of peace, joy, and happiness.

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?*

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot, and days of auld lang syne?*

*For auld lang syne my jo,*

*For auld lang syne,*

*We'll take a cup of kindness yet,*

*For auld lang syne.*

**HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE... GOOD NIGHT!**

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# A Hit With The 6 & 7 Year Olds

Today for lunch, I went across the street to my old stomping grounds to help my newly turned first grade 7 year-old niece celebrate her birthday. 10-10-10... three months after I celebrate my own day She could have had me over Friday but she did not like the menu. Today's offering of chicken strips, muffin, and peaches was fine (I was never fond of the school's cole slaw, so I let that go).

As you can imagine I was the most popular big kid in the joint. All eyes were upon me. Do you think I minded a bit? I did have a hard time getting into the building. All but one door is locked all day, and I did not know which one (it hasn't been THAT long since I've graced the halls). And a lot has changed. The elementary section is now where the halls of my high school were. Alyssa's classroom is where the library/study hall used to be.

I did see a few faces from the past. The same elementary secretary who was there humn years ago still occupies the desk (as she did the first day I entered the school back in 19-). I also came across my fifth-grade teacher. She has since retired but was subbing for a Kindergarten class. All this while sitting at a table outside the classroom (usually meant that you were in trouble... ME!?)

It must be my size that made me think that the lunch room appeared to be smaller than it was. But I thought for sure there were more tables set up in my day. One change almost broke my heart: the milkshake machine was gone ☹ DANG! I also do not remember being so rushed to eat (maybe there are

fewer tables). Nope, just learned that the kids are rushed. At least one parent has complained... possible while they were sharing lunch with their little one.

After lunch, Alyssa and I went to the Puppy Pound for a bit. She got on one of the swings. Shortly after, the swing set was occupied with little ones begging me to push them. One kindergartener became a daredevil after he was pushed high enough and leaped from his seat. I remember doing that back in the day! Unfortunately for my new friend, the result was the same: A whistle blown and an escort to the wall. I tried not to grin as he hung his head.

If I had known that I was going to be the center of attention the whole time, I would have taken my camera.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ALYSSA!**

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## **Proud Of Your Boy**

This marking the day before the 2nd anniversary of Ma2's passing, I have made a promise to myself to annually honor her memory around this time. To paraphrase one of my favorite quotes: She's really not gone as long as we remember her. May sound sappy to some but Emily really was like a second mother to me. A strong, courageous woman... in fact the strongest and most courageous I have ever known. I can still remember our last conversation over the phone. We were to meet the next day to discuss my new found friends and my then anticipation of going to the big city. Unfortunately, she had just found out that she was going to be returning to Columbus for another extended stay at the James. Little did I know that this would be the last conversation we would have. She was so determined to beat the leukemia. I believe her words were: "I'm going to

kick this thing in the ()” I knew that if anyone could, it was her. She also told me how proud she was in how far I had come in my theatrical ventures and pleaded with me to not give up. That I had finally allowed myself to let my candle be uncovered by that bushel basket. “He knows what he is talking about.”

Proud of Your Boy. I believe that I have posted about the “lost song” from Disney’s *Aladdin* that was shall I say a prayer sung by the title character to his mother. I believe that the mother was written out in order to better portray the hero as being a “worthless street rat” with only his companion Abu by his side. I think it is much more than a simple prayer. I believe that deep down inside us all there is that little bit of ourselves that feels a need to prove to someone (be it a parent, other relative, close friend, mentor, whatever... perhaps even ourselves) that we are more than the sum of our parts. That we will get over these “lousin up, messin up, screwin up times.”

I am so glad that with the release of the Platinum Edition DVD, the song was pulled from the archives. It really is a gem as sung by Clay Aiken. That tells you how long it has been since its release... he hasn’t really been in the spotlight for a few years. I was lucky enough to be able to work on the piece while Emily was still (physically) guiding me.

I LOVE the orchestral accompaniment and the screen playing scenes in the background. HMMM...

Love you, Ma

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## Echos From The Earth And Beyond

Another feature of my small town scandal sheet (a steal at \$1.00 for eight pages) is the "Echos from the Earth" column which gives flashbacks from articles from 5 to 20 to 50 years ago. Two of the topics really took me back. Five years ago in the paper dated 8-25-2005, Ma2 was named Ohio American Legion Educator of the Year. An honor I know she cherished very fondly.

The second item that really caught my eye was dated 8-29-1980... **30 years ago, folks!**. It even was from the days when school opened in September. I was going into the first grade. My oldest brother was going into the 6th grade and the other one would be starting the 5th grade. We won't say how old my baby sister was!

Thirty years ago this year, my school system welcomed a new P.E. instructor/basketball coach (whom I remember very well from my elementary days), another teacher I cannot place because he was a high school instructor and was gone before I got there. Also welcomed was a certain teacher who "will assist music department head Bill Quackenbush whose primary responsibility would be to the junior high bands." (That is how the sentence read so the grammar is not my fault). I have been told that Emily was a student teacher at the high school where another [tangenteer](#) was enrolled.



(A tangent from one of my memorable moments with Mr. Q. Not only was he the high school band director back in the day but was also the tennis (?) coach. He was the instructor of the summer tennis program. We were volleying the ball back and forth. All of a sudden, I felt a ball SMACK into my eye! We rush into the school, get an ice pack, and a Mt. Dew. The next day, I woke up with a shiner. ☐ )

Emily was also the music instructor at the local Catholic school for a number of years. So she was the teacher of 5 Sh kids and two Sh grandkids. God must have helped there!

Emily also is having a hand in my song list for the evening of fun and music I am planning with some of my best friends and my new coach. We had been working on one of the selections for a great while and is now at the performance stage after a bit of polishing and tweaking.

A week or so ago, I was requested to find a good worship song to begin with. I cannot believe that it took me nearly four hours to come up with one. One of the last pieces Emily and I looked at was one of the most inspirational songs I have ever heard. Definitely will need a prayer to get through but she will be watching and I will be able to lean on her shoulder.

Not really gone as long as we remember.

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## **Magic Moments At The Huber**

When someone makes it not only into our weekly hometown [scandal sheet](#) but also in the column of the papers longest, active writer, the whole town knows it. For the Sunday matinee of *Miracles*, I was surprised by a group of 2 “minor senior citizens” and a few others “who are really working at

being seniors.” Max’s column, “Magic Moments” is similar to a weekly blog in which she chronicles her day-to-day life as well as publishes a few recipes culled from her stack gathered over her eventful life. Full of insight and humor the post is always worth a glance.

Along with Maxine and the 2 minor senior citizens (who I had been told may be coming) was “Grandma” Margaret. Ever since my maternal grandmother passed when I was 8, she and the late “Grandpa” Roy filled the void. Three of my favorite memories:

- The summer following my 4th grade year my poodle, Buffy was put to rest. The following Christmas, we received a parakeet which we named Corky, after Margaret.
- Following a Thursday night college band rehearsal, Roy and Margaret came up to take me home for the weekend. I would also receive periodic care packages and notes of encouragement.
- After the passing of my two day old nephew, Zachary, (by this time) Deacon Roy and Margaret traveled to Indianapolis to bring the baby to E-town.

Just a few of the magic moments my family has shared with two of our village’s finest. Thank you Ruthie and Steve for bringing her. One of the cast had to “pay special attention” to the group after the performance.

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## **He Ain’t Heavy; He’s My Brother**

Today was a big day indeed! It began at 6AM... about an hour and a half earlier than necessary, but I woke up and could not go back to sleep... UGH! The family hit the road for [Our Lady](#)

[Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Cathedral](#) for Joshua and Shelby's confirmation. The cathedral is a marvel of architectural design and was the model for my own parish's church. A gorgeous place to worship... not in the safest of locations in the city but beautiful nonetheless. If you ever have the chance to visit it... the pictures on the website do not do it justice.

Upon arriving at the church, I was surprised to see one of the youngest members of our game nighters. Since I know he is in high school, I had to ask... "Aren't you a little old?" To which he replied... "Oh, no... this is all for me!" On the contrary, he and his sister are members of our twin parish and she was being confirmed and sat a few rows in front of Joshua and I.

I found Bishop Blair's homily to be quite timely and very well delivered. Aimed chiefly at the confirmands, he stated that they were about to state on their own that they were ready to become part of the larger Christian community. And like [Father Flanagan](#) (founder of Boys' Town whose motto is the title of this post) must be tolerant and compassionate to all who are part of that community.

I have been teasing my godson a bit throughout his preparation. If he goofed in front of the bishop, he would be slapped... HARD! I dunno where I heard this but I remember the same as I began preparing for my day. However, he did just fine as he stood in front of the bishop with me behind him with my hand on his shoulder. So happy to stand behind him as he took a major step on his Christian journey.

I forgot to grab my camera this morning. I had it in my hand, ready to go. Then, my brother came to the house and asked if I had a shirt he could borrow. I went, grabbed one, and we then went out the door with the camera on the desk. So... here is a picture taken of Joshua and his sister and little brother in what looks like a criminal line up. AH, well... next time

he'll think before his mug is shot.

✘ I still say with his new glasses, he looks like a famous boy wizard. Especially with that mane of unruly hair! In total, 120 young men and women from 6 parishes in the diocese were confirmed.

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# And Remember The Truth That Once Was Spoken

*To Love Another Person*

*Is to See the Face of God*

This morning, the family lost another member to the most hateful word in the English lexicon: cancer. Aunt Carol has been valiantly battling the disease for a number of years until the last few months when she was house-ridden and given home health care. This morning between 11 and 12, the phone rang once and then quit. However it was enough time for the ID to display the caller. It was enough for me to realize that it could not be good news and they forgot that Mom was on her Kindergarten bus route. Shortly after noon, Alicia and Stacy came to the house and the tears began. She passed around 9.30 with both of the girls by her side.

It finally hit home for me at work tonight. I was in the back by myself and I just realized how soon following Emily's passing that Aunt Carol succumbed. One week exactly from 16 months. Two extraordinary women who passed away much too soon. Carol was 53. Emily was exactly one month from her 60th birthday.

Thoughts and prayers to Carol's family.

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## **If An Athlete Gets Athletes Foot, What Does A Snowmen Get?**

This afternoon, after picking my new-battery installed car from the theatre, I went to the school to watch the dress rehearsal of Alex and Alyssa's Elementary Christmas program. I just found out about it this morning and since I am otherwise engaged this evening, I thought I would go and lend an ear. The program was divided up into two adorable musical revues. The K-2 portion featured close to 90 little ones in a show entitled *The Incredible Reindeer*. It seems that an asteroid is hurtling straight toward the North Pole which will not only wipe out the planet but will cancel Christmas. Enter a quartet of super-powered reindeer: Lightspeed, Mighty Moose, Laser, and Robodeer. Will the heroes save the day and who will lead the sleigh through the murky fog with Rudolph out with a cold?

The second half was an American Idol parody entitled *North Pole Star*. The eight reindeer were the contestants with the host and three celebrity judges: Santa and Mrs. C, and the obligatory Simon stand in (sorry did not catch the name). The audience got into the act by voting for their favorite on a ballot sheet. Personally, I thought Comet the Comic was the most talented, but once again I was not in the majority.

The shows were really cute little ones standing in front of the microphone delivering their short lines. I was impressed with many of the older kids' solos, not bad for the age

group. I remember the program my 5th grade year, the masterpiece that is *Santa and the Snowmobile*.