

Trading Parrots

I've always wanted an African Grey parrot; it all started when I was a kid and I read the wonderful book ["Harry's Mad" by Dick King-Smith](#), the guy who wrote the book-turned-movie, [The Water Horse](#). African Greys are not nearly as "beautiful" (colorful) as other parrots, but they sure can talk and even use logic to demonstrate an intelligence level equivalent to that of a 4-year-old human child. We did end up with a parrot, but we got the eye-candy version instead, a Scarlet Macaw. Here is a picture of Squawky – he was molting at the time, which is why his chest is gray:



At the time we got him, it was an opportunity we couldn't pass up: he was a previously owned bird who was still very young and inexpensive, and gorgeous, of course. We've had him for 6 years now, and he is part of the family. He has quite a personality, and I get a kick out of most of the things he does. He's in my laundry room, so it's an especially nice break in my daily routine when I open the door and he bursts forth with a very enthusiastic "HI!". But there are days when

I still long for my African Grey, mostly because Squawky is my husband's bird, which means that no one else is allowed to touch him since birds tend to bond to one person. I think Squawky loves me and the kids, but we are not allowed to touch him under any circumstances. We can talk to him, and he'll even talk back. He can be quite entertaining with his vocabulary of about 20 words, more if you count the human and animal sounds he likes to imitate. He especially likes to laugh. He likes to pick up toys and drop them, then he'll laugh. But sometimes, and it's especially horrible when he's molting, sometimes he screams so horribly loud, you cannot hear yourself talk or even think. I've had to threaten numerous times that my laundry duties will be forfeited to the owner of the parrot if I keep getting screamed at in the laundry room, but somehow, he always stops before it comes to that. So anyway, there was a recent article in the news about an amazing African Grey parrot named Yosuke Nakamura – he lives in Japan – who got lost and then found. He aided in his own rescue, even though he wouldn't talk to the police! Read the article here:

TOKYO, Japan (AP) – *When Yosuke the parrot flew out of his cage and got lost, he did exactly what he had been taught – recite his name and address to a stranger willing to help.*

Lost in Tokyo, Yosuke the parrot was able to give his name and address to get taken home.

Police rescued the African grey parrot two weeks ago from a neighbor's roof in the city of Nagareyama, near Tokyo. After spending a night at the station, he was transferred to a nearby veterinary hospital while police searched for clues, local policeman Shinjiro Uemura said.

He kept mum with the cops, but began chatting after a few days with the vet.

"I'm Mr. Yosuke Nakamura," the bird told the veterinarian,

according to Uemura. The parrot also provided his full home address, down to the street number, and even entertained the hospital staff by singing songs.

"We checked the address, and what do you know, a Nakamura family really lived there. So we told them we've found Yosuke," Uemura said.

The Nakamura family told police they had been teaching the bird its name and address for about two years.

But Yosuke apparently wasn't keen on opening up to police officials.

"I tried to be friendly and talked to him, but he completely ignored me," Uemura said.

If it weren't for the expense and especially the screaming, I would definitely have my African Grey by now!

100!

This is my **100th** blog post! What a long way I've come from my first blog post, aptly and boringly titled, "First Post" – it was a description of me learning to blog! And what a variety of subjects I've covered, from retractable sharpie pens, to kids' blankies... from movies and tv shows to animals, trips, and family life... It seems like forever ago that I was taking you all through the 11, 572 snow days we had, and it's been fun to share all these aspects of my life on the internet while learning things about my friends and family who read and/or comment on my posts. So thanks to all my readers, even if you just read because I make you, thanks anyway... I truly appreciate each and every comment I receive – written

and spoken, keep it up! And might I add that I'm the first tangents.org blogger to achieve this milestone... hope to have others join me soon!

Letter to the Humane Society

As an animal lover, I am a big believer in getting as many of your pets from a humane society as you can. Sometimes there are reasons why a family might need a "purebred" animal (allergies to certain breeds, professional showmanship, etc.), but for the most part, I don't really like when pet stores carry dogs and cats for sale, especially when they try to make "breeds" out of dogs that are mutts! Case in point – we visited a Petland this weekend, just something to do to pass the time while we were in Fort Wayne, Indiana visiting the zoo, and I noticed that at least HALF of their puppy stock was mixed breeds! The same animals you could buy (rescue!) for a small fraction of the price at a humane society, or even a pound, where they euthanize (KILL) animals just because they have too many! And here these pet stores are creating more, just for profit and to "design" a custom-made dog for somebody that in my opinion, does not have their priorities straight if they're willing to spend extra money just to have a "designer" puppy. Petland, etc. will make up breeds; for example, the store we went to had "puggles" (a pug crossed with a beagle), cock-a-poos (cocker spaniels mixed with poodles), and "borderjacks" (border collie mixed with a jack russell terrier), to name a few. Anyway, I won't go into the reasons for choosing to adopt your next dog from a shelter vs. a pet store (except to say it will SAVE A LIFE!!!), but I just thought I would post a copy of the letter I'm going to send to my local humane society to thank them for the awesome family pet we adopted a few months ago from their shelter:

Dear Humane Society:

We just wanted to say thank you for our new family member. We adopted "Sasha" from your facility on March 4, 2008. We renamed her Beesley after a character from our favorite tv show, and not only has she learned her new name and some new tricks, she has become a very much loved part of our family. She gets along with our 2 dogs just like one of the "pack", and she is an energetic, obedient, and gentle playmate for our 3 young children. She seems really happy in our house, and we couldn't be happier after choosing any other dog for our new pet. Thanks so much for taking such good care of her while she was a homeless dog and for having patience with us while we got to know her to see if she would fit into our family. She fits like a lost piece of our family puzzle, and we couldn't imagine a better dog... well, except for our "old lady" of the house, the pack leader named Charity, who Beesley worships and spoils along with the rest of us! Here is a picture of the kids with Charity and Beesley. Thanks again!



Spring is in the Air = BABIES!!!

CONGRATULATIONS to my sister in Illinois, who gave birth to a healthy 8 lb. 15 oz. baby boy today!!! I can't wait to see pictures of the little darling, and I will post them when I get them (HINT HINT - no, just kidding, I know you have much more important things to do right now than to worry about sending pictures) I just wish I could hold him! And Congratulations to Austin on becoming a big brother - it's an important job buddy; I know you'll be a great one! Welcome, Ryan Timothy!

Other baby news - our kids' babysitter's cat had kittens the other day. Look how unbelievably cute they are:



See if you can count 'em - makes a good picture puzzle, doesn't it? There are 6 -

the little orange one kinda blends in with the towel – he's unique!

My daughter's teacher had her baby, and my two cousins also had their babies, which means 3 of my grandmother's 4 expected great-grandchildren for this year are here already! I am the last one standing ☐

Seriously, I feel left out, being the only one left pregnant out of all the women I knew who were expecting. I am ecstatic that all the babies are healthy and thriving though – that is truly something to be thankful for! For the most part, I love being pregnant, though I have to say this one is the most difficult pregnancy yet in some ways. Also the easiest in some ways too, so it's not all bad... But my feet are killing me constantly... I feel like I can't stand for more than 10-15 minutes at a time, and with a toddler and 2 other little kids to care for, that is a tough feeling to have. Plus I'm exhausted much of the time, and have terrible heartburn a lot... all this and 3 months to go, not to mention the fact that the weather is only getting nicer, then it will get really hot and then I'll just be miserable. I hate not having the energy or the desire to go outside to enjoy these nice days... it makes me feel guilty, especially because it means my toddler can't enjoy them with me. Is it mean for her to be couped up in the house with me on gorgeous days like today? She doesn't seem to mind though, and we do play together lots while I'm sitting down, so it can't be all bad... I just tell myself that in August I will have much more energy and time to enjoy the weather. It's hard to imagine now, but some of the fatigue and aches and pains will lift, I HOPE!

Life Nonetheless

I got to do something so cool today – it really made my day. It's so nice outside, so I was looking for a place to walk with my youngest-for-now, and we decided upon the pet store. Not that we need a specific place to walk, but I always like to have a mission. So anyway, we walked up to the pet store, and they had little baby gerbils. I am talking newborn pinkie gerbils even smaller than a person's pinkie. I asked the

worker how old they were, and she said about a week, I couldn't believe how small they were. Some were just beginning to get fur but still had their eyes closed. It was amazing to me how the Mommy gerbils in the cage just ran around, business as usual, kicking up the shavings in the cage right onto the pinkies. I noted this to the worker, and she said yes, they aren't really as fragile as they look. She came over to see them, and she goes, "wait, there are new ones in there that weren't there last night!" So then she took one of the less than 24-hours-old gerbils out and let me hold it!

It was SO cute – well, cute isn't even the right word because it was so teeny. It flipped over onto its side in my hand and just laid there, too exhausted to try to right itself. I loved holding it, but it was SO teeny and fragile-seeming, that I was afraid it was just going to up and die in my hand so I gave it back. But it was amazing to me that life begins so small. Something so small and still so precious – it is life, nonetheless.

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!

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!

3's a Crowd?

Announcing a new addition to the family: Beesley! No, we didn't have the baby early – Beesley is of the canine variety. She is named for a character on what is quite possibly the best tv show ever, The Office (Pam Beesley). Now that the writer's strike is over, we can once again look forward to new episodes of this great show. This way, if Pam

and Jim get married, there is still a Beesley namesake ☐



She is a cocker spaniel mix about 5 1/2 yrs. old. She is black and white and really cute! She's great with kids, and we've had a bit of a rocky start with our other 2 dogs, but we think 3 dogs will be good company and not a crowd soon. We got her from the humane society, which is always a crap-shoot, but **well worth it** if you do your research. Get to know the breed of dog you're considering (if possible, sometimes they don't always know what a mutt is made of!), and spend a lot of time getting to know the potential pet and vice versa – bring your whole family to test the dog around kids and look at a bunch of dogs to get an idea of what kind of personality and habits you may or may not want in a new family member. Remember, this pet will be living with you and your loved ones for hopefully a number of years, so it's really important to find a good fit! Giving a pet a home who needs one is so rewarding! It's really easy and fun to go puppy shopping at a pet store because let's face it, puppies are some of the cutest things ever! But remember, they grow out of the cute and teeny phase within MONTHS, sometimes even mere WEEKS! Puppies are not potty-trained, and you will have no idea how easy (or difficult!) your new puppy will be to potty train. Our first dog took **years** to potty-train, whereas our 2nd dog basically potty-trained herself even though she was a young puppy when she came into our home. Beesley is already potty-trained, and she seems to have had a good home in the past. She is used to being let out on a cable in the backyard, knows her way around the house, and basically seems to fit right in so far at least... So, our crap-shoot seems to have paid off thus far! I will keep you posted!

Oscar Party

We had an Oscar party last night. It was a lot of fun! We asked the guests to bring a \$5 item from home they would have put in a garage sale. Everyone filled out a ballot, and whoever got the most correct guesses (my husband out of sheer luck, can you believe it? He doesn't know anything about the Oscars! Congratulations Honey!) chose an item first, followed by the person with the next most correct guesses, and so on. So, we got a cool looking food chopper. Haven't tried it yet... I didn't do too badly on the guessing, I got to choose fourth... but I was disappointed because the item I really wanted (needed, actually) had been taken by then... but I am happy with the food chopper, I'll have to see how it works. What I really wanted were the set of metal padlocks, it sounds weird, I know... but we have this escaping parrot who needs all the doors on his cage padlocked – there are 3 – and he can bite thru plastic padlocks. The other day he got out of his cage and chewed the light switch plate off the wall... so I'm afraid we're going to come home one day to find a parrot. But, who would have guessed that the padlocks would be in such high demand. Not my husband, who did get to choose first but thought the padlocks would be left for me to choose, so instead he chose the food chopper for me – awww. But I really recommend doing award show parties, sports-watching parties, etc. this way, it's lots of fun, and it's really interesting to see what kind of stuff you end up with.

But enough about us and our party, let's move on to the real party... I didn't really see any of the red carpet this year – oh darn – cuz we were busy playing a game and then we watched Barbara Walters interviews, which I don't usually watch. I did see Hillary Swank, who I mistook for Halle Berry – don't

know what that was about, but she looked really different, barely recognizable. I thought the show was supposed to start at 8, but it started closer to 9, which could explain why our poor friends were stuck here until midnight on a work night! I thought Jon Stewart did pretty well as host. He was pretty funny, but my favorite Oscars host is Ellen – I really wish they'd have her back. I got 8 of the 24 votable categories correct. Not an outstanding score, but among our party of about 10, I think it was about average. The only award contenders I saw this year were *Gone Baby Gone* and *Juno*. See one of my previous posts for a review of *Gone Baby Gone* and you'll see why I wasn't broken up about it losing out on its Oscar chance. I was glad to see *Juno* win for one of the screenplay awards – it was a really well written movie, and I recommend it to anyone who is not a teen. If you have a teen, watch out, and do not let them see this movie, as it totally glorifies teen pregnancy, makes it seem easy, and will most likely have them saying, what's the big deal, I can handle it, no problem. Enough of my rambling, here are the Oscar winners in case you can't find them anywhere else for some weird reason:

Best Motion Picture: "No Country for Old Men."

Lead Actor: Daniel Day-Lewis, "There Will Be Blood."

Lead Actress: Marion Cotillard, "La Vie en Rose."

Supporting Actor: Javier Bardem, "No Country for Old Men."

Supporting Actress: Tilda Swinton, "Michael Clayton."

Director: Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, "No Country for Old Men."

Foreign Language Film: "The Counterfeiters," Austria.

Adapted Screenplay: Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, "No Country for Old Men."

Original Screenplay: Diablo Cody, "Juno."

Animated Feature Film: "Ratatouille."

Art Direction: "Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street."

Cinematography: "There Will Be Blood."

Sound Mixing: "The Bourne Ultimatum."

Sound Editing: "The Bourne Ultimatum."

Original Score: "Atonement," Dario Marianelli.

Original Song: "Falling Slowly" from "Once," Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova.

Costume: "Elizabeth: The Golden Age."

Documentary Feature: "Taxi to the Dark Side."

Documentary Short Subject: "Freeheld."

Film Editing: "The Bourne Ultimatum."

Makeup: "La Vie en Rose."

Animated Short Film: "Peter & the Wolf."

Live Action Short Film: "Le Mozart des Pickpockets ('The Mozart of Pickpockets')."

Visual Effects: "The Golden Compass."

The Price is WRONG, Bit...

You know I'm not going to finish that sentence... if you've seen Happy Gilmore, you know how it ends, anyway. If not,

rent it if you like comedies, it's a good one. In case you haven't noticed, I watch a lot of tv. Actually, I don't really watch it, I just leave it on to listen to while I putter around the house doing various chores and tending to children all day... it's nice to hear adults talking, even if they aren't talking to me – I can pretend. Anyway, I usually have The Price is Right on in my laundry room for my parrot – it's his favorite show. He likes to imitate the AWWW noise the audience makes when they get something wrong. I'm getting used to Drew Carey. He's no Bob Barker, but he is finally becoming less nervous and getting in the groove of the show – or so I thought. The other day when I started this post – it got POSTponed (HA) because the baby and I have been under the weather – Drew was a little “off”. The opening prize was a train set, and he goes, what do you want to bid for that chainsaw? As he admitted, he didn't even look at the prize! Then later on, he called one of the models Rachel Ray. Funny stuff – and though it might seem like I have too much time on my hands, I beg to differ.