

Meet Me AAAAAAT The Fair

The Monday following Labor Day is the annual Fair Day for kids in Williams County, Ohio. This day all the little ones get another day away from the classroom. This year, kids in most of the districts had a four day weekend as Friday was canceled due to fog. Monday morning, I had the honor of sitting for a five and three-year-old. By 11AM, they were getting rambunctious so I decided to take them to the fair. Grandma gave me \$20 to use between the two of them for snacks and to bring their mother back a bag of delicious roasted peanuts (one of the stands I frequent yearly). As we arrived, Sydney (the three-year old) saw a ride that seemed to peak her attention... or maybe it was the flag on top. It was a ride that took passengers slowly straight up in the air; then, it suddenly dropped and returned to earth. Up close, my young niece thought against the ride.

We found a ticket stand at which I purchased two wristbands for the girls. And we went on our way. First stop, the carousel at which I was needed to ride with Sydney on the non-mobile bench and Alyssa also wanted no part of riding on a horse... BOY are these **MY** nieces? There was also a train that both of them enjoyed and a Strawberry ride that resembled the teacup ride at Disney Parks around the world. Sydney did not want to ride the school bus attraction until she watched her big sister brave it. There were a few rides that I would have gone on: the bumper cars which probably would not have been a good idea. I had the feeling that Alyssa would still be a bit short to drive a car herself and I don't think three in one is allowed. However, I did get tickets to ride the Tilt-A-Whirl which little Syd did not like at all.

As for the snacks, that was the highlight of the day. Another of my must stops is the Dairy Association's milkshake stand. Every year, I eagerly await the arrival of the fair if only to indulge in one of the tasty treats. Unfortunately, the girls

were not too big on them. I made the mistake of getting them both one. Actually, one wanted chocolate while the other wanted vanilla (I don't know why but... a vanilla shake? I do know that some of my other relatives prefer vanilla over chocolate so I'm not that surprised). They each took one sip of their respective shake and immediately said YUCK! **WHAT?!** Ah, well.... it wasn't my money being wasted.

Before we left, I asked them what they wanted for their snack. Sydney wanted a bag of salt water taffy.... yum, yum. Alyssa adamantly stated that she wanted a CANDY apple. So we went to the stand operated by friends of our family. We got Syd's taffy then I asked Alyssa if she really wanted a CANDY apple. At least three times she said yes... a CANDY apple. She got her candy apple, began to lick the hard, CINNAMON candy and said... "I don't like this." I knew it. Not only did I know that she does not like cinnamon candy, I had a feeling that she would not be able to bite into it. After 5 minutes of pouting, the apple ended up on the ground then in the garbage. Once again, not a big deal to me... not my money. Sydney was sweet enough to share a few pieces of taffy.

I found it strange that neither girl wanted to see the animals until we were across the race track headed back to the car. It was nearing 4 and I had to get back for rehearsal so we had to miss the big bike giveaway at 5... must be present to win of course. Ironically, the next day I learned that a grandson of one of my co-workers was the winner of one of the two bikes. I think they still give two away.

All in all not a bad time, except for a few moments, but what can ya do?

HE'S BAAAAAACK! Anyone Up for Some Parkour?!

YES... it has been a mere 8 days since I have been able to access the internet. Our connection via Verizon went down for the umpteenth time so my very Trekkie er... techie brother recommended that we make the switch to Time Warner high speed. So, for a week I have been getting phone calls from ardent fans asking if I have been abducted by aliens, fallen off the face of the earth, or just kidnapped by our friend from you-know-where. Actually, I have gotten a bit accomplished in the past few days: watching the Yankees slip a game or two, memorizing some lines, checking out the county fair, playing some softball (now 3-0, thank you very much), reading a 600+ page book of which I have less than 200 to read, and song lead in church. I did manage however to go out one day last week to borrow my brother's computer to read my 81 emails and read a few posts from my [co-tangenteers](#). Minutes ago, I read another 81 emails (ironic) and am anxious to see how far I have fallen behind in the ranks of tangents. Wonder if I get to read a take on the EXCELLENT season premiere of [The Office](#).

Chicago Bears: We Beat the Steelers!

It wasn't always pretty and I have to be honest, I am still not sure about this Bears team... BUT WE **BEAT THE STEELERS** and avoided going 0-2. 0-2 might not sound like too big of a deal to you baseball fans, but in NFL world and 0-2 start often

means a long and painful season.

Bears new superstar QB, Jay Cutler, rebounded from his terrible 4-interception performance last week to have a very solid game. No interceptions and two touchdown passes!

The Bears defense looked soft at times but, in the end, was able to keep the Steelers to 14 points – thanks especially to Jeff Reed (the Steeler's kicker) missing 2 “easy” field goals.

It was an exciting game and a Bears win. Have I mentioned how much fun the NFL is? Next week, the Seattle Seahawks... A team I personally hate. Don't know why, but I do! Hoping to be 2-1 after next Sunday – a winning record would be awesome after that putrid start against Green Bay.

And the rain comes down

As I sit here and type this blog, it seems that there is a bit of rain falling. I can hear it hit the windows, roof and echo on the metal chimney. To me, this is a comforting sound. As long as the wind isn't too strong, or the lightning too intense, I enjoy hearing it rain at night. I'm warm and dry in my house, and I know that we are receiving needed water.

It also brings back memories of walking in a warm summer rain with my wife. Not really worrying about getting wet or cold. Feeling relief from the summer's heat. And feeling the warmth of our relationship.

I also remember hurrying from building to building of our local zoo when the cold spring or fall rains hit during one of our many excursions. Maybe stopping for a warm drink at the cafe or spending extra time in the warm tropical exhibits. And

finally getting back to the van and putting the heat on.

Or back at the zoo during the Christmas Lights exhibit during those bitter winter rains. We actually enjoyed those evenings more, since the crowds would be much thinner. We would be dressed and ready for the rain with waterproof or repellent outerwear and umbrellas. We would look at the lights and the raindrops falling would reflect a variety of color. Of course the evening would include hot chocolate, coffee or tea.

And of course there are always those first spring rains that bring the green back to the area after the long grey and white winters. Memories of fun, love, laughter and light remind me that even during the coldest times, the hope of spring and new life can be found in the same rains.....

A tale of two gatherings...

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... (Sorry Mr. Dickens)

But then again it was. This weekend families gathered to mark similar yet different events.

On Saturday, my nephew celebrated his birthday. He has reached his teen years, and is more interested in the presents, food and television than the actual gathering. I do believe he 'suffered' through the gathering just to make sure he got his presents. Nothing really wrong with that, I'm sure most young people of his age do exactly the same thing. The gatherings, unless totally oriented toward the youth, are for the adults. We ate, talked, laughed and remembered many of these events during the day. This is what, through the ages, kept families together. We share common bonds and we celebrate those bonds.

Be they birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays, times with family and friends keep our bonds alive.

On Sunday, another gathering was held. This was a memorial of the birth and death day of my grandson. He received no physical presents, and he won't be living into his teen years to complain about the attention he is or isn't getting. This was a day to support those who will miss his presence in the world. It was a time for family and friends to gather and support one another. We ate, talked, laughed and remember many events, but we also shared a tear or two. Coming together in the hard times is another thing that keeps families together. Death, sickness and other troubles are also something we all share. Another common bond. Another way to show support and love.

While on the surface, I wish that all we ever had to do was share the happy occasions, I realize that it is the difficult situations that are the true measure of what we mean to each other. These hard times can show the best humanity has to offer.

So this weekend was the best of times and the worst of times, with the best of times far outshining the worst. Those closest to the sadness may not feel this for quite some time, but in looking back they will eventually remember "The Best of Times."

And I Thought The Sky Safari Was Cool!

The [Sky Safari](#) is an aerial ride at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It's like a chair-lift at a ski

resort, but lose the snow and add views of zoo animals; including zebra, ostrich, wildebeest and lions. I rode on it earlier this summer with my daughters, mom and uncle, and we all loved it. Speaking of travel, I've heard from a bunch of my Ohio friends about how beautiful the Hocking Hills area is in the southeastern part of the state. We probably won't have a chance to visit this year, even though I've heard that it's just gorgeous in the fall. It might have to go on the "to-do" list though after I found out they have [this](#); a 2-hour zip line tour through the treetops! Check it out – the first part of the video is the training and orientation, they really get going around the two-minute mark if you want to fast forward. But it looks like something I think I would try!

The Office: Yes, I Looked Up Parkour

Well, this season of *The Office* is off and running – literally. Michael, Dwight, and Andy are participating in creating a Parkour video. What is parkour you ask? (see video)

Let's just say that the trio from *The Office* didn't create such amazing athletic footage. It was a great way to start off this season – with some physical comedy!

We also quickly learn what we already kinda knew... That Pam is carrying Jim's baby. And then we learn something we didn't know... That Stanley Hudson is having an affair. Uh oh!

Thanks to some interns, Michael becomes aware that Stanley is seeing someone on the side. He then proceeds to tell everyone in the office. Which, of course, he is proud to do – after all, HE has some inside juicy gossip.

Thanks to Jim, Michael begins to realize that perhaps spreading word about Stanley's affair is not a good idea. But, as Michael points out "you can't unsay what you've already said" (ok, that is not the exact quote)... So, his plan? No problem, he will just spread crazy rumors about everyone in the office. If he does that, people in the office will realize the information going around is not true and, thus, realize that the rumor about Stanley's affair is 'not true'.

In the end, Michael's rumor mill does work... At the expense of Pam & Jim. He tells people that Pam is pregnant, unaware that she actually does have a bun in the oven. The couple had wanted to keep their pregnancy private but confessed in order to protect Stanley. (If you want that last sentence to make sense, watch the show!)

Anyway, I'm sick of blogging... The point is – *THE OFFICE IS BACK!! YH0000000000PPPPIIIIIEEEE!*

Me and the WCCT: All Alone at 0-3...

Well, it was another year at the WCCT Family Fun Day – a great tradition started and organized by [my wonderful wife](#). Family Fun Day is a day where people from the Williams County Community Theatre get together for a picnic and some softball.

This year there weren't as many players as in years past as the WCCT has a show coming up soon and some of our regular players had to work on the set. However, we still managed to fill two teams with the help of an all-time pitcher (thanks Beth!).

Enter this year's game I was 0-2 and I was bound-and-determined to get my first win this year. I even made sure I would have the benefit of Zach on my team (always a strong player). Since [John](#) was unavailable ☐ I thought I had a very good chance of winning – FINALLY.

Things started well, after the first inning my team had a 5-2 lead and I was actually starting to feel guilty thinking it might be a blowout. But after the 2nd inning I felt a little better; we were still winning but it was a close game. The score: 8 – 6 heading into the 3rd and final inning. Hey, we're theatre people and we're old. **Any more than three innings and we do start to sing showtunes and drop dead.**

The third inning was interesting, the opposing team (consisting of [Lisa](#), [Jamy](#), Eddie, and Jose) scored 5 runs making it 11-8... But we (Zach, John R, Megan, and myself) still had yet to bat. Since we were averaging 4 runs per inning I was not concerned.

WE SCORED ONE RUN!

Even Zach couldn't get the ball out of the infield in the third inning! The ending score was 11-9 and I now stand alone at the BOTTOM of the record list at 0-3. Yep, that's right. NOBODY ELSE IS 0-3. The next worse record is 0-1 or 1-2... Meaning EVEN if I get a win next year, I will STILL have the worst softball record in the WCCT! Eeech!

The problem is – several people have expressed that they do not want to be on my team next year. ☹ I just don't know how to break the curse – oh, and before you start thinking I just stink at softball let me say this...

I HAVE NEVER GOTTEN A SINGLE OUT WHEN BATTING!

Am I boasting there? Come on! I have the WORST record, you gotta give me something!

The good news is that my dear friend Jamy is now 3-0 and my beautiful wife, Lisa, now has a win. Also, with 6 (count them **SIX**) RBIs my wife was undoubtely the MVP!!! **GO LISA!!!**

For me, it's once again "maybe next year". Hopefully John (John 0!) will be playing then and will agree to be on my team. Until then maybe my friends will take it easy on me and not razz me too much about my win-less record. We will see!

Comfort foods

I wrote yesterday about how the fall has a shadow over it for me. Today, I was feeling a bit down, and I wanted a specific type of food for dinner. Unfortunately for me, the restaurant I wanted to go to was closed for renovations. I didn't get the dinner I wanted, so the psychological release I would have associated with it was gone.

Now I will admit that I could lose a few pounds. I'm not extremely overweight, but I know losing around 15 lbs. would be good for me in the long run. I also realize I have to watch what I eat due for other reasons. But I was good today, so I knew I could have my comfort food tonight. Then I realized almost all of my comfort foods are not what would be considered a healthy diet.

So anyway here are my top 25 comfort foods in no particular order:

- 1- McDonalds McDougle cheeseburger (I didn't really notice the missing slice of cheese that makes this not the Double Cheeseburger). Or the Wendys Junior Bacon Cheeseburger... Neck and neck on these. Both hit the same spot.
- 2- Pancakes, Waffles or French Toast. At home is good, but for personal reasons I really like I-HOP.
- 3- Sausage Gravy and Biscuits with Scrambled eggs.
- 4- Oreo Cookies and milk. Usually the Double Stuff
- 5- Mashed Potatoes and Gravy
- 6- Meatloaf
- 7- Gingersnaps
- 8- Good Coffee and Cheesecake
- 9- Pumpkin Pie
- 10- Yellow Cake with Chocolate frosting
- 11- German Chocolate Cake – I like the frosting with nuts, but the coconut is good too
- 12- Good Chocolate (Usually this would be imported and expensive)

- 13- Lemon Meringue Pie
- 14- Key Lime Pie (not with a meringue)
- 15- Red and Black Raspberries (in anything or fresh)
- 16- Chili
- 17- 'Lil Smokies
- 18- Sloppy Joes
- 19- Kielbasa
- 20- Bill Knapp's Chocolate Cake (If you know where to find this let me know)
- 21- Chocolate Frosted Donuts (Fresh made are best)
- 22- My Mom's BBQ sauce on just about anything
- 23- Dried Apricots, Fresh Apricots and even Canned Apricots
- 24- Fried Onions and Potatoes with Sausage
- 25- Fried Baloney, Onion and Ketchup sandwich (Thanks Dad..)

Now with all of these there is a time and place. I won't usually want Chocolate Donuts at the same time I want Mom's BBQ sauce. Believe it or not, each of these foods brings back certain memories for me. Mom's BBQ are those weekends when family would all stop to visit. Same with the Sloppy Joes. Chocolate Frosted Donuts and Bill Knapps' Chocolate cake will invoke memories of spending time with my aunt D. She never served the Bill Knapps' cake, but the one she did serve was very similar, but I never knew where she got it. CheeseBurgers – Backseat of the family car for a 'special' night out.

I just noticed a lot of this food are childhood memories, some others are memories from my life as a father and husband. Some are just plain good.

I do have to be careful of these, because I do know that most of the extra weight I'm carrying came from the years after my wife died. I can't tell you how many Oreos, gallons of milk, cheesecakes and coffee or Sausage Gravy and Biscuit meals I had, but it was way too many.

Ok, I shared. What are your favorite comfort foods. Do I need to add something to the list?

Those Beautiful Fall Days

If you were in NW Ohio, NE Indiana or Southern Michigan today, you probably had beautiful fall weather. Warm without being too hot, nice breeze and wispy clouds. And I noticed that some of the leaves have started to change color. We are still a few weeks off from most trees turning red, gold and brown, but it is starting. Some of the early changers have started to lose their leaves. Just a beautiful time...

Except, I still remember the good days from 6 years ago. The days before the intense shoulder pain slowed my wife's days to a crawl. The good days that soon turned ugly.

I remember that it was about now that I should be holding my new grandson. But the days turned ugly.

I remember the last few days of my Mom's life from many years ago now. She didn't know what was coming her way in the waning days of October 2000. And my father, one year later, going through things that I didn't understand then, but I really do understand them now. While his health wasn't very good when mom died, he could have lived many years with a bit of luck. My feeling is that his heart broke at the one year mark, and nothing would fix that. After my stress related

illnesses of my first few years of being a widower, I can tell you that that takes a toll.

All this happened in those beautiful days of fall. For the past 5 years, I didn't see much of the beauty. I realized it was there, but other thoughts would push the beauty of the season out of my thoughts. The older thoughts don't weigh as heavily on my mind now, and for a moment I saw the beauty of the day. Then I noticed my arms were empty... My daughter and son-in-law have empty arms too. And I wonder when will I see fall again, without its ever present shadow?