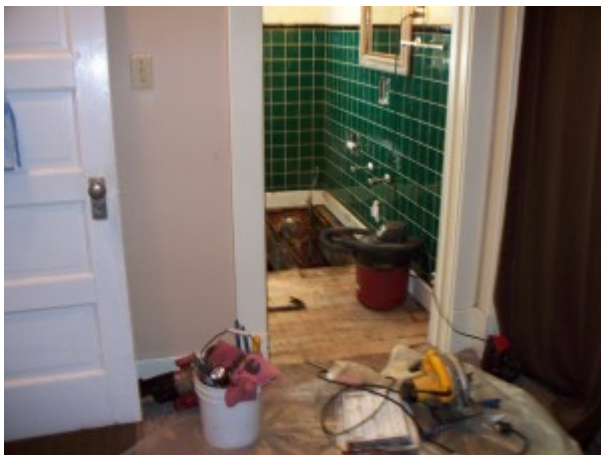


One Of Those Days...

I knew it was going to be a busy day today before I even woke up, and I was dreading having to get up early. I am very lucky (thanks to my wonderful husband) that I don't have to get up early every day; I'm not a morning person. But today there was an early morning dentist appointment and someone also had to be here for the plumbers (more on that later). So I had begrudgingly set my alarm, but someone nearby decided to mow their lawn early this morning, there were dogs barking (turned out to be ours, of course, doh!), and a weird smell in the house (like someone had just gotten a perm, yuck). So I got out of bed a half hour before my alarm even got a chance to make a peep. And when I went downstairs, I found this where our downstairs (and most popular) bathroom used to be:



Well, ok, so it wasn't a complete shock. We had scheduled the plumbers to come today to fix [our bathroom floor bulge](#), but I wasn't expecting the bathroom to be **missing**! And obviously the plumbers' estimate of the work is going to be way low (and the estimate was frightening enough in the first place!) since much more of the floor was affected than they originally thought even before they tore it to pieces. Tomorrow we find out if the plumbing itself is "worse than they thought" as well, which would add yet another day to this project and who knows how much money, yikes! Plus we still have to get a new bathroom floor; to be installed by a different contractor all

together – how much is **that** going to cost? Did I mention I've had a headache all day? The plumbers' drill isn't helping; it seems like they're drilling my head open... All this after we put a bunch of money into house stuff earlier this year when my husband sold his software which we considered a blessing at the time (more on that later). We got rid of our humongous, room-sized furnace and put central air in the house, and then ironically it was the coolest summer on record and we barely needed the new air conditioning system. We have the strangest luck sometimes. I wouldn't go so far as to call it bad luck; after all, the irony is born from good things we're receiving, so how can that be bad? I do get a new bathroom floor out of this, at some point anyway – we might have to try the ~~primitive~~ classic wooden look for awhile... And while I'm venting about the frustrations of today, let me just go off for a bit about how darn inconvenient it is to get things done while sharing a house with a few (extremely talkative) plumbers who are tearing apart the bathroom! Not only do I have to keep the kids away from there, but I have to bring the whole gang (of kids – not the plumbers of course!) with me upstairs every time I need something from the bathroom!

And back to the stress of my husband's work right now... Back in the spring when his business deal went through, we were ecstatic that we would be able to pay some bills, fix some things on the house, and most importantly, spend the summer as a family without having to worry about work as much. It was a great summer, but now we have come to find out that a major company wants the software that was sold and is willing to pay much much more than for what it was sold just months ago. In short, if we had waited to sell the business for just a few months, we would be... let's just say 'in a very good financial place' right now. I'm learning a bit about the lessons of patience and greed (ain't human nature grand? Just months ago we were perfectly happy with the business deal the way it was, and now I think about regretting selling because it's worth so

much more money), but it's frustrating; especially on a day in front of little sleep and after the destruction of my beautiful bathroom. Does this make sense? I feel like I'm rambling a little bit... I stopped in the coffee house drive-thru on the way back from the dentist appointment, and it's been a while since I've had a White Lightning, so I kind of feel like I'm all over the place...

But anyway, I should get the kids out of here and away from the busy plumbers (imagine that, a gaping hole in the bathroom floor attracts kids like flies to... well, I won't go there. At least the drive this morning to the dentist through the NW Ohio countryside at the beginning of the beautiful fall season relaxed me a little. If only there was time for a nap before I go and try to lead a group of 13-year-old spastic seventh-graders...

Talk like a duck

One of the things I remember doing (OK, I still do it ☐), was talking to the animals at the fair in their own language. Yes, I would snort and grunt at the pigs. Moo at the cows and steers. Neigh and bray with the donkeys and horses. And of course baah with the sheep and quack with the ducks.

Of course, I would then tell my children exactly what the animal on the other side of the conversation said. I don't know if I ever convinced any of my girls that I was 'talking' to the animals, but I had fun doing it. Still do.

This year at the fair, I heard an animal sound that I never heard before. Llamas in my experience were always very quiet. I'm not sure if this is a normal case, since I only see them during the fairs, and they are not very common at our little

fair. It was an interesting sound and I got curious as to what type of vocalization they do. So I found [this site](#) that had a sound close to what I heard. Check out the humming vocalization. When one llama made this noise, the other responded. It was cool to see and hear them react to each other. It will take some time listening to the llamas to be able to converse with them, so I will have to wait until next year.

And for those who had a movie come to mind with this blog post, I will leave you with [this](#).

Many MOPs Are SAHMs

I'm not going to pretend to know the latest texting lingo. I know ASAP and TTYL and even oic, but that's about the extent of my in-house texting-acronym dictionary. Not that I care too much – it doesn't even make me feel old or out of it because texting itself is amusing to me; not when texters are behind the wheel though, that's just scary. I saw that graphic UK public service video with the girl who was texting and crashed her car. Awful stuff, I DO NOT recommend you watch that; it was incredibly disturbing. But anyway, I **do** know the acronyms I need to know for my chosen profession as a SAHM = **Stay At Home Mom**. And last night, I officially became a member of MOPs = **Mothers Of Preschoolers**.

It was really different and very nice – after dinner I left the house **alone** for a change. Poor hubby got left with all 4 kids and a messy room to get cleaned. I didn't feel guilty; I knew he could handle anything without getting so frustrated he would melt down for the rest of the night, which is more than I could promise for myself. And after all, I had been waiting

for my turn to go out ever since Hubby was in his last community theater production and I got stuck home with kids during his rehearsals. But that was a year ago, and in the meantime, there was just never anyplace to go that would have not been more fun with my entire family.

So last night, Hubby fared well; the room was cleaned (sort-of), but the most important thing is that no one was stressed out, and 2/4 kids were actually *asleep* when I got home – BONUS! As for the MOPs meeting itself; it was different than I was expecting...

I was expecting a few women from our church who I know have young children, but when I showed up, the parking lot was full. I went in, feeling a bit intimidated since everyone else seemed to be with a friend or two. And there were about 60 women, dwarfing my prediction of 5 or 10. Not only that, but there was a sign-up table, where I learned that you were supposed to sign up ahead of time in order to be assigned to a group. Oops – guess who hadn't signed up? So I crashed a group, but I knew at least a few of the other women from church, so it wasn't really like crashing. Our poor friend Jeremy, the teaching pastor at the church, was there to make a church-related announcement, and I've never seen a man look so out of place. He stood before 60 women in a room *oozing* with femininity – an endless sea of scrap-booking supplies, flowers, chocolate, and scented candles... And he looked like there was *anywhere* in the world he'd rather be; it was hilarious. He gave his spiel, left in a quite a hurry, and then we snacked, chatted about our families, and made our scrap-booked our place mats which will be at our tables every month during our meetings. Overall, a very fun evening, and we even got to take home some cute little fall trinkets. I found out that childcare is available, so next month Hubby can have a break too while the kids play. I learned that many MOPs are also SAHMs like me, so we have kind of a girly little community. And that reminds me; I was really amused when the

coordinator asked, “Does anyone have any special announcements? We have gifts for any of our members who are expecting or adopting.” I guess in a room full of dozens of women in their child-bearing years who already have young children, asking if any are expecting doesn’t really come from left field. So of course, not one, not two, but *three* women came up to share their blessed news. Then we also heard from two who had recently had babies and brought them to the meeting – talk about a dose of baby-itis! But for now it’s fun to talk about our kids and our lives – I’m the only one in our group with more than 3 children; which surprises me – I thought large families were making a comeback? But for any other moms out there who want to join a fun Christian-based peer group, check out [this link](#) for a MOPs group near you!

Solo Sailing...Almost

Well this is the start of my 3rd week without children at home, almost. I say almost since my darling youngest daughter has come home the first 2 weekends and will be home the 3rd weekend too. I don’t run around as often, but the drive is a bit farther now. Sure there are good excuses for all of the home trips, so I won’t say too much about that.

I did find it funny/strange all of the young ladies my daughter rooms with have gone home for the first two weekends. I’m kind of glad at that. If I were in that situation, I would hate to be the one left behind on the weekend.

So on to me. What have I done the past two weeks.. Well, same old same old except I was a bit lazy last week. I found a web comic from an artist I enjoyed in my youth, and I’ve been reading his stuff. It may take me a while to catch up. Anyway

I was looking for [this](#), but I found [this](#). Years of comic stories too catch up on. It may be something I will need in my personal library, but so far the web comic is ok. On this site I did find the original comics that drew me to the artist. Back in my D&D college days, I remember reading [Phil and Dixie](#) on a regular basis. Then the Myth series of books that Phil Foglio illustrated. Such fun memories..

Chicago Bears – It Was a Total Nightmare!

- We lost our most celebrated player... FOR THE SEASON.
- Our new pro-bowl quarterback had the [statistically] worst game... OF HIS CAREER
- We had other key injuries... THREE OF THEM (yes, three MORE)
- Our consistently amazing special teams unit made a huge error... THAT MAY HAVE BEEN FATAL
- Our defense looked good all game, but when it mattered most... THEY CHOKED
- They were not playing a normal Sunday day game, it was a night game... ON NATIONAL TV
- It was not any game, it was against the Packers... PUBLIC ENEMY ONE

I'm going to try and answer some common questions often asked after a game like this...

Q: *What positives can you take out of a game like this?*

A: Well, I didn't die while watching it, and that's always a good thing. (Good for me anyhow)

Q: *Can the team bounce back next week and win big in their home opener?*

A: Nope. They play the Superbowl champion Pittsburgh Steelers. The only thing the Bears can hope for is a Steelers team that gets arrogant and fails to come ready-to-play. But, hey, this is not just a good team – these are the Superbowl champs!

Q: *How big is the loss of Brian Urlacher?*

A: Brian who? Never heard of him.

Q: *Should Offensive Coordinator Ron Turner be fired?*

A: Football is about the fans, and I'll tell you – the fans do know the sport. I personally think Ron is just plain boring for our offense. If we're not going to win I at least want us to be exciting... We have some speed, we have a top running back, and we have a [supposedly?] pro bowl QB. Lets roll!

Q: *Want to make a season record prediction for the Bears this season?*

A: No, but I will anyway... I predict they will start 0-1. The only noble thing to do is predict that they will go 18-1. Fifteen wins during the season, 2 wins in the playoffs, and one in the Superbowl! The only loss being that abomination in Green Bay at the start of the year. (But if they went 8-8 I wouldn't say I was surprised)

Q: *Would you trade Jay Cutler back to the Denver Broncos for Kyle Orton and some dog food coupons?*

A: No. That is a ridiculous question... Well... How much coupon savings are we talking here?

.....end of my self interview..... wait, one more thing.... no, wait, the self interview portion of this blog post is over.....

I am doing the rest in bold. Why, because the Bears lost and I am pouting so I can do what I want!

Oh man, I just remembered... I am trying to work on being less

obnoxious, so off with the bold!

Well folks, the bottom line is that my beloved NFL team the Chicago Bears lost this September 13, 2009 to the Green Bay Packers (see what I did there – all the keywording, it is so Google (*Hi Google!*) will know my blog post has info about that exact game). We lost the game, we lost good players, we lost confidence, and I lost my mind... Oh boy... ***Another NFL season is upon us!***

Lincoln Legends

Just in time for the Halloween season, as I mull over costume choices for myself and my two youngest, haunted places have come up in conversations recently. These recent topics have reminded me of a few such places in Lincoln Nebraska...

Back when we were a little family with only one toddler, we lived in Lincoln for a year. It was a great city – large yet rurally isolated and without the sprawling suburbs we had grown accustomed to after growing up in the Chicago area. After a few months in Lincoln, I was charmed by the city and began reading up on local history, which is where I found out about the interesting stories of Charles Starkweather and Robber's Cave.



(Caril Fugate and Charles Starkweather before the murder spree)

Charles Starkweather was a young, lower-class, James Dean wannabe who dated a younger girl named Caril Fugate in Lincoln in the 1950's. There is some debate about Caril's role in the horrific events for which the pair is known, but Starkweather was convicted of the murders of 11 people in Nebraska and Wyoming during a 1958 eight-day-long murder spree. Starkweather was executed by the state in 1959 at the age of 20, while Caril served some time and is now presumably living a quiet life. I think it would be interesting to see an interview with the now 68-year-old Fugate, but like everyone else involved in the horror, she deserves her privacy and probably guards it. So anyway, Starkweather is buried in a large, beautiful cemetery nestled amongst rolling hills in the heart of Lincoln called Wyuka Cemetery, and has the unusual (however macabre) distinction of being buried in the same cemetery as some of his victims. Caril's dilapidated house (where the first murders, those of her family, took place) no longer stands. But Starkweather had a huge grudge against upper class folks, and the beautiful house of the Ward family, a wealthy couple who along with their maid fell victim to Starkweather's massacre, still stands. Also interesting are the many works of pop culture inspired by the rampage; movies such as *Natural Born Killers* (though this one is very loosely based), *Badlands*, and books: characters in both Stephen King's *The Stand* as well as *Outside Valentine* are based upon

Starkweather, Caril and some of the victims. Interestingly, the author of *Outside Valentine*, Liza Ward, is the granddaughter of the wealthy couple that were victims of Starkweather in 1958.

So anyway, if you're into that kind of thing, plenty to see in Lincoln based upon the Starkweather case alone, but that was actually a super-huge tangent that took me away from the original reason I wanted to write this post! Guess I'll save Robber's Cave for my next post...

FOOTBALL! Time To Blog, Except...

... I've gotten engrossed in another video game. And because I'm a mom of 4 and don't have a lot of extra time, my blogging frequency is going to suffer while I divide my spare time with mindless gaming, oh well. With the start of the NFL season and back-to-school-time, I will have more time at home for my favorite quiet activities like reading the newspaper, blogging, and playing video games while my husband watches football (Go Bears!). I thought I'd be rolling out blog posts, but then my husband put an N64 emulator on my computer, distracting me with what is quite possibly the best video game ever made – in my opinion, anyway: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. It's an adventure game, which is my favorite genre of video game, but I'm very picky – there has to be large 3D worlds to explore, as well as a variety of puzzles peppered with the perfect combination of inventory, fighting, and weaponry. This version of Zelda has everything, and this is actually my second time playing it through. Currently I'm in the second dungeon (Dodongo's Cavern) which is probably my

least favorite in the entire game. Once I get past it though, I have lots of fun ahead – there are plenty of areas left to explore; including an underwater colony and the inside of a volcano. This game also skips ahead 7 years, and you get to see what Hyrule (the country you are defending) looks like in the future when your character has grown into a young man from a little boy. Here is a screen shot:



...which makes me want to get back to it so I can kick some Dodongo a**!

GO BEARS!!!

Time to close this blog?

Seeing that today is the one month anniversary of my last blog post about my life, that is a valid question. The filler is interesting, but what about my two jobs, one of which was once the emphasis of this blog? This week was actually a milestone for my new job. For the first time my commission exceeds the \$50/day they have been paying me since the start of training last June. It's still not much, but the job promises to pay more eventually. And what about the camera training the owners have asked me to take charge of? One of them has

plugged me as the national camera trainer to one of the clients after they noticed my pictures are pretty good. Great- a standard to live up to! ☐ .I still wonder how much I will be paid for this training whenever it happens.

At the moment I am subbing, or trying to, for two full days a week plus mornings five days every two weeks (every other week I go to two places on Friday so I can't sub that day). I am signed up in three districts this year but so far have only worked in two. What? Yes I did say two before, but then the third sent me a welcome note without my having signed up again so I stuck with it. Since they were the source of some of my jobs so far, it looks like I made the right choice there. I have subbed for one (half) day of middle school so far- the rest have been in elementary schools. I actually took a bilingual first grade job- something I try to avoid during the main part of the year. I also just took a job for a kindergarten morning Monday at the very school I went to for K through most of 2. Oddly enough, while I can remember the names of all my other elementary teachers, I can't for this school. I wonder if I will be in the same classroom I was in for my own kindergarten? I wonder if I will even recognize anything at the school. I am pretty sure I took no assignments there last year.

Let's see what I can say about the jobs I've taken so far. The first-grade bilingual class was a little rough as the plans the teacher left were not very detailed, often requiring me or one of the assistants who were in and out of the room throughout the day to find the required materials. The kids were also not very good listeners, but whether that was because of limited English skills or other reasons I couldn't say. Another couple of days I was in a position where there were *no* plans. These were for special-ed teachers who didn't even have set schedules yet being the beginning of the year so I ended up helping out in different classrooms throughout the day. I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if I found out

that they came in the next day and said, "I had a sub?" I don't think I was expected... The junior high job was a teacher who had both 7th and 8th grade classes, and all I did was supervise as they used computers to work on projects. I was worried when not just my classes, but others as well used the laptops throughout the morning with little time to charge them, but according to one teacher the batteries actually hold out for some six hours or so, something I have never heard of in laptops. My own computer lasts for three or less, but with its specs I am not surprised.

So why have I not been keeping up on my friend's blogs even if I couldn't be bothered to update my own? I don't know. If you want refrain from ~~posting~~ commenting in return I will understand.

Four Day Weekend, Already?

But didn't school JUST start? And wasn't the kids' first weekend a THREE day weekend? Yes and yes. But to be **fair** (pun intended), this 4-day weekend was not planned in advance, well not entirely, anyway. It began with Monday being Fair Day for the kids – our county fair opens tomorrow, and the kids are off school on Monday to go to the fair and also because many of them have 4-H projects that will be judged at the fair on Monday – that was a planned day off. So then today, my husband was driving our daughter to school, when he realized he was the only one on the road and at the school. At least, that's what he thought -it was so foggy they couldn't see much of anything... so they returned home only to find that there was a two-hour delay because of the fog – our phones had been turned off so we didn't get the early morning call... So anyway, the 2 hour delay turned into an entire fog

day because the dense fog would not clear early enough for the school district to send the buses into the country to pick up the kids. Fog Day on Friday + Fair Day on Monday = the first 4-Day weekend of the new school year, taking place on only the third weekend of the new school year! Luckily our student calender is set up to include 5 calamity days, and in NW Ohio, early morning fog is considered a calamity, I guess! What will we do when the 5 yearly calamity days are taken out of the calendar since the governor's plan calls for calamity days to be phased out? Wait and see, I guess...

And now I have to totally rearrange my day – so much for advance planning! I'll have to juggle the not-4-kid-friendly errands I have with my husband's planned business call – keeping 4 kids quiet and out of the way for that? Good luck to me! These are the times when I wish he had his own office... The benefits of working at home outweigh the negatives of him working at an office of course, but on days like these, ugh! It's funny because I'm not native to NW Ohio and so both fog days and fair days are new to me – man, would I have loved these as a kid. As an adult... not so fun. Maybe we can have another calamity day later this year when we have nothing planned and we can just sit inside and watch movies and play games all day... Then, let it snow!

Thinking of the Fair

Our local County Fair starts this weekend. I don't think I missed this fair since I came with my wife and oldest daughter back in 1983. While it has change some, it really hasn't changed at all. Most of the same vendors come year after year, the local producers (pork, beef, dairy) serve the same food. There are always fresh fair donuts. ☐ The biggest thing this

fair has to offer is all of the hard work the kids put into their projects. Animals, displays, showmanship, riding skills can all be seen. The fun I get from this is seeing the fun the kids have.

Even though my youngest was home for the Labor Day holiday last week, she wants to make the trip home again for a trip to the fair. She still has friends that will be showing their animals. She may get to run into a friend or two. One never knows at the county fair.