

Priceless dog therapy

Okay, those are two things mashed together in the title describing events of Wednesday, my only day of subbing this week (though I am still trying for some Friday work). What happened to Tuesday? Well, I had to push my Monday photo work to Tuesday due to that annoyance to the daily routine known as jury duty, or in my case non-duty. Fortunately no driving was required for this civic duty as the location was Chicago. In fact, I would just not show up rather than drive there due to the ridiculous traffic. Fortunately, the train stations are within walking distance both from my home and the courthouse in the city. I also was glad this was the civil court instead of the criminal one- I don't know how people are able to serve on juries for criminal trials that can often take weeks to complete. I realize jobs can't fire you for jury duty but they don't have to pay you, and that lack of pay would be a huge problem, at least for me. You noticed, I'm sure, that I wrote "non-duty" earlier. What actually happened was my group got called down (while I was in the bathroom no less) and we went down to a courtroom, only to wait and be told that the two parties came to a settlement so no jury would need to be picked. So we went back up to the jury waiting room in case we might be needed again. About an hour later we were called up again, jury trial take two, or so I thought. However, this time we were given our checks and sent home- I guess being called up once can count as our civic duty even if we didn't make it to jury selection, let alone trial. We did have to wait until they were sure we would no longer be needed though. With half the day still left, I stopped for lunch since the next train wouldn't depart for another 45 minutes. Unfortunately, with the light leaving us earlier these days I was not able to go to even one of the dealers since I couldn't be sure how long it would take and didn't want to make a wasted hour round-trip anywhere. Yes, I could have blogged Monday, but I just wasn't up to it.

Which leads us to the topic of the title, my sub-job Wednesday. I had to get up at 5:30 to start looking since it is near impossible this year to get a sub job in advance for some reason. I somehow managed to secure one at a nearby school in their mentally-impaired program. I must remember never to show up any later than 10-minutes early at this school. I was right on time, but ended up about ten minutes late because they closed the lot by the front doors due to buses meaning I had to ask where the other lot was, wait in traffic to get to it, suffer leagues of parents dropping off their kids in the very same lot, find a spot, then walk a quarter mile back to the front doors of the school. I did note there were still spots left in the front lot as I headed to the doors.

So I eventually made it to the classroom, somehow still before the kids arrived to the class (though I still had to work my way around several at their lockers). Being a MI class there were of course teaching assistants so I was able to cool down from the hassle of my arrival. They showed me the schedule for the day, but being Vet's day that schedule was just made to be broken. Instead of an hour of guided reading, for example, they had maybe 20 minutes before heading to their 2nd-grade buddy class. That teacher talked a little bit about Veteran's Day, and then a couple of soldiers came in to visit- one from the Army, the other a Marine. Both had served time in you-know-what part of the world (the marine couldn't tell us where- essentially saying it was classified, but the army soldier had been to Afghanistan). They talked a little about what they did, what life was like with their respective units, and their families. The 2nd-graders had written several questions to ask them during their visit. It was quite interesting. Once the principal came in and whisked them to their next class to visit, we headed back to our own room for snack time. The next schedule change came during this time. Just as they finished eating and sat down to read silently, in walks a vet. Okay, she wasn't a vet but I just had to use

that play on words. Notice how I didn't capitalize the word this time? That's because this person was a pet therapist, if not a veterinarian. Both work with pets, though for different reasons- oh never mind. So my pun didn't work- sue me. ☐

Anyway, the therapist reminded the kids how to handle the dog (apparently she had been here before), making sure they let this lap dog sniff their hands before they could pet him. She also taught them how to give the dog treats (in an open hand, because the dog could bite your fingers if you hold the treat by the thumb and forefinger). She also had the dog do some tricks. The kids one at a time rolled a die and the dog would jump through a hoop for the number of times it showed, then later they did dog bowling where the kids would hide a treat among foam pins, and the dog would knock a number of them down to get to the treat. Cute.

The kids got their silent reading in, and then we skipped math to do calendar in the short time left before lunch. This is where the next part of the title comes into play- the look of surprise on a 5th-grader's face when you sneak up behind him while he's eating lunch and ask him a question in a place he does not expect to hear or see his church and summer camp leader as he turns and recognizes me. Priceless. As I talked to him, two more kids from my church got up to talk to me- one of whom I was going to talk to next, the other a surprise to me. What was funny about this encounter was the girl who I had worked with in church drama last year didn't know what to call me since she only remembered my first name, which is what I use at church- Mr. Derek. She had clearly been taught to not use an adult's first name at school. Maybe I told her last year, I don't know. I didn't know the third one came to this school, but this school being the closest to my church means several kids do happen to attend school here. I know of three others in the junior high area who I know I have mentioned before (two are the girl's brothers, twins whom I have also worked with at church).

The rest of the day was pretty mild. I had an extra half-hour off due to the kids going to music, and when they came back we scrapped writing for some reason to watch part of a movie. You know, I don't think I have ever watched *101 Dalmatians* before even though I kind of know the story. We only watched a little bit of it before getting ready to go home, where I rested up until choir rehearsal, where I just want to mention that another pair of twins I taught a few years ago are regularly a part of- they finally came down to the tenor section after singing alto for the last couple of years (hey, they were 12-13 at the time!). I can even name a couple more sets of twins and a set of triplets too. I don't know why, but they are not all that uncommon at my church. Well, if I can think of some story to write about them sometime I may say some more.

Wonder Woman

Probably a year ago now, I received one of those email forwards about getting to know your friends. You know the type – you read your friends' answers to some strange and random questions and then you answer them, getting to know more about your friends and yourself. One of the questions was something about choosing a fictional character that best describes your friend, and my friend wrote "Wonder Woman" about me. I thought that was awesome because I don't feel like a wonder woman, but it's fun that someone else thinks that about me, so it's kind of stuck with me... Especially in these recent days where I am one of the last ones in our family standing as the others are flu-stricken. It's been kind of a mantra I say to myself as I walk around our barren wastelands of a living room, tending the ailing... *"I am a wonder woman, I will not get the flu."*

If I were a sort of flu wonder woman, I would carry holsters for my tools of trade: bottle of disinfectant, antibacterial soap, hand sanitizer, Hall's Defense lozenges, antibacterial wipes, tissues... I've washed my hands raw in the past week.

This is all very strange, maybe the flu has infected my brain. I've also taken on what seem like really weird habits lately, like swallowing garlic cloves and onion petals like pills with my dinner. I'm not going to say anything about how I smell lately, but hey, I'm one of the last ones around here who hasn't gotten sick. So far, our two youngest kids and myself remain healthy. I can't believe we haven't gotten it, and it feels strange to live life feeling like a sitting duck. This thing is so nasty and contagious, it's really only a matter of time...

Our oldest daughter came home last Friday night and stayed in bed until Tuesday when she also finally starting talking and eating again. Our second oldest daughter had a bad fever Tuesday and slept for awhile and then she was fine. My husband has felt terrible for 3 days now. It's affecting everyone differently, and it's completely unpredictable. I had to go into the middle school to get my daughter's homework, and that's where I found out that half the 4th grade came down with it Friday night. I also learned of the "8 day" theory - some people have thought that their families were sick and over it, only to have other members of the household come down with it 8 days later. Sounds like a horror movie, feels like a sci-fi movie. Pretty much everyone I know who has kids has H1N1 in their families. I'm especially worried about our friends whose diabetic daughter was sent home from school with a blood sugar reading of over 300. Her mother also has a chronic illness and her medication includes steroids, so both of them are high risk for H1N1 complications.

We had a busy week planned this week and had to cancel most obligations. It's really difficult to live our busy lives

without being able to commit to anything, not knowing whether we'll be sick or healthy. I hope everyone else is doing ok... is the outbreak especially bad in our small community, or is this just the reality of the 2009 flu outbreak? *I am a wonder woman, I will not get the flu...*

So what's that tickle in my throat?

Now that I have one...

Can I do anything else with a double-boiler?

The short answer was yes. You can cook anything that needs low even heat. Most of the time this is chocolate for candies. You can also make many sauces and fondues. There are many recipes on the web just for double boiler cooking. In fact the double boiler was one way to reheat leftovers before the microwave. But can it be used to make a main dinner dish.

For that I needed to do a more in depth search. I've never used it for more than melting chocolate and making custards. Never a main course.

I did a lot of searching and found many sauces for main dishes. I also found that a double boiler was used to reheat the dish as a part of the dish. I even found a recipe for scrambled eggs. While I do like eggs for dinner every now and then, I didn't consider that a main course.

Then I found one. I've never had it before and will try it shortly. So lets try to make Welsh Rarebit. Yes, the double boiler is used to make the sauce, but since the sauce is the main ingredient in this dish, I think it fits my needs. The only thing that isn't cooked in the double boiler is the

toast. There is even a variation that uses poached eggs with the sauce and toast. Those could be cooked in the lower portion of the boiler after the sauce is ready. Double use from a double boiler. I like that.

From that I could also make Eggs Benedict. Toasted English muffin, poached eggs and hollandaise sauce, but I have to cook the Canadian bacon.. Hmm not quite a full meal with a double boiler, but close.

From The Twisted Mind Of A Thirteen Year Old

Tonight, my nephew/godson and his two siblings came into the store before Wednesday night CCD. I thought... uh-oh what is this terrible trio up to. Joshua (in his infinite wisdom) chose to ask me in his own special way if I would consider being his sponsor for Confirmation... "since no one else seems to be able to." I tried really hard not to laugh at the presentation but I could not resist firing back at the way it was presented. What an honor to be asked when so many others turned it down. How many others were asked I do not know. After they left, I decided to think that he failed in his attempt to say that there was no one else he would rather have do it. Hey... this is my blog so if I want to sugar coat some things, it's my prerogative.

I remember when I chose the person I wanted to stand with me as I made the decision to accept my Christian faith that my parents and godparents made for me when I was baptized. It also happened to be my godfather. I also remember hearing stories about the bishop slapping each candidate on the face

as they were being confirmed. This practice must have stopped some time before I received the sacrament.

Ok, I will say that it will be an honor to be a part of Joshua's Confirmation day.

Country Music Award Time!!!

It's time for the CMAs, and I'm making just a quick little post to share my guesses – we'll see how I do at the end of the night. I know, I know I whined and cried about missing the show this year, but my family came down with H1N1 and we're under a self-imposed quarantine. I think the kids need to get to bed early – for their health, of course ☹ – and I get to watch the show live after all! Believe me, I would so much rather be at youth group tonight, despite all my whining, I swear! This is an awful sickness, and I would so much rather not have anyone in my family have to have it... but I don't want to dwell on that now – we've been living this illness since Friday night, so it's time to break from that now a little bit – CMA time!!!!

My picks – I'll try to update throughout the night to see how I did. **Correct in green, wrong in red.**

TOTAL: 4/11

Entertainer of the Year:

Taylor Swift, winner

Kenny Chesney

Female Vocalist:

Taylor Swift, winner

Carrie Underwood

Male Vocalist:

Brad Paisley

Vocal Duo:

Sugarland, winner

Brooks and Dunn

Vocal Group:

Lady Antebellum, winner

Rascal Flatts

New Artist:

Darius Rucker, winner

Jake Owen

Album:

Taylor Swift's Fearless

Single:

I Run To You – Lady Antebellum

Song:

In Color – Jamey Johnson, winner

I Told You So – Randy Travis

Event:

Start a Band

I Told You So

Music Video:

Taylor Swift

NOTES: Awesome show so far – great performances, and I love the hosting duo of Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood. Their little duets are entertaining, funny, and even pleasant music to listen to! I especially appreciate the ditty about the swine flu – priceless, and it really hits home right now! Carrie Underwood has an **amazing** voice! Thank you American Idol for gifting her to country music!

I love the infusion of the classic country: Mamas Don't Let

Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys and especially the Zac Brown Band's rendition of Devil Went Down to Georgia (on speed!) was EXCELLENT!!

Brooks and Dunn's final CMA performance (retiring) with ZZ Top is a highlight!

Still enjoying the show, but what the heck happened to the awesome hosting duo of Paisley and Underwood? Seems like they haven't been onstage together for a while. And when they do reappear together, let's can the jokes about Brad checking out Carrie's looks behind the back of his wife, [Kimberly Williams-Paisley](#) – there's just been too many of those jokes, and they're stale.

What could be better than Martina McBride singing When Country Wasn't Cool with Charlie McCoy on harmonica as a tribute to Barbara Mandrell to welcome her into the Country Music Hall of Fame?!? That was GREAT! That reminds me of an addition I must make to a fellow tangents.org blog about my favorite Christmas special – The Mandrell Sisters Christmas!

Oh man... the show started out the best CMA awards show EVER! But then it slowly went downhill... until the final award – Taylor Swift?!? You've got to be kidding. She is very talented and has done a wonder for attracting teen and tween girls to the country music genre, but... What about the rest of us?!? Let's face it, she did have a heck of a time hitting some of those high notes... Well, I'm not going to act like Kanye West. Taylor Swift deserves her time in the spotlight, even if it did ruin the entire flow of the CMAs...

Oh, and judging by my total guesses correct, it's obvious how much I'm allowed to listen to country music radio these days... For me, it's mostly KidsSongs and videos from the library (lately Shelley Duvall's Fairy Tale Theater) in the car. Whatever – no one could have seen that Taylor Swift Entertainer of the Year coming no matter what you spend your day listening to. I don't care if she IS the youngest CMA nominee for Entertainer of the Year ever – in my opinion, she

should have had a lot more ground to cover before she won an award like that! The show started out great, but I have to say, I am left disappointed, and not only by my terrible score
□

Not So Evil... YET!

So... we are now in week two of rehearsals. Last night was exceptionally fun. We had our first injury and it wasn't even stage related. It seems that our director had a bit of a spill earlier in the day and had a humongous gash on his forehead. Someone made the crack that he should have dialed 9-1-1 and he could have answered his own call.

We rehearsed a few of Mr. Potter's scenes and while I tried my best to be good and evil, I was having a bit of difficulty. For one thing, I kept hearing someone humming the "Imperial March" (or Darth Vader's theme) from *The Empire Strikes Back*. No goon to lead me in so I improvised which did not help matters at all. So, while fun, I don't think we got a great deal accomplished.

After rehearsal, I went home and watched my new rental, the second X-Files big screen extravaganza entitled, [*I Want to Believe*](#). It was definitely the uncut director's edition because there were a few rather gruesome scenes that would have NEVER made it to movie screens rather long the television series. But, being a fan of Agents Mulder and Scully, I enjoyed it.

Dad, I don't have a...

When my oldest moved out on her own, one of her first needs was a double boiler. Instead of asking how to cook a main or side course, she wanted to start with dessert. She wanted to melt chocolate.

Dad, I don't have a double boiler, can I just heat it on the stove? Hmmm. By being very, very careful I've had some luck melting chocolate over a low heat on the stove top, but it can be tricky and the chocolate can burn or scorch easily. I haven't had much luck with microwave melting, but that could be because my microwave is very old. So I did suggest to my daughter to use a double boiler. But didn't she just say that she didn't have one?

The good thing is most kitchens have at least one substitute for an official double boiler. A double boiler is a very simple device. One pan is supported over another. The lower pan hold water to boil. The upper pan holds what you want to melt or cook at low/controlled temperatures.

Easy solution a small pan held over another with boiling water. Problem is holding the pan until the cooking is done, it can be tiring. Better is to rest a slightly larger pan on top of the smaller pan that boils the water. But it is a balancing act and you still have to hold the pan. A real double boiler has the upper pan resting in a recess in the lower pan. Can this be done without the special equipment? It can if you have a round stainless steel or oven safe glass bowl. Just rest the bowl in a pan above the boiling water. If you really want to know, the stainless steel bowl works best for me.

More on what you can do with a double boiler later...

New Category

My daughters have asked me many questions over the years. Sometimes about cooking, sometimes about kid issues. I was thinking that I could put some of the answers on my blog. I will be going through some of my past posts to see if any past items could be moved over. I have one question to answer, but I will need to look up a few things and get them written down.

Anyway, the new category is Family Hints...

IT IS HERE

It's official – there is a flu wreaking havoc in our house. I don't know if it's H1N1, but all the signs are there. Our middle-schooler came down with it Friday night, and she's been in bed ever since. She had to miss a birthday party and church this weekend, and she won't be going to school tomorrow. Today our 5-year-old and 1-year-old starting showing symptoms, and tonight our 3-year-old looks like she might be starting to get it. And oh yeah – why would you think this one skipped Hubby, who gets EVERYTHING that comes around? Looks like it's making an appearance in him tonight. As usual, (except for the flu season when I was pregnant and was sick from Thanksgiving until Christmas – one bug after another) I remain the last one standing, as yet untouched by the virus (crossing fingers, knocking wood...)

So up goes this post, and down goes our family – I think a flu outbreak is a good reason to go to bed at 10, don't you?

Here's hoping and praying that it doesn't hit us too hard and also that I may stay well enough to care for my family. We are going to have to quarantine ourselves this week, which is a shame since we had plans for every single night. Tomorrow will see a slew of phone calls made and emails sent to cancel everything. Health comes first, of course. Best wishes to readers for staying healthy!!!

So What Happens AFTER You Push The Button

That is when the enthralling if not totally preposterous events begin to unfold in *The Box*. A likable couple with a young son are approached by a creepy looking man with a device that contains a button that when pushed rewards the pusher one million dollars (tax-free). The price: the death of a person whom you do not know. It could be an innocent new born infant or a murderer on death row. Arthur (James Marsden) and Norma (Cameron Diaz) Lewis certainly could use the million but are they willing to have "blood on their hands" after the button is pressed? I think the movie would have been rather dull if they sat around discussing the moral conundrum and if they had simply refused it would have been a twenty minute show.

I'm sure I have read a short story or two in which this scenario is played out but this movie puts a whole new spin on the consequences. What is purpose behind the box? Who exactly is the mysterious man named Arlington Steward (played deliciously by the creepy Frank Langella)? That's as far as I go. I do think the reason I liked it is the fact that it was so *Twilight Zone*-ish and was not for one moment boring.

This was a reunion of sorts for Langella and Marsden. Langella played Perry White and Marsden played Richard White in *Superman Returns*.