

Scary Flu 2.0 hits

1.0 being the avian flu a few years ago which barely got out of the starting gate as far as pandemic status is concerned. Yes, I know there have been really nasty flu epidemics/pandemics in the past, but I am specifically referring to modern variations in my numbering. Anyway, tonight I got a call on both phones one after another (I must have given them my cell number at some point) from near-city district's emergency response system which informs employees and parents of emergency situations. This one was bound to turn up since my area has a heavy Hispanic population. This time, it turned up in one of the middle schools. I was not set to work in that school tomorrow, and haven't been in the last couple of weeks, so I am good (so breathe a sigh of relief, fellow blogger & family who I visited with the other night). However, they canceled school for tomorrow just at the one school. I wonder how that works for required school attendance days- will just the one school have an extra day tacked on in June? Anyway, I work tomorrow in one of its elementary feeder schools, so I do hope there are no siblings of that middle school student in class- especially it being bilingual 3rd grade which of course means all Spanish-speaking kids in this district. Well, I'll let you know how it goes I guess.

UPDATE: It appears that the school is off until at least Friday, so again I wonder, will they have those extra days tacked on while the rest of the district enjoys summer break? Hmm. Today, one girl in my class went home sick after lunch, but it is unknown at this time if her illness is related to H1N1 swine flu.

To Hellinois...

I'm not a big fan of the place and try to avoid it like the plague for the most part, but there are about two times a year I am willing to travel to the place of my birth which I lovingly refer to as "Hellinois", a nickname for Chicagoland, with its insane traffic patterns and millions of unfriendly citizens: around April for my nephews' birthdays and also around Christmastime. Making the 4-hour trek across two states twice a year is doable and definitely worth it so that my kids can have fun and get to know their relatives. So Friday afternoon, we took off and headed over to the Land of Lincoln. I don't understand why it took me two hours to pack our family of 6 for a one day trip, especially because there were plenty of things that were forgotten, but more on that later. We arrived outside the Loop right about 6:30 on a Friday evening local time, but much to our surprise, we barely hit any backup. What the? Unheard of for a Friday night! But on our way past the Chicago skyline, we did have fun trying to find the new Trump Tower and comparing it to the John Hancock and also to the other new skyscrapers that have sprung up, seemingly over night. I have to admit that Chicago's skyline is more impressive than that of New York, at least in my opinion – just for the heck of it, I played tourist and actually took a picture of the Sears Tower. While I was there, I heard that they're going to build balconies on the observation deck of the Sears Tower with glass floors. They got the idea after watching all the tourists bump their foreheads on the windows while trying to look straight down. I have to admit, I've done that myself a few times. Wonder if I could keep my new-found vertigo in check enough to give the new balconies a try when they're complete?

We arrived at our hotel and got the kids ready to go down to the pool, and that's when we realized that we forgot my son's bathing suit, as well as ALL of my husband's clothes that had

been put in the dryer before we left and forgotten. So we all had to sacrifice – I had to sleep in my clothes and give my pajamas (sweat pants and a t-shirt) to my husband to wear to the birthday party the following day. He had to wear pajamas to the party and also roast inside a sweatshirt all day since the t-shirt was ripped. My son went swimming in his pants – luckily I had learned a little something from the New York trip and brought plenty of extra baby clothes with me.

We were only down at the pool for about 30 minutes, but the kids had fun – my son kept clapping. We had called fellow blogger Derek to join us, but we kicked him out soon after we got back from the pool since the room was very crowded and the kids needed to settle down for their big day ahead. We ordered pizza (MMMmmm, Chicago-style pizza!) and tried to get the kids to settle down, but it took a long time. We got so tired that we forgot to close the drapes, which led to everyone rising bright and early in the morning – big oops. Our almost 5-year-old Sammie, the handful (putting it mildly) of the bunch, decided to draw a bunch of block letter T's all over her cousins' birthday cards. No problem, until she ran out of room for any more T's and threw a 2-hour tantrum about it – I am not even exaggerating. By the time we checked out of the hotel, so many people had walked by glaring at our family; it was not a good way to start the day. We were so not in Kansas (err, Ohio) anymore. I have trouble getting used to that every time I visit other places. It feels weird to not say hi to everyone I pass, or worse yet, to say hi and get a weird stare in return.

We had decided that my husband was going to take Sammie somewhere else rather than for us to subject my elderly grandparents to her screaming, but luckily she calmed down on the way over to their house. We had a nice visit, and as usual, my grandma made too much food. What was supposed to be a light lunch (so we could fit in as many other samples of fine Chicago dining as possible during our short stay) turned

out to be a buffet spread of strawberries, black raspberries, cheese, smokies in biscuits, deviled eggs, pickles, cheese spread and crackers, not to mention 3 kinds of dessert! So anyway, we had a really nice visit with my grandparents, although we were walking on eggshells with Sammie, who got an early birthday present from them, which was nice. But then fights broke out over the birthday present, and rather than stress my grandparents, we beat a hasty retreat. My grandpa did manage to make a joke, despite all of his discomfort from the Parkinson's and who knows what else. He asked how our 10th Anniversary vow renewal ceremony went, and we said great! So then he said, "You made the same mistake twice, huh?" Obviously, I don't feel I made a mistake once (or twice) marrying my husband, but it was funny anyway and so great to see the old tease that is my grandpa back in action. So we left their house in Schaumburg and headed to Aurora to see the rest of the fam. After little sleep the night before and the 2 hour tantrum in the morning, I offered to drive so my husband could take some much needed rest. Wanting to think as little as possible, I turned on Jill the GPS and sat back and let her lead me through the tangle of expressways that is Chicagoland. Except that Jill had apparently had one too many morning cocktails. She directed me to stay on I-290 rather than to merge onto I-355. I knew better than that – I had made that trek many a time when my husband and I were dating. But my brain was fried, so I lemmingly went along with Jill's directions, and next thing I know, we're traveling east TOWARD the city, instead of west toward Aurora! Finally I saw the toll road we needed – I-88, and now we were finally headed in the right direction, after going 10 miles out of the way! Oh, well, at least we were running early since my kids had decided to get up at the crack of dawn!

Just writing about this makes me tired. I think I'll take a break here, unpack a little and save the rest of this huge weekend for another post!

Crashing Through E-Town

This morning when I arrived at work at 9, I was greeted by shards of glass all over the sidewalk in front of the building. There was an orange barrel in the corner where a street light STOOD just last night. I asked the boss what SHE had been doing last night... one too many, perhaps? When she got to work about 7.30, the mess was still being cleaned up. I was given a push broom too clean up the remaining evidence. Because of the large amount of glass on the walk, she thought the large bay window had been broken byt the fallen lamp post.

I heard two differing time frames involved in the mishap. One was around 2AM and the other was 6.30AM which would explain the time it had taken to clen the mess up. The driver of a pick-up truck was travelling through town on his way home from the races. That made me question the 6.30 time... do races last THAT long? Reportedly, the driver fell asleep, veered into the wrong lane, struck the light pole which fell across the sidewalk. If the pole had moved just inches more to the east, the store window would have been no more. It did strike the pop machines in front of the store, but little damage was done to them. The driver must have awakened before the pole crossed the intersection where it could have crashed into the window ont the side of the furniture store.

When the authorities came to the store, it was reported that the driver got out of his truck and ran up the street to the shop of a local race driver where he thought he might be able to get in and call for help. What a mess! At least there wasn't serious damage done and no one was injured, miraculously. Neighbors of the store reported that they thought a freight train had gone through.

Week in review

This week was mostly unremarkable. Monday I was in second grade, Tuesday and Friday PE, Wednesday sixth grade science, and Thursday I was in third grade. The highlights, or in one case “low”light, were probably the PE classes and the third grade class. Science was a “students work on projects while sub circulates” day- not that it was a bad day, just a relatively uninteresting one. Second grade just wasn’t memorable this week.

Tuesday’s PE class included some 4th and 5th graders who played a game called “homerun derby” where they used a fat bat and tried to hit a small gatorskin dodgeball across the room to a predefined homerun zone. The 4th grade class didn’t get a single homerun leading me to switch to actual game mode toward the end. 5th grade did better. The big part of this job though was the work with mentally and physically impaired students- three classes to be precise. These classes started with some running, though some were pushed in wheelchairs or otherwise helped along by assistants meaning those assistants got a bigger workout than many of the kids. Then with varying degrees of success the students practiced hitting the ball when pitched to them. Again, the assistants played a big role here, not only swinging with them, but in some cases just getting them to the plate to take a turn. The third class had more severely impaired students, so they didn’t even have the ball pitched to them. Instead, there were T-ball setups, one of which I brought out to them. The classes ended with free-time as these kids can’t go for a full 30 minutes of structured gym time. They got to choose balls or oversized scooters (2 feet x 3 feet (!) I think) and spent the rest of the time with them.

The third grade class was truly a low point. I was worried from the moment I read the note saying to get the help of one of the teachers next door if the class gives trouble instead of calling the principal over, which apparently one sub did three times last year. I actually did not have to call him over, but the one time he did come was in the middle of a crisis so of course I ended up looking bad. I'd better cross this school off for any sort of permanent job should my life go in that direction. There was one student who actually got so mad at one point he stormed out of the room slamming the door behind him. This was shortly after the principal's visit when some students were set on finding some money that was thought to be lost or stolen instead of working in their reading groups. Another student got frazzled and needed some calming time, saying he had a bad day yesterday and was trying to avoid one today. Well, depending on what that bad day entailed, he may have failed as it was certainly a bad morning for him (and me) from that point on. By the afternoon things got better though the math group tended to be every bit as chatty as the regular class (they switched for math). There was also an assembly at the end. The student who had stormed out during the morning was supposed to sit next to me, but instead the principal had him help with the awards presentation, rewarding students for positive behavior/work over the last few months.

The other PE class was my reward for Thursday's third grade. Over the entire day I only had five classes. This had part to do with the fact this teacher worked in three different schools and so had two travelling times, and part to do with Friday being a light day with only one class at one of the schools instead of the usual four, so I was able to go home for lunch (this was in hometown district). All classes went very well. The first school had a volleyball unit going and her classes had their first day playing a real game so I had to go over the rules, though we really didn't keep score. The other three classes played some tag games. It was a nice way

to end the week.

Where You Can Eat And Get Gas Or Get Gas And Eat

Tonight, a group of self-anointed “cougars,” Megan, and I (the only male) traveled to Findlay to see a production of [*Pump Boys and Dinettes*](#). Before our hour and a half trek began, piling into the minivan was almost worth a few dollars to see itself. I would have gladly given up my front seat but to see the ladies crawling over each other to get a seat was priceless. We drove through quite a bit of rain... so much for the “Slight chance of evening showers.”

For dinner, we decided on a place called The Gathering that was right beside The Tavern in the Inn (I almost thought I was back in NYC at Tavern on the Green). I decided on the restaurants signature ribs. Thank goodness, I decided on the Piglet order instead of the full-rack Oinker platter. I barely finished the half-rack. Guess I was not as hungry as I was when I tackled the full-pound sirloin burger.

This show itself was billed as “a country music review.” However, while most of the music had a country feel, I did notice a few pieces that had a rock sound from the 50s-60s. The music was ALL ORIGINAL. Since the show was a review, the plot was totally secondary and seemed to be spliced together from old bits of Hee Haw corn. The small cast included sisters Rhetta and Prudie Cupp who run and operate the Double Cupp Diner and the three main attendants at the garage/filling station next door. The leader of the Pump Boys, Jim, seemed to be the MC of the evening and introduced the ladies man,

Jackson and the more suspicious, L.M. The pit was included on stage and the two guitar players, pianist, and drummer each seemed to have personalities of their own without saying a word. I would say my favorite selection was L.M.'s recollection of a week he spent while attending the concert of a certain buxom blonde country legend.

The set really made you think you were in a small backwater town in Carolina where the men far outnumber the ladies (inbreeding). Where beer is home brewed as well as the 'shine and a cow eats the field of marijuana (be sure to have that milk tested).

After the show, Megan and I were encouraged to check out the green room in the basement. Although the ceiling was a bit low (thank you Megan for pointing that out as I hit my head more than once), I must say that I found myself thinking of making a switch. There was furniture galore (comfortable furniture), a large television which served as a monitor showing the action on stage (very nice to have), as well as cast pictures from previous shows. As the Fort Findlay Playhouse is also constructed inside a hollowed out church, it made me wonder how many theatres have been converted from places of worship.

On another note, it seemed that the [Fort Findlay Players](#) stole our theme idea for a season (or more members of their board were more receptive to the suggestions). Next year, the theatre is doing a Salute to Hollywood by presenting a series of plays that were also movies. Shows like *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *House of Frankenstein*, *Singin' in the Rain*, and *The Wizard of Oz* (the version based on the 1939 classic film), and *The Odd Couple* are on the season. See... it is possible.

Pump Boys and Dinettes was just a fun bit of escapist fun that just flew by. The vocal talent was extraordinary and the choreography was simple yet energetic. I could see myself doing it. That again is saying A LOT.

Sometimes I Amaze Even Myself

Once again my reputation has followed me. I walked uptown this afternoon to deposit three checks (ok... deposit two and cash my State Refund). At the bank, I had the pleasure of meeting the new, quite personable manager. I was immediately impressed. First, he identified me as the “guy from the grocery store.” So, I formally introduced myself. He then began his spiel to see if I knew how to get the store to switch banks. I told him it was not me... he would probably have to go to the big guy himself (Good luck with that). I know the manager would be of no help. That put me off a bit as I am not that high on the feeding chain, but after I was totally amazed.

He then mentioned that he has seen me in the paper (been a while) and on stage many times and asked what was coming up. Well... next weekend I have an audition for the 10th Anniversary of an area theatre’s production of *Joseph*... His daughter is also planning to try out. I asked if she had been to the theatre’s website where she could download an audition sheet as well as follow a link to some MIDI files of the songs from the show. I have been going over “Benjamin Calypso” and other songs since discovering the link.

This summer also marks the 10 year anniversary of my foray into community theatre. I auditioned for [FCF](#)’s first summer show but did not get a part. Happily, I did not let this deter my efforts (a LOT of HELP from a certain teacher who is now helping from above did not hurt either). The following summer, I tried out for a [neighboring production](#) of *Joseph* and got my first role in a non-school show... and a monster was born. The first few years, I tried out for summer shows only. The manager of my FPOE was not too keen on even that

much rearranging of my schedule. But the fabulous person in charge of the front end pleaded my case. And the rest I will elaborate on later. Always keep them wanting more (where have I heard that before).

But I will once again be auditioning for one of my favorite ALW shows. Now if only the rights had not been taken away for the other (a toss up between Cats and Aspects of Love ... WOW... so not).

[poll id="18"]

Thrice Upon A Potty

Yesterday saw the official beginning of potty-training for our 2-year-old. She has used the potty a few times before, but now it's official – we went out and bought the toddler sized potty. She was excited about using it and has done so twice yesterday and once today! I just worry about the time it takes to stay consistent. She still needs reminding and accompaniment, and those things might become impossible to do at times depending on what her baby brother is doing at the moment. But for now, we're really excited about her progress, and maybe we can build up some consistency so that she can tend to her own needs in case baby brother is running me too ragged to help.

There are MANY methods of potty-training. There's the famous video/book set, Once Upon a Potty, but that is a bit graphic (I don't think it's important at this age to learn WHERE the poo-poo comes from), and I don't know about your kids, but mine find it difficult to relate to a little girl named Prudence. The "diaper free infant" method of potty-training is becoming increasingly popular. This entails holding the

newborn baby over the toilet and not letting him wear diapers. I'm not one to complain about other people's parenting methods, but 'diaper free infant' parents seem like lunatics. The average newborn baby needs his diapers changed 8-10 times per day, and I don't even know how they determine what a 'day' is when referring to newborns since they are often up all night, needing their diapers changed in the middle of the night as well. Who is going to hold a newborn baby over a toilet 8-10 times a day and all throughout the night? A lunatic. But seriously, as I said, the popularity of this method is increasing, so I guess some people are having success with it. Personally, I wait until the kid is old enough to understand. She understands that older people and especially older kids use the potty and don't wear diapers. She's old enough to not like getting messy anymore, and she's old enough to understand rewards. We had a very hard time potty-training our oldest daughter. The daycare she went to at the time gave us a suggestion that finally worked – sprinkles. When a kid successfully uses the potty, give them sprinkles (the kind you put on cookies, not the kind they're putting into the toilet). Once the sprinkles came into the picture, our oldest was potty-trained almost immediately after months of trying everything else. Our second daughter was a snap to potty-train, well, ok, first we had to wait for her to get out of her "painting with poop" phase, but again, I wait until they're old enough to understand things. During the "painting with poop" phase, she wasn't even 2 years old yet, and so it was really difficult to explain to her why the poop should go in the potty rather than being artistically displayed upon the walls, her crib, her toys, and even her face... YUCK!

Ok, this post has taken a turn for the worst, so I will take that as my cue to sign off. The point is, CONGRATS to Disney for doing such a good job on the potty!

Simultaneous Sports

Last night was rare – my husband and I were watching two different sports on two different tvs, and football was not involved! My husband is a huge fan of the Chicago Bears, and tries to catch every one of their games. But it's not football season, so we decided to check in on the Chicago Bulls since they are in the playoffs. We tuned in right at (what was supposed to be) the end of the game, and it was really exciting! Let me back up to 1997 for a minute – a few weeks after we met, my husband took me on a date to a Chicago Bulls game. Not just any game – it was game 6 of the NBA Finals, and the Bulls were going for the win over the Utah Jazz. Not only that, we got to see the “Dream Team” in action – Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Dennis Rodman, Luc Longley, etc. And the Bulls ended up winning that night! It was so fun... well, except for when I passed out on the street before the game – it was in such a bad neighborhood that people thought I had OD'd. But I had just not eaten or drank much water that day since my car had overheated, and I had to walk to a pay phone and try to get a hold of my husband, er boyfriend at the time to pick me up where I was stranded. We were almost late to the game, and it was obviously a hot day and I think I dehydrated... Anyway, that was my first and only live NBA game, and it was enough to let me appreciate basketball, especially exciting games with high stakes.

So last night, the Bulls were on the verge of getting eliminated from the series, when the score was tied and they went into overtime – not once, not twice, but triple overtime! And the Bulls ended up beating the Boston Celtics – tying the series at 3-3. Winner of the next game takes all! It was a lot of fun to watch, and Saturday's game will be even

more fun! So that game was on the tv, and on my laptop I had put on the Cubs game which also went into an extra inning, but I won't talk about that too much – they didn't end up winning. But the game was very exciting up until the 10th inning, and I noted how unusual it was to have duelling sports on in my house – especially because it's not the time of year when MLB and NFL seasons overlap!

Can you dance.

I think I will have to admit this video shows someone who can dance better than I do. It doesn't really take a lot.

[Dancing Parrot](#)

I thought I knew how to embed a video, but I can't seem to make it work. Oh well, it is worth the time to click on it.

I'm afraid I've been thinking

If the two previous posts weren't enough to give it away, I thought I might just let everyone know. Yes, I've been thinking. A dangerous pastime.

There are a number of things driving the thought processes at this time. My children have either grown up and moved out, or are growing up and moving out soon (youngest is a senior in high school). Out of 4 daughters, number 3 will be getting

married very soon (How did I miss that?). A good friend of mine lost his son (about the same age as my oldest daughter). It is spring and review time at work. I'm sure there are a couple of other things that I've misplaced from my brain.

All in all, I've been a bit busy, but today was a slow day. Not a lot planned, but things fell into place. A time for reflective thought. Good, bad or indifferent. Today was a day for thinking. Even the weather was cooperative. Rainy weather is always good for thinking.

And think I did. As far as I can tell, nothing dangerous has happened yet. □