

I Have Gas

I know what you are thinking... and no... not that kind. This morning, I set out to complete my Halloween costume (still missing something I would have liked to add, but not essential). Ran into some old friends/former co-workers and chatted a bit and caught up and let them know that I have not completely disappeared from the planet.

I also bought my first Christmas gift for the menagerie of people I choose to buy for. Someone mentioned that they enjoy a certain fantasy book series so I looked for that. Then I realized that a movie was made from the series and luckily enough I found that. One down... several to go.

Just before I hit the city limits on my way home, I glanced at the dashboard. The little needle was in the red zone with very little room to go. I found the first driveway available, headed to the nearest station, and made it just as the little light came on. **PHEW!**

Great Weekend, Even if the Bears Didn't Play this Sunday.

I would usually write about the Bears today but since they didn't play Sunday I can enjoy writing about the rest of the weekend.

I had a GREAT weekend. I am a huge haunted-house fan... To me, a haunted house is **theatre-in-motion** – scene after scene of

live (and interactive) entertainment. As with any theatrical productions, some of the actors were better than others and some of the “sets” were better than others, but all had their charms. *I cannot wait until our friends and ourselves can put on a haunted house in our area!*

But, by far, the best part was spending time with family and friends. My friends are just amazing. I can do anything with them and have a good time. It really didn't matter in the end if we were driving in the car eating Italian Beef (YUM!!), or wandering through a haunted house, or just waiting in an insanely long line – I was enjoying myself fully! As much as I HATE LINES (man, I HATE lines) I kept thinking to myself – how unbearable would this be without these guys! Standing there wasn't much fun in a conventional sense, but it was another experience we had together... And thinking about us standing in that line – now makes me smile. **I love my friends** (which makes living with my best friend awesome!).

After a night of haunted house action we got to spend Saturday seeing all of our family. Everyone! It was just one of the best days I can recall. It started with us being very late, getting stuck in traffic – ugh! Although stressful at the time, it actually is perfect – the in-your-face reminder of why we're so lucky to live where we do. Anyhow...

After the delay we got to see my (side of the) family. We had a delicious breakfast (that poor Lisa couldn't enjoy) and then visited at my Sister's/Mom's house. Spending this time with my family was just delightful. I had such a feeling of peace being with them and was just ecstatic to see my mother so happy and healthy.

From there we went to visit Lisa's grandparents. Her grandfather lives in a nursing home so we went there for the visit. The home was nice and they were both in good spirits, enjoying their situation as best they could. How wonderful is that! They're still appreciating the wonders of life –

nursing home and all! They just glowed when they saw the great-grand-kids.

At Lisa's sister's house we celebrated her mom-and-dad's 40th wedding anniversary. It was a low key event that was very enjoyable. Kim & Tim are always great hosts and Lisa's family just eats-up our little ones. I just had a blast running and chasing the "big kids" (Taylor, Austin, Sammie, and Disney) and was completely exhausted afterwards. We then enjoyed a meal (yummy lasagna) together and played a bit more. After the meal we went to another haunted house. This time with Kim & Tim – Derek too. It was a very good haunted house; probably the best one all weekend. But I thought that by far the coolest part was seeing Kim & Tim out on a "date" together. They've had some rough times lately and it was just awesome to see them connecting and just enjoying one-another. Lisa and I both felt really great that we got to enjoy this experience together as two couples. It was a nice double date + Derek! And, Derek being along just made it better. He's no third wheel, he really made everything more fun! Like all of my friends, he always enhances every experience.

So – even though the Bears didn't play this weekend it was still the best! It was awesome. All the ingredients – Lisa (LISA!!), Taylor, Sammie, Disney, Christopher, Derek, Jamy, Megan, Mary, Mom, Caroline, Wilson, Ben, Gwyn, Lilly, Great Grandma, Great Poppa, Uncle Bud, Mother-in-Law, Father-in-Law, Kim, Tim, Austin, and Ryan + Italian Beef + Haunted Houses.

A recipe for a great weekend indeed!

Ohh!! You didn't tell me

you were going to kill it!!

Reliving a bit of my childhood tonight. I'm watching "It's the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown". Of course I have a signed document, even though it isn't notarized.

Of course cartoons of the 1960's were sometimes written for adults as well as children. I remember watching these shows year after year, but my parents would also watch. When they stopped showing them as often, my wife and I got the Charlie Brown cartoons on Video. I'm not sure, but I think I've seen each show at least 20 times. It could be more, but I don't remember watching as much in High School or College.

Good shows, good humor make a timeless show.

Anyone have a favorite childhood cartoon?

Freedom And Jeff

I received another touching email forward, and I have to admit that I [snopes-ed](#) it because it sounded so fake. It's the story of Freedom the eagle and her friend Jeff – here is their story:

Freedom and I have been together 10 years this summer. She came in as a baby in 1998 with two broken wings. Her left wing doesn't open all the way even after surgery, it was broken in 4 places. She's my baby.

When Freedom came in she could not stand

and both wings were broken. She was emaciated and covered in lice. We made the decision to give her a chance at life, so I took her to the vets office. From then on, I was always around her. We had her in a huge dog carrier with the top off, and it was loaded up with shredded newspaper for her to lay in. I used to sit and talk to her, urging her to live, to fight; and she would lay there looking at me with those big brown eyes. We also had to tube feed her for weeks.

This went on for 4-6 weeks, and by then she still couldn't stand. It got to the point where the decision was made to euthanize her if she couldn't stand in a week. You know you don't want to cross that line between torture and rehab, and it looked like death was winning. She was going to be put down that Friday, and I was supposed to come in on that Thursday afternoon. I didn't want to go to the center that Thursday, because I couldn't bear the thought of her being euthanized; but I went anyway, and when I walked in everyone was grinning from ear to ear. I went immediately back to her cage; and there she was, standing on her own, a big beautiful eagle. She was ready to live. I was just about in tears by then. That was a very good day.

We knew she could never fly, so the director asked me to glove train her. I got her used to the glove, and then to jesses, and we started doing education programs for schools in western Washington. We wound up in the newspapers, radio (believe it or not) and some TV. Miracle Pets even did a show

about us.



In the spring of 2000, I was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. I had stage 3, which is not good (one major organ plus everywhere), so I wound up doing 8 months of chemo. Lost the hair – the whole bit. I missed a lot of work. When I felt good enough, I would go to Sarvey and take Freedom out for walks. Freedom would also come to me in my dreams and help me fight the cancer. This happened time and time again.

Fast forward to November 2000, the day after Thanksgiving. I went in for my last checkup. I was told that if the cancer was not all gone after 8 rounds of chemo, then my last option was a stem cell transplant. Anyway, they did the tests; and I had to come back Monday for the results. I went in Monday, and I was told that all the cancer was gone.

So the first thing I did was get up to Sarvey and take the big girl out for a walk. It was misty and cold. I went to her flight and jessed her up, and we went out front to the top of the hill. I hadn't said a word to Freedom, but somehow she knew. She looked at me

and wrapped both her wings around me to where I could feel them pressing in on my back (I was engulfed in eagle wings), and she touched my nose with her beak and stared into my eyes, and we just stood there like that for I don't know how long. That was a magic moment. We have been soul mates ever since she came in. This is a very special bird.

On a side note: I have had people who were sick come up to us when we are out, and Freedom has some kind of hold on them. I once had a guy who was terminal come up to us and I let him hold her. His knees just about buckled and he swore he could feel her power coarse through his body. I have so many stories like that.

I never forget the honor I have of being so close to such a magnificent spirit as Freedom.

Hope

you enjoy this.

Jeff

Awww, that eagle sounds so sweet! So how did we get stuck with this big red jerk?



Quack Doctors

I know I promised to stop whining about my sore mouth, but it's amazing how little focus I have for other things when I'm not eating – all I can think about is pain and food, but sometimes I think about food and pain. The good news is that today when I woke up, the pain was loads less than yesterday. Today marks the first day of improvement since this thing began last Tuesday. But there is also bad news.

Even though I was feeling better, I decided to go to the doctor because this is totally and completely interfering with my daily life. I can't really talk, and it's really hard to chat with, guide, or discipline my kids throughout the day without being able to talk loudly. I can't eat, and I can't drink without pain, so my energy level is very low. So the bad news? The doctor told me it was canker sores after only looking at my tongue. He prescribed me "Meyer's Magic Mouthwash", a concoction listed on a piece of paper unlike any prescription I've ever seen. It looked like a cooking recipe, and my name was scribbled on top and the doctor's on the bottom. I should have taken a picture of it, but I was so anxious to get it filled. The pharmacist used a word that I can't recall at the moment, but she basically meant that they were going to have to brew it up like a potion. It was going to take a few hours, at least.

I got through the day, made it back over to pick up the medicine where I learned that it would be \$308 and insurance wouldn't cover it of course. Needless to say, I am not going to buy \$300 mouthwash! I'm angry that the doctor shrugged off the internet diagnosis without so much as a look or a test for hand, foot, and mouth disease. I'm mad that he didn't give me anything for the pain and that the medicine he did give me

costs so much. What a waste of time and money. I had better things to do today than to sit at the doctor's office – and who knows what else I picked up.

That reminds me, when I was at Walmart today stocking up on my favorite meal as of late, Equate shakes, I saw a lady wearing a medical mask. I wonder if she was trying to keep something to herself or trying to keep other viruses away? I wonder if mask-wearing will become more common as this swine flu business becomes even more serious?

Spooky, Great Fun In The City

Not one, not two, but **THREE** hauntings were on tap in the Windy City Friday night. It was soooooooo cool... (so maybe not the hour long wait in the line that never moved that went on and on my friends) but even that did not damper my excitement.

First stop was the Ditka Dome for the [Haunted Mansion and Asylum](#). Our group of six was divided in half and Mare, Derek, and I went in second. This was more focused on the jump out and scare you approach... been there done that, but it was still fun. A 12' man on roller blades was interesting. As we made our way through, I was once again amazed that the inhabitants kept saying my name.

We then made our way to [Eleventh Hour](#) where we had VIP tickets. There were four attractions in one: a corn maze (nothing special), and a three segment haunted house. Even outside the haunted house, we were entertained by actors being pused in wheelchairs and a crazy British woman giving orders who was unwilling or unable to take a photo of another couple who braved the terror. The haunted house was really amazing, full of actual scenes in which the actors stayed in character

the entire time. I enjoyed the “Sweeney Todd”esque character who greeted us with a history of the house. The stairs then lifted a la the Munster case without Spot the fire breathing dragon. Also inside was the much mentioned little screaming girl, a walk in freezer, a live rock band, a very disorienting maze, and an elevator of doom.

Our final stop was [Evil Intentions](#). The story line for this one had to do with an old coffin factory (if memory serves that was the actual location... was it not?) This was the spot for the dreaded wait of doom. When we finally got in, we were all placed in separate coffins before being led through the terror. A locker room separation, a crawl through vents (I was half expecting a creep to come at us), and by the middle of the haunt, 4 of us had been led away leaving Chris and I by ourselves and eventually being required to sing a song to leave the haunt.

If I had to choose, I would say that Eleventh Hour was the scariest house of horrors because the whole thing was so elaborate that we all could tell that so much time had been put into the extravaganza. Evil Intentions minus the wait was very cool, too. And while not as memorable, I’m glad we went through the Haunted Mansion and Asylum. A frightfully good time with ghoulishly cool friends.

Overall, A Series-ly Wonderful Day

Ok... the big item. The Yankees are off to THE WORLD SERIES! After a bit of speculation about the pitching decision (I thought all along that Andy Pettite was the way to go since he

as pitched in numerous big games and now has the most post-season wins of any pitcher). Once again, a great game and I was flabbergasted when the combo of Buck and McCarver began to be silenced when the Angels remarkably made two errors in a row. The quartet of players who were flying high in the late '90s (Captain Jeter, Pettite, Jorge Posada, and closer extraordinaire, MARIANO RIVERA) will be joined by second year skipper, Joe Girardi (who was also the catcher in the late 90s and now is the fourth person to play on a World Series Yankee team and later coach another to the series).

NOW, for even better news on a personal level (close but yes even better), I will be playing the role of the eeeeeevil Mr. Potter in the Village Players' production of *It's A Wonderful Life*. Travis called me earlier and informed me that I need to put on my mean face. I love playing the villain. Can't wait to get started! And it is now projected to run 2 weekends (December 11-13 & 18-20).

GO YANKEES!!!! AND NOW I CAN TRY OUT THOSE ERASABLE HIGHLIGHTERS (I was hoping that it would not be a long wait).
BOOYAH!

More crockpot cooking

The original recipe I had called for 4 boneless chicken breasts, 1 bag frozen mixed vegetables, and 3/4 cup chicken broth, salt and pepper to taste. This could be served with potatoes or noodles. Always quick, easy and tasty, but way too much for one person. So I cut this down to try to serve 1.

I have a small crock pot to use for dip and other small recipes, so I set out to use this. I had 1 boneless chicken breast, enough vegetables for 1, chicken broth to just cover

the chicken breast (just like in the big crock pot) and some red pepper flakes instead of salt and pepper. Cooked this for 3 hours on high, and served with mashed potatoes... I thought it was good. Not bad for a cool fall evening.

And this was a little healthier than my breakfast food cravings of just a little while ago. How often should one eat sausage gravy? ☐

What part did I have?

Our rehearsals have started for the WCCT's production of "Miracle on 34th Street". I started with a few male roles, since they were small roles and would be easily played by 1 actor. I started out with 4 such roles. Then 3 others were added, with lines from one or two being combined with one of the new parts. Today I was moved to a different role and lost another. Such is the way of community theater.

I'm just happy I get to keep the role I wanted. And I am again on stage with one of my daughters...

We do have a great Santa Clause with a real beard. In my opinion, our Santa is one of the best actors on our little stage. It is a pleasure to work with him again. A few other actors that I've been on stage with are also in the cast. And we also have many new people on stage. I always like seeing new people on stage. They are the way our theater grows.

I'll have to add a countdown the the opening. It should be a fun show...

In The Eleventh Hour, Evil Intentions In The Basement Of The Dead

As you may have read in my previous post, we took a trip to Illinois to visit with family and also tour the area's haunted houses. Well, I'm done whining about my painful mouth, so here's a run-down of the fun parts:

Got to visit with lots of family in the short time we were there. We had nice visits with one of my husband's father's only living blood relatives, his niece Lilly. Lilly is a really sweet person who has been going through a few tough life experiences lately. We don't get to see her often, so it was great to see her on Saturday. We hope to be able to get her out to Ohio for a visit soon! We stopped by my mother-in-law's house where we also got to see my husband's sister and her family. Our kids had a ball playing with each other; there are 7 of them altogether! After that, we also got to see where my Grandpa moved; it's a very nice place with a cute little main street area for visiting, complete with ice cream shop. We discussed the Chicago Bears (no comment as of the game's unfortunate status right now in the 2nd quarter – poor hubby!) with my grandpa and told my grandparents of things like the kids' awesome grades at school. Afterward, we had a really great 40th wedding anniversary for my parents at my sister's house. The kids had such a great time that they refused to leave – literally. My sister's family had to literally lock out my kids, which was slightly embarrassing, but mostly just a humorous result of their incredible come down from their awesomely fun weekend – also known as a fun-down.

The family stuff was Saturday, so Friday night we were lucky enough to be joined by 4 friends (3 all the way from Ohio!) for some haunted house fun! We went all over the 'burbs, with a goal to complete a huge square if you plotted our stops on a map. Because of an hour-long line in a cramped basement tunnel in Elgin, we did not make it to the Aurora stop, but we cajoled my mom (even though it was her anniversary party) into watching all 6 kids on Saturday so we (along with fellow tangenteer derek who made the drive south for the second consecutive night) could go to the haunted house with my sister and her husband, who hadn't been to a haunted house in probably about a decade – FUN! Here is a run-down / rating of the Illinois haunted houses – haven't made it to any Ohio ones this year, don't know that there will be time for that!

[Haunted Mansion and Asylum 13](#) – Bolingbrook IL – Saving the best for last would mean the worst is first, right? This haunted house was definitely the worst of the lot. It had lots of actors, not much else. Average costumes, not much scenery, blasting music not relevant to the theme of the haunted house... the only noteworthy and the most enjoyable part of the entire thing were the live chickens in the 'crazy hicks' scene. Seeing [Drew Peterson's](#) house in Bolingbrook might have been creepier. **Grade: C-**

[Eleventh Hour](#) – Elk Grove Village IL – This haunted house is located at Berthold's, a family-owned plant nursery and is actually 4 attractions in one. The corn maze is small but succeeded in losing us, even if for a short time. The haunted house was actually a string of 3, but it wasn't really clear when one ended and another began. Eleventh Hour had some really cool haunted house concepts, along with the obligatory chainsaw guy and spinning tunnel to walk through. The scenery was REALLY cool, complete with (SPOILER ALERT!!!) moving staircase and refrigerator door that both actually became passages to walk through! And, they had a live zombie band performing in a separate room while we viewed them through

little windows – now that is something I haven't seen in a haunted house before. A very cool haunted house, and without all the same old tiresome gore. Prize moment when an extremely creepy little girl made my husband scream like a... well, that seems like a mean thing to say about a guy who's been doing nothing but wonderful things to help out during my illness. It was hilarious, that's all I'm going to say.

Grade: B+

[Evil Intentions](#) – Elgin IL – This one also had a few very unique fright concepts, but they really need to work on the wait time – we waiting in a dingy narrow basement hallway for over an hour! After that, they separated our group of 3 guys and 3 girls into individuals and put us each into a casket! Mary and I lucked out and got to share one since there were 6 in our group and only 5 caskets, but it was still terrifying knowing that they were probably going to do something sudden and scary to us in the casket. SPOILER ALERT! They pretended to show us a movie on a screen in the casket, but the screen went to colored bars and made the high-pitched beeping noise, which was creepy, but that's all that happened. They really should have lengthened the movie or banged on the casket or something, anything. This, like a few of the other concepts in this haunted house, really needs to be better developed in order to heighten the fear factor. You take a bunch of people and put them in a haunted house with only 5 caskets for them to queue thru, and of course you're going to have a huge long wait to get in. The makeup in here was average, there seemed to be a relatively low number of actors (all of whom seemed to have the same mannerism of getting right up in your face – how many times can that be scary?), and I would consider the scenery downright bare – they definitely could have highlighted the building's casket company history in the scenery as well as they did in their marketing. The guide ghouls are particularly fond of separating the groups of patrons, especially isolating the women from their men, a concept I sort of hated and also really enjoyed at the same

time – it was weird. If I factor in the wait time for this one, you don't want to know the rating, so we'll just pretend I'm rating this as if I walked right in like I did in the previous two rated houses. **Grade (not including wait time): C+/B-** (hard to forget that awful wait time!)

[Basement of the Dead](#) – Aurora IL – Because we had to wait an hour for Elgin on Friday night, this one had closed and we didn't make it. But as I said earlier, my mom, dad, and uncle graciously agreed to watch the little ones so that us sisters, hubbies, and a friend could venture to downtown Aurora – a frightening experience in itself, haha. Seeing the line outside was daunting, and one character said the wait would be at least an hour. We were about to leave since my brother-in-law had just come off a double work shift and hadn't slept in 36 hours, when intrigued by the totally awesome looking makeup on the characters wandering outside, my husband inquired about the wait time at the ticket window. We took the gamble, and it paid off when we were admitted after only about 15 minutes. During our stay in line, we were entertained by a few of the haunted house escapees; including a super-tall, slow moving dude who had a habit of very creepily and slowly inhaling the scents of patrons of his choosing. The guy's build kind of reminded me of an Ohio friend, but I won't mention who, even though I know he's not a reader of my blog. There was a KISS rocker meets clown guy who succeeded at making his makeup and mannerisms really creepy also, and a blank face guy (a nylon stocking on his face, I would guess?), and a guy who moved quickly through the bushes on all fours, kind of like an ape. When it was our turn to go in, the scary clown slob manning the door burped and blew it in my face which was not scary, just stupid and rude, and if I get his H1N1, I will consider a lawsuit. Kidding, but it was still gross. He made me go first into the haunted house. Whatever, I would just let my husband ahead of me when we got in the door anyway, except that when I got in the haunted house, they shut the door on me and someone came

running up and told me to go through it alone. I flat out refused – I'm not going to PAY to do something I don't want to do, and they reluctantly let in the rest of our group. Sorry I foiled their plan, but I would not enjoy the experience alone; that's not really my thing. It was fun to see my sister and her husband in the haunted house since they hadn't been in one in years, but we quickly lost them in the dark mazes and didn't bother trying to find them. We figured they wanted to hang back and enjoy the startles they would get if they weren't so close to us. When we got back outside, we waited and waited, but two groups emerged before the rest of our group, and when they came out, my sister was white as a ghost. Hilarious, and I think they had fun – most people can benefit from venturing into a haunted house once in awhile, especially parents who can go without their kids – it's nice to just have only yourself to worry about for a little bit ☐ The makeup in this one was stellar, best I've ever seen. Scenery was good, if a little dark for my taste since it was difficult to see some of the blood and guts. Also a few good animatronics and lots of blood and gore, which was actually a change of pace from the others we've seen this year. **Grade:**

A