

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. □

Paths and Traveling

When planning a vacation, you can decide where you want to go and then find the best way to get there. Of course, you may want to get places to stay reserved for the trip. This sometimes makes the trip easier on the nerves.

Or you can one day decide to go on vacation and just drive. When you see something you want to investigate, you can stop and visit. When you get tired, you can find a place to stay. When hungry, you stop and eat. All off the cuff and unplanned. But what happens when there is no place to stay, or anywhere to eat. The whole trip can be easy, but a bit of nervousness when you need a place to stay.

It is much easier today to 'plan' that second style of vacation. With cell phones, computers and GPS units you can make hotel reservations for the end of the day and take off in the direction of your hotel. You can still make unscheduled stops, following a general direction.

But what about a journey where you don't know exactly where you are going? You don't know how you will get there. You do

not know the path you need to take. You don't know if you will have a place to rest for the night, or even enough food for the day. Would you want to take that journey?

What would you say if I said you were already on that journey? If you are among the living, you are taking that journey. No matter how well you think your life is mapped out, the path you will take, and the outcome of that journey is all up in the air.

Think back 5, 10 or 15 years. I remember in interviews always being asked where do you expect to be in 5 years. As far as I remember any of the answers, I am not, and never have been where I thought I would be. My priorities changed, life intervened, things happened. Are you where you thought you would be? Is the path you took, the one you had planned?

Where do I want to be in 5 years? What do I want to do in 10? I honestly don't know. I am taking what life gives me right now. I work, I have fun and sometimes I relax. Plans we make can fall by the wayside very quickly. I don't know my path, but I will make it my own. Will there be a place to stay at the end of the day? I certainly hope so. If not, I plan to be resourceful enough to make my own place.

Summer Fun At The Movies

While I hopefully will have a jam-packed summer to look forward to, I do plan to see at least a few of the big-budget, popcorn munching, no chance of winning any major awards movies coming soon to a theatre near me.

- [X-Men Origins: Wolverine](#) (the backstory to arguably, the most popular member of the gang of mutant superheros...

opening Friday. If you haven't seen the much publicized copy that surely found its way onto the internet)

- [Star Trek](#) (the much-hyped reboot of the 43 year old franchise. The trailers look phenomenal... hopefully, as is so often the case, the previews are not the best thing... I'm hoping the delay from Christmas Day to May 8th will be worth the wait))
- *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (the much delayed sixth movie of the seven book franchise. The final book will be divided into 2 movies. It has been two years since the last cinematic adventure of the students of Hogwarts)
- *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (didn't I tell you that it was a summer of popcorn, senseless movies)
- *Land of the Lost* (Will Farrell in an update of the classic 70s Saturday morning series about dinosaurs)
- *Up* (Pixar's Latest about an old man who hitches his house to a bunch of balloons and up, up, and awaaaaaaay he goes. Pixar movies are a must)
- *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (the sequel looks as fun as the original...LOTS)

I probably will not have time to see all of them but will do what I can. I plan to be in one show, help with the realizing of another show, and squeeze in some work this summer. May the summer bring fireworks in the cinemas as well as the sky.

Don't wait. Guarantee your seat before you go and avoid a sold out show. Skip the box office lines and buy movie tickets at Fandango.com.

Even after 5+ years

I've had some good news. I've had some not so good news. I've had some bad news. For 20 years I would go home and discuss the events of the day with my wife. After 5+ years of being widowed, I still miss that time. Talking about the same things with my daughters or friends just doesn't give the same feelings. Funny how some things just hit me.

My logical and analytical side has been thinking about that very thing the past couple of weeks. Deaths, upcoming family events, things at work have been in the front of my mind recently. Every one of these events would have be part of the evening discussions. What was so special about those discussions? 'Twas a puzzlement, but I did figure some things out.

1) Depth of personal involvement. On top of being Husband and Wife, we were best friends. We just enjoyed being together. Anything we did was better when we were together. Trying times a bit less trying. Good times were always better. We were very compatible.

2) We did not agree on everything. I was logical and thoughtful, she was more emotional and reacted with her feelings. I was often slow to react to things. Discussions with her made me think of things differently. It was sort of an instant 'out of the box' experience. I never had to come up with another way of looking at things, she was there to do for me, and I did it for her. We were complimentary.

3) Depth of feelings and empathy. We knew each other very well. We shared our deepest thoughts and emotions from almost the beginning of our time together. She knew that I would often have a 'delayed' reaction to something. I knew that the reaction she was having could have been triggered by a unrelated event. In some ways we were truly one.

Over the past few years, I've learned to be on my own again. I became comfortable with myself as an individual. Even when some of my friends see me as a appendage to one of my daughters (or the other way around), I am just me. For 20 years it was J and S (... S and J?), now it is justj. The meaning and reason behind my blog-name comes to light, and that is a good a place to stop as any.

Bowling Obsessed

For date night this week, our movie options were limited. We are lucky enough to live nearby cheap movie theaters that allow us to go to the movies weekly, so we see almost everything that comes out. Well, everything we have an interest in seeing, anyway. There are movies such as Krank 2 that you couldn't PAY me to see – I would rather just skip the movie altogether – same with the upcoming Star Trek (no offense to you Trekkies – just not my kind of movie!). So this week we were left to choose between Obsessed, a stalker-thriller with Beyonce Knowles and the new boss Charles (who already left) from the Office or a movie called The Soloist, which is about a Julliard-trained musician who ends up homeless because his schitzophrenia stands in the way of his success. The Soloist actually seemed to have some substance, but it also seemed like the kind of movie that could wind up being a tear-jerker or just plain boring. So we went with Obsessed, despite its 4.0 rating on imdb.com (which had slipped to a 3.8 as of today – ouch). Obsessed is a movie about a successful business man who had a beautiful wife (Beyonce) and child – essentially the perfect life – until an obsessed temp gets in the picture. This woman is truly psycho, and I really enjoyed watching how she made this poor man's life unravel. The movie wasn't bad until a few clues

shed the light on the movie's secret – Beyonce can't act. Add in bad character development and a weak script, and I can definitely see where the 4.0, er, 3.8 came in. There was one line near the end of the movie that was one of the stupidest lines I've ever heard in any movie. I won't spoil it for you, but let's just say that my husband and I got dirty looks for laughing out loud at its absurdity. On top of all of that, the movie was completely predictable – it must have been based upon (copied) every popular stalker movie ever made – The Crush, The Temp, Hand That Rocks the Cradle... Would I recommend it? To the right person, maybe... you have to like thrillers; so much so that you'd want to see one that is almost a thriller parody. You have to go to this one in a cynical mood, looking for stuff to make fun of – and you won't be disappointed.

After the movie, we decided to mix it up a little and go bowling – something we haven't done in a LONG time (I blame my 4 pregnancies – bowling is NOT a recommended sport for expecting women, and I've been pregnant for about one tenth of my life!) So anyway, for my first game, I'm embarrassed to say that I got a measly 99 – not very good for someone who used to bowl in a weekly league for years. My second game was back on par with a 137 – but I was still surprised at how quickly I got the sore muscles of bowler's fatigue. I guess picking up 10 lbs with three fingers uses muscles that haven't been thought about for years. While I'm happy to report that I wasn't sore at all the next day, I do have to say that my first attempt at bowling as a 30-year-old wasn't pretty. I guess I have to practice, especially if I'm ever going to go ahead and join that league I've been talking about doing for years. I just hope I don't hurt myself too badly.

Out of respect for my wonderful hubby, I will not disclose his bowling scores. Let's just say that he didn't stand a chance against the former high school 'Female Intramural Bowler of the Year'. ☐

You Have Now Entered... THE TWILIGHT ZONE!

It's unusual for me to blog twice in one day, but hey, today itself has been unusual. First, the swine flu has officially spread to Chicago. Why does that affect me? Because we were planning a trip there this weekend for my nephew's first birthday party. We were up in the air about going for financial reasons, but we decided to go ahead and do it because we really wanted to. Plus, my grandparents live there, and they are elderly and housebound, so going to Illinois is the only way I can see them and the only way they can see my kids. I hated leaving everyone up in the air until the last minute about our visit (we were waiting to hear about my husband's business deal – no word yet!), so we just decided to bite the bullet and commit to going. So I called my Grandma and my sister yesterday, and I told my daughter and emailed my mom this morning, and everyone is ecstatic. But now I see that this dreaded swine flu has hit Illinois – especially the counties where we are going to be visiting. I don't know how big of a deal this is – I mean, it seems as if it will be here in NW Ohio in no time as well, but I don't know that I want to be the family that brings it! Ok, I shouldn't joke about it. But with 4 little kids, it is an issue that makes me reconsider our decision. I guess all we can do is wait and see where things with this are on Friday or Saturday when we plan to leave. Darn swine flu!

There were a few other weird things that happened today (surprise 99¢ / gallon milk at Walgreens, for one!), but they are just little things, too many and too little to mention. Add them all up, and that's why I'm making a second post of the day. The other major weird event is this – I got a

mysterious letter in the mail today, and I have to say, it scared me. I think I've been watching too many stalker movies (blogging about that tomorrow). But this letter had my name on it – just my name, not my husband's name or The _____ Family or anything – just MY name. And it seems to be typewritten, not even printed on a computer – *typewritten*. Seeing a letter in a security envelope with your name and address typewritten on it without a return address is enough to give anyone pause, I think – but I am also a paranoid person. If I had gotten this letter in 2001 during the Anthrax attacks (someone was sending the deadly material Anthrax through the mail, and people were killed), I definitely wouldn't have opened it. So anyway, I opened the mysterious letter I got today, and guess what was inside? A thick green piece of paper that turned out to be blank – weird. Even more strange was that there was a Meijer gift card wrapped in the green paper. An *activated* gift card – the TO and FROM are blank.

So who sent this? Is it a joke? An anonymous good deed? A scary stalker? I just don't know... I do appreciate it, if the generous gifter is reading this, I want you to know that I'm thankful, but I'm also a little bit freaked out. It's just a very strange thing to happen, and I hope to get to the bottom of it, at least so the person can get their deserved "thanks!". If you or someone you know sent it, maybe drop me a hint... I am thoroughly confused!