

Little Luke Likes Lights

Thought I would post a quick little update about our youngest child who is growing so quickly that I don't know if we can call him our "new addition" any longer! Luke James is almost 2 months old, and among his likes are being held, listening to music, and looking at lights. He's been especially impressed by the colorful lights on the Christmas tree. These things are common favorites among many almost-2-month-olds, but Luke is a very special baby – he has been able to hold his head up for a few weeks and is extremely alert for a baby his age. His VERY FAVORITE thing to do in the whole world is to be held like this while his little hands open and close and his eyes bulge as he takes in the world around him:



Luke

doesn't sleep well at night, but we aren't really surprised because none of our 5 kids were very good sleepers as babies. But Luke doesn't sleep much during the day, either – he takes about one good nap per day about 3-4 days per week. And by "good nap" I mean him sleeping for over an hour without waking up. Actually, I thought of the perfect way to describe Luke the other day: he is an *intense* baby. He wants **what** he wants **when** he wants it, and he's not shy about asking. Don't get me wrong; it's not that he is a disagreeable baby, and he is very smiley. He's just very demanding, and since he is always awake... well, you can understand why my free time is down to almost none and the blog posts from me remain infrequent.

Especially because he demands to have 100% of the available attention, whether it's eye contact while playing with him or using both hands to feed him – he is not a fan of a multi-tasking parent.

He's already able to play – he loves looking into the eyes of people who play with him, and he especially likes to exchange baby talk with “goo” being his favorite word. He loves when his sisters and brother play with him, but it's hard to tell if he has a favorite yet. Christopher is 3 and Luke's only brother, but he doesn't play with him often – it seems like Christopher is afraid of hurting Luke, and he also seems shy about talking to him or playing with him. Disney likes to hold Luke (she's 5), but she loses interest in a matter of minutes. Taylor is almost 12, and she enjoys Luke's cuteness, but she is too busy with a life of her own to spend a lot of time with her baby brother. Sammie stands out as the remarkable sibling. 7-year-old Sammie just adores her baby brother; she's always asking to hold him, and she doesn't soon grow tired of it. She plays with Luke, asks how he's doing, expresses interest in his activities, misses him when she's gone, and loves seeing cute pictures of him. I'm looking forward to watching their special bond strengthen even further as they grow up together. His brother and sisters love their baby brother in their own ways, and any time Luke does something new, he is crowded by an admiring entourage that can rival that of most celebrities.



Luke also really likes baths. He smiles like crazy the whole time he's in the bath; he'll even throw out a couple of "goo"s and "gaa"s and doesn't seem to notice that he sounds different when his ears are under water.

Luke is also the tie-breaker in our family – we have 3 brown-eyed people and 3 blue-eyed people. Two months old is too early to tell what color a baby's eyes will be, so right now we don't know which "side" will win. It's interesting also that our 2 blue-eyed kids are left-handed while our 2 brown-eyed kids are right-handed. Will Luke be a tie-breaker in only the eye color category or will he break the mold and be a blue-eyed righty or a brown-eyed lefty?

Even with his intensity, Luke is a wonderful baby and it's been nothing but a pleasure so far to get to know him as his personality develops – I wouldn't change any part of him or anything about him, no matter how far behind on stay-at-home-mommy-work I am! Here he is wearing the adorable camouflage hoodie someone got him – it's so cute! And here's an interesting bit of culture clash for you – where I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, Luke would wear this and we'd be trendy. Here in the woods of rural Northwest Ohio, I put the camo hoodie on Luke, and we heard no fewer than FIVE comments about hunting and him being a little woodsman ☐



Not As Good As Others

Well as I am often reminded after wishing customers a good day: "They are all good just (all together now) some are better than others." I think that this year has taught me that there are times that test us but with the help of family, the best of friends and the power of HIM above, we manage to get through them even (often times) better for the experience.

This past week, my Dad was back in the hospital. At least he was in the right place at the right time as he was at his doctor's office for a follow-up and ended up spending the next two nights and one day in the luxurious accommodations of our area hospital. After getting him checked out, I had to take him across the street to the medical center for his appointment with a specialist. I learned something new about his condition: one of the arteries in his neck is 60% blocked.

Unfortunately, physicians do nothing unless it is at 80% or more. I'm beginning to think that this just might be the crux of his problems. Not knowing how it feels physically, I can see where it is having an effect on his mental health. The specialist said he would see him in another year and sent him on his way. Seems to be the response of the day. In any case he had a CT scan done today, has a stress test next week, and to the VA on Thursday. Think that is why he asked his sister to come up from California who arrived last night ☐

Prayerfully, Chad seems to be doing well. Yesterday, he went in to have his gall bladder removed. His friend called here about 10AM before he went "under the knife" and by one, my brother was out of surgery, in recovery, and doing wonderfully. He got to come home a few hours after as well.

I received a Facebook comment yesterday from BooBoo who "Hopes

that the Jamiahsh family has investments in the hospital.”

After this year, I think we have our own private rooms with engraved beds. ☐

And thanks to my pal-brother who happened to be in the ER the other night and was there for them as he, himself, was checking on another friend.

King Praising King

Our new addition, Luke James, is almost 2 months old (already!), and he loves music. While I sit cuddling, feeding, and playing with him, I've been perusing youtube.com looking for music for us to enjoy together. Being the time of year that it is, we've really been appreciating Christmas tunes, especially Martina McBride and Celine Dion's versions of O Holy Night. How I love to sit with my little Luke and think about what the lyrics of these songs REALLY mean! I've also been especially appreciative of Elvis' gospel songs and praise music lately. My favorites are "How Great Thou Art" and "Put Your Hand in the Hand". Today it came to my attention that my friend's dad composed a praise song for Elvis and sang backup for the track with his music group, The Imperials! How cool is that! Thanks to Amanda who shared her dad's talent on this song, "If the Lord Wasn't Walking by My Side":

Black Friday Madness

I'm not even sure why most stores opened Thanksgiving night at either 9 or midnight. Did they think perhaps it would be less chaotic than opening at 4am? My brother and his friend hit Wal-Mart at 10. My cousin and her annual group headed out at 11. Me?! I traveled to our area Wally World about 8am to a half-full store. While there, I was even able to chat with a few of my former co-workers. It seems that the store was the place to be earlier. No less than 18 shoppers had to be escorted out. A co-manager stated that next year it would be necessary to rethink some of the procedures and have lines around more of the doorbusters. Seriously, it is **Not at all** worth rushing, clamoring, and FIGHTING to get that 32" LCD tv for \$200 (or whatever the deal was). I was able to find gifts for all but two people on my list (Cyber Monday sounds nice to me) and spend less than \$60 total after getting a decent night's sleep. I even picked up the *All-Star Superman* DVD for \$1.98. Perhaps it would be fun to go in and watch the lunatics have a free-for-all making every effort to get that last Tickle Me Elmo doll (ok... that was **\$0** 20 years ago) but not to go in and see 18 people be escorted out. That is lunacy at it's worst and this is SMALL TOWN U.S.A. "Peace on Earth, good will toward men" and Black Friday shoppers.

A Muppetational Thanksgiving

What a fun-filled day full of loving (if a bit wacky) family with so many blessings given to us from above. So thankful

that He has led me through this one of the toughest years I have had to endure with not only my own physical hurdles but hopefully within a few weeks those of my Dad and Chad's as well. Chad is having his gall bladder removed on the 1st and Dad goes to a specialist on the 2nd. I pray that both of them come out of these experiences better and stronger for the experience.

As tradition, I got up and helped set the table for the first of two feasts and then watched the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade getting a glimpse of some of the best of this year's Broadway shows and a sneak at the coming *Newsies*!!!! that would be EXTREMELY fun to see on stage.

Before we sat down to two long tables in the dining room and Mom joined a few of the littles in the kitchen, Alex provided the blessing. He is serving as chaplain in his Boy Scout troop. He says he is also bugler but has yet to get a bugle.

After the noon day feast, I stretched out and tried to nap... NICE TRY! Not sure what we did, just sat around enjoying each other's company and viewed Elizabeth's video she made for her honors English or Lit class (whichever it was) a faux trailer for a new version of H.G. Wells' (not Orson, Jeff) *The Time Machine*. And at 4, the annual Drug Cartel of Dallas football game. And around 5, the Swary contingent arrived for the second feast.

FINALLY, a troop of us headed to the movies to watch *The Muppets*! YAY!!!!!! Highly, HIGHLY recommended! I would pay to see it again! Everything that I love about the old series and the movies rolled into one and with nods to both. The new character, Walter stole the show he was S0000000 adorable.

Cameos, singing, dancing, fun for the ENTIRE family. It could have done with a bit more Statler and Waldorf but still great fun! Mahna Mahna! In an interview, Jason Segel (who plays Walter's human twin, Gary and served as a writer and producer) stated that every generation needs a Muppet movie.

No spoilers just plain, good, FAMILY fun!

Finally, Chad and Cynthia stayed to go to shop electronics at Wal-Mart for Black Friday while the rest of us drove home.

Hope all of you my friends AND family had a blessed Thanksgiving filled with love. Do Doo de Do Do! Mahna Mahna! I think that will be stuck in my head for a few days.



MOVING ON!

Honestly, he is **NOT retiring!** Moments ago after 28 1/2 years, and a combined on-air time over 53 years of 17,000 hours (a Guinness record), [Regis Philbin](#) said goodbye to HIS show. He moved from NYC to California years ago after graduating from his beloved University of Notre Dame. In 1983, he returned to his home and eventually created what I have enjoyed since it went national in 1985 (not every day, but every day I was able). Whether it was with Kathie Lee or Kelly (Lee as Letterman refers to her), the warmth that Reege brought to millions will never be replaced. Succeeded but never replaced.

The celebration of his career in the morning began almost minutes following the announcement of his vacating the role on January 18, 2011. Support from fans both in the limelight and we ordinary joes poured in from all over the country. It culminated the past few weeks with extended tribute segments paying tribute to the legend. Last night, a Katie Couric special followed his backstage ritual and around the city.

Something that surprise me as they made their way to Cardinal Hayes High School and the auditorium that was named after

Regis: He never performed on the stage during his time at his alma mater. I could tell that he wished he had. During his "exit Interview," Big Daddy stated that he was happiest when he was entertaining people (so he won't be gone long). I could NOT agree more.

Later, David Letterman presented a gift to his frequent (scheduled or otherwise) guest: a motorized scooter. Regis went outside the Ed Sullivan Theatre (been there, inside, AND performed... but that is another post) and proceeded to crash after about five feet! Way to go Dave; kill the man hours before his final bow!

This morning was a fantastic send off. The audience was filled with friends, dignitaries, and other special people. We finally got to hear the details of Regis and Joy's honeymoon... something that has been hinted about for several years. Also interspersed were "Reflections by Regis" on his life. And what would a Regis celebration be without the 100s of people who have (for better or worse) come up with their own interpretations on the King's unique personal.

For me, the greatest part of the show has been Regis, himself. He's like the uncle everyone wishes they had (or actually do have, who knows). He is a remarkable story teller. In fact, I tuned in every morning I could to see the first 15 minute host chat and if the guests did not appeal to me, I turned the channel. He created a totally family feeling atmosphere by introduced his audience to Joy, his daughters Joanna and JJ, his son-in-law Michael Schur (a writer on *The Office*), and his grandkids Mr. Trouble and Ivy. Everyone on the show from Kelly to his executive producer Michael Gelman to the "Executive in Charge of Production" Art Moore (whatever it is he does besides sit in the corner begging for air time) were like an extended family coming into homes every weekday morning for an hour. Regis really did entertain for an hour with the extraordinary brand of "guerilla television" and made us feel better.

Thanks for the memories, Reege! We will see you soon!

And anyone looking for that GREAT Christmas gift idea: [How I Got This Way](#)^x. I do like some reading material in actual book form instead of downloading it onto my Nook. ☐

all about friends

I've been thinking recently about friends and friendship. I value my friends and value my close friends highly. If it is within my abilities, there isn't much I wouldn't do for a friend. Now there are some questionable activities that I won't consider, but if asked for, or needed, I try to be there for my friends.

I have a few very close friends, a few close friends and then there are friends that I think I should get to know better. Generally, once I decide someone is a friend, to me they will always be my friend. The only consideration, is how close of a friend are they.

I've often wondered how others make the determination of a close friend, but I know how I do it. Should be obvious that a person should know how they determine who is a friend and who isn't, but in the age of Facebook, friends seem to be something to count instead of count on.

My friends are people I trust. I trust them with my secrets, I trust them with my children, I trust them with me. How much trust I give, depends on how trustworthy I deem a person to be. This can change over time, but when the trust is lost, it is difficult to regain.

I wrote something on Facebook that I think is appropriate for this post.

We never really know the depth of our friendships, until we trust our friends when we are in something really deep.

I was going to say “when we are in deep shit.”, but that didn’t sound as philosophical to me. So my thoughts were already in the trust area weren’t they?

And today I wrote

A friend will stand with you when others are against you. A real friend will know what to do with the bodies.

Not really a realistic statement for most people, but in the humor lies the real depths that friendship can take. A friend isn’t always trying to stay on your good side, but they should be willing to have your back, even when you are wrong. If you are wrong, expect them to kick your backside when it needs it. That is one of the true marks of friendship.

Les Misérables Remastered

SO GLAD Megan could get tickets! Back in June, I learned that the 25 Anniversary of *Les Misérables* was making its way to the Stranahan. I did not forget but with all the eventful events surrounding my family the past few months, it kind of took a back seat. However, Megan was able to score us a trio of seats for tonight’s show. I was willing to drive which at times met with some rather humorous moments from young Miss Clark (“**OMG WE ARE GOING TO DIE!**”). Even walking to the theatre parking lot after the show. MWAHAHAHAHA!

We made excellent time even with my capable driving. We got a bit of dinner with an hour to spare before curtain. The show was even more spectacular than I remember. I last saw a high school production about 3-4 years ago and saw a professional production (it had to be) about 10 years ago at the Stranahan.

There were several changes made in the staging, scenery, and lyrics which all combined to enhance what was already one of my favorite shows.

Immediately noticeable was the changing of the backdrop pre-show. It had previously been a drawing of the young Cosette with her broom. It has been replaced by a Victor Hugo painting. I did not know that the author of the original novel as well as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was also an artist. Gone also were the captions indicating the time and location of the story. These were not needed as the action just moved at a steady clip.

The revolving platform that had previously been used in productions was also noticeably absent. Instead, different levels of perspective were used to heighten the drama. Marius sang the beginning of "A Heart Full of Love" to the mature Cosette from the ground while his love stood on her balcony (think Tony and Maria or Romeo and Juliet). Later, the audience could "see" Valjean carry the wounded Marius through the different sections of the sewers. Finally, Javert falls back and is enveloped by the water as he falls to his death.

A brilliant re-imagining of a classic theatrical event!

After the show, the three of us had our picture taken with M. and Mme. Thénardier (who as usual stole the show). We lined up and (also as Usual) I was relegated to the back but go right between the charming couple. As you may recall, I performed "Master of the House" with Carol at a recital last spring. How I would relish the opportunity to play the role in a full scale production. I will post the picture as soon as Carol makes a copy.

The drive home was fun as well. After stopping at a gas station before getting on the turnpike for a drink (again after Megan made her patented quip about dying), we popped in the new LIVE anniversary recording. As we approached our drop off point I heard “**TURN LEFT! TURN LEFT! NO, KEEP GOING! KEEP GOING!**” **HAHHAH!** Sorry...at least I did not mention how many times the lovely ladies had to visit the powder room ☐ (oops)

I also learned for future reference that a high school classmate of mine live a short distance away from the theatre. A handy tidbit for those times when we have to go dashing through the snow like a few years ago on Good Friday.

Thanks Megan and Carol! ☐

Now that I know how to put accents above letters in words like *Misérables* and Thénardier, I cannot stop myself. Such a fantastic show! A silver screen version of the musical *Les Misérables* is soon to start filming with Hugh Jackman as Valjean, Russell Crowe as Javert, Anne Hathaway as Fantine, Geoffrey Rush as Thénardier, and Helena Bonham Carter as Mme. Thénardier. Set for a 2012 release. If they ruin the show with the translation to the screen, I will not be happy!

A Sad Day In Happy Valley

This will be relatively short. I do agree with the firing of Joe Paterno after the shocking week at Penn State University.

In 2002, after he was approached by the graduate assistant who knew of the assistant coach's gross inappropriate conduct, Joe Pa should have gone NOT to the Athletic Director nor even to the head of the school, he should have gone to **THE POLICE!** He was morally and (most importantly in this case)

legally obligated to do something more. Instead the assistant coach's actions were covered up. It may be easy to say... "In hindsight..." Well... in my eyes, that does not excuse the suffering of the 25 (I believe) victims of the crime. The 61 year coaching tenure of the most winning and one of the most revered coach's in college football history ended by scandal. Not a good year for Big 10 football off the field.

Help Wanted

Well... it seems that Oscar is in need of a host once again.

Yesterday, amid scandal and controversy the producer of next year's Academy Award extravaganza Brett Ratner backed out of his duties. Shortly after, Eddie Murphy stepped down as host.

This morning, I heard two possible contenders being promoted (two being rather subjective). On GMA, there was a huge push for the soon to be returning to the silver screen Muppets to take the gig. What a boon that would be! An instant band for the evening courtesy of Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem.

Comedy provided by Fozzie Bear. Joan Rivers could be joined on the red carpet by the queen of fashion, Miss Piggy. The Oscar parties could be catered by the Swedish Chef. Gonzo could do... Whatever. Even heckling would be provided by the masters, Statler and Waldorf. And of course, your Master of Ceremonies... Kermit The Frog. YAAAAAAAAAAAAA! I cannot wait for the movie to open in time for the holidays. There is even an on-line push for the [Muppets](#) chance at the gig

Later during my morning cup of cocoa (boy it is starting to feel like November), Regis jokingly threw his hat in the ring.

Of course, after next Friday, the Reege will have plenty of time to devote following the final episode of his 28 year run on his morning program. I don't know where they will possibly

come up with a worthy successor to his charming, acerbic wit. Maybe even an unknown... Mr. Philbin's memoir is soon to be on bookshelves everywhere. Of course, he is "**JUST MOVING ON!**" and NOT actually retiring. If memory serves, Regis did serve as the host of a pre-Oscar show a few years ago and did take over on New Year's Rockin' Eve after Dick Clark suffered a stroke. Maybe he should step up to the big show?

Or... dare I say... combine the two.

