Dog Toys, Wires, and Tablecloths, Oh My!

My son is crawling — uh, oh. I don't remember what his 3 sisters got into when they started to crawl, besides trouble, but my son's favorite things seem to be dog toys (and the dogs' food and water bowls, what a mess!), tablecloths (which he yanks on - I'm going to have to remove the one in the living room before he yanks it and pulls the heavy computer right down on his head!), and wires (I don't think I need to explain why he shouldn't be pulling and chewing on wires. Ιf I do, let's hope you don't have any kids of your own). He smiles so sweetly when we say no-no; I think he likes the attention. A more stern NO just makes him grin widely and start waving at us. So how do you discipline someone so incredibly cute? I can't help but smile back when he grins he's so cute with his little toothies sticking out from his bottom gums. Could you say no to this face?



The Haunting In Connecticut

We saw The Haunting in Connecticut at the movie theater for date night (after refusing pizza from "Carlos Zambrano" at the mall pizza shop — seriously, the guy looks just like the famously hot-headed Chicago Cubs pitcher!) and the movie made for a pretty good ghost story. I had heard it was based upon a true story, but after seeing it, here is my guess on what about the movie is true: a teenage boy has cancer, his family rents a house (a former mortuary) near the hospital where he is receiving treatments, and they had strange happenings while staying there; probably due to stress or lack of sleep or even just plain exaggerations but not hauntings, is my guess. is the basic plot of the movie, but I left out many events that could not have possibly happened in real life and would also be considered spoilers, so I will not go into details. will say that the movie opens with all kinds of vintage photographs of deceased people - I know this because of my friend who attended a lecture on the subject. I had wanted to go with her, but we found out about it last minute and I relunctantly had to pass. But my friend went and came back with all kinds of interesting info which is how I knew what the pictures were that opened the movie. For instance, many people back then (the movie takes place in the 80's, but the pictures were from the early 1900's) didn't have their photograph taken often, so when a loved one passed away, they would get their family portrait taken with the deceased better late than never, I guess? Not only that, sometimes they would pose as if the person was still alive - kind of morbid by our standards today, but then again, things are very different and taking pictures is so much more common; it's difficult to imagine past attitudes about this.

But The Haunting in Connecticut is a very entertaining, edgeof-your seat nailbiter with plenty of startles. To its credit, it's scary and creepy without the gore. Worth checking out, if you like that sort of thing, but not one of my favorites — it did give me some ideas for a haunted house though... Now if I can just remember them until 2010 when we actually have the time to DO the haunted house...

Falling off the edge

The problem digital TV is that you either get the picture or you don't. I was watching a show this evening when everything went black. I tried other stations and they were black too. I'm fairly certain there is some sort of weather going on between me and the stations antennas. In the old analog days, just a couple of months ago, the stations would have filled with static, and I could have watched the end of the show. Now I just have to wait until I can watch it on the net (and they don't seem to have fast forward), or catch repeat. I think I'll just skip it.

I started thinking about this digital drop point. Why should they drop off so quickly? I haven't studied the technology behind it yet, but I wonder why a digital signal should just drop off to nothing. On occasion, I've noticed the pixelated views of the digital signal when the wind starts blowing, or rain falls. I'm thinking that an advanced receiver could capture enough pixels to keep the sound and video going for a bit. A time delay buffer should be able to mix and fill in the missing data. It's done in digital videos and photography, so why not on TV. Just wondering...

Who Advises The Advisor?

Recently, I received an email from a high school friend asking for advice on auditioning for a movie role. She has never acted before but knew of my passion for theatre and decided to come to me for whatever reason. I have never tested for film, but gathered that my stage experiences would help. Here was my reply:

That sounds cool. I have never auditioned for film before, but I can't imagine it being any different from stage. Being a first timer, there will be anxiety which is good to have... it gives you energy. I still get it... anyone who says they never get nervous at an audition because they have done it so often is lying through their teeth but the more experience you get in auditioning the easier it becomes to use the nerves to your advantage. Not sure what to expect... do you have a script or is it a cold reading? Do you have to have anything prepared ahead (monologue?) . The best advice I can give is to go in, do what the director asks and have fun (the most important thing). The minute you walk into the site you ARE at the audition. Most of the auditions I go to start out by introducing yourself. This is as important as reading from the script or anything else they ask you to do. The first impression is the most important... be yourself (Sounds cliche and corny, but is very true). And don't let your inexperience get you down... everyone has to start somewhere. With your personality, I am really surprised that you did not try out for anything in school, but... never too late. Break a leg! Let me know if there is anything else you need and let me know how you do.

Apparently, she felt really good about the audition, because she sent me an email Saturday after the audition and told me that she used my advice. She was nervous but went in and presented herself as best she could and even talked to one of the writers and the casting director. Her husband, another EHS alumnus was in the store tonight and related how excited she was and how grateful she was for the advice. Unfortunately, she has to wait until April 6th to hear about call backs, etc. I would be driven insane waiting that long. She is even anticipating minoring in theatre at the University of Toledo where she started taking classes last fall. "Theatre is fun" she said. I even told her that she needs to take advantage of the theatre around her.

This is not the first time I have shared advice and my love of my favorite thing. It seems that I am quick to pick out members of any cast who are inexperienced and offer words of encouragement and take them "under my wing" as it were.

My problem is this: If I find it so easy to encourage others (friends, new acquaintances who more often than not turn into friends), why can't **I** find the encouragement to go further? have conquered (or at least been on) 6 stages in my little corner of the world. I love everyone of them. I have made the best friends I have EVER had in two of these venues because the bond many of us share is so strong. encouraged by many of them and yet... here I sit. Have I become so "comfortable" here that I will never try (again) to go above and beyond? I know I am just rambling and many of you may not understand how strong this thing is (I'm not even sure I do at times) but to me if someone finds himself trying out for every show in his community theatre (even when he is not cast... just picks himself up and tries again and again) and even ventures to other groups from time to time, well... AND I ${f know}$ that ${f I}$ solely am the one who has to come to terms with Maybe one day soon I can decide to take another friends advice to heart and believe that:

"There are no limitations in what you can do except the limitations in your own mind as to what you can not do."

Busy family

Can this family have much more excitement?

The current list (as it stands now □)

- 1) 4th Daughter heads out for Show Choir Competition in April.
- 2) 4th Daughter's High School graduation in May.
- 3) 3rd Daughter's Wedding in June Play I was in is going to regional competition \square I can't make it.
- 4) Family Vacation???
- 5) 4th Daughter Starts College in August
- 7) 1st Daughter's first child due in September

OK what else is can happen? I'm not sure. With the way this year is going, I'm sure there will be something. My life tends to get more complicated, not less.

Could 'The Lion in Winter' Go to State competition? I would love that. It was a good part and I would like to play it again...

Weddings, Graduations, College, Birth. I can remember when that was me. It wasn't that long ago was it.

Of course, I'm sure there will be more medical testing now that I'm 50. That will take some time won't it. And the fun part is, I don't know when or what those will be right now. Depends on how the tests go doesn't it?

What is life without adventure, it looks like I have my days filled with it.

Ever Had A Big Mac Attack?

Have you ever had a late night craving that only the "tow all beef patties special sauce lettuce cheese pickles onion on a sesame seed bun" could cure? Apparently, that was the motive behind a woman's irate shooting at a McDonald's drive thru window Sunday morning. The woman, driving a white Dodge Intrepid, entered the drive-thru of a Salt Lake City restaurant an wanted to order lunch, dinner, anything else besides what was being offered. Apparently, 24-hour McDonald's change from lunch/dinner to breakfast only around 2AM. I never understood the need for fast-food establishments to have different hours for different meals. Is there something that prohibits them from serving guarter pounders at the same time as egg mcmuffins? In any case you can follow the link to the full details and a possible connection to other shots heard a few hours ealier

Monsters VS Aliens

We took the kids to see the Pixar movie Monsters VS Aliens last Sunday after church. The good news is, we didn't end up with any nude children running around the theater (see a previous post of mine; I forget which one, but I think this happened more than once so take your pick — we haven't been to the movies in months, and now you know why!). The bad news is that I didn't think this movie lived up to the hype. But I couldn't be sure; I didn't get to see much of it. It seemed to me like they showed all the funny parts in the previews,

but then again, once you read what I was doing instead of watching the movie, you'll see why I could be wrong...

Our family now takes up an entire row at the movie theater. Our oldest starting pouting because she was stuck on the inside and complained that she couldn't see. To her credit, she got over it right away and ended up being the one kid of the four who actually stayed awake for the entire movie. The movie was about to start, and I felt something pelt my back -I turned to my husband and said, "I think someone just threw something at me, intentionally because it was hard and it hurt!". He said, "It probably was intentional — turn around and see who it is!" Duh — why didn't I think of that? I'm not the type to want to draw attention, so I figured it was some poor kid who was going to get in trouble if I turned around or something... so I turned around and saw some gamenighters grinning at us. "Good thing you finally turned around, "they said, "we were almost out of Junior Mints!" Haha — that was funny, and I learned my lesson, if you get pelted in the back at the movie theater, you should turn around to see who would actually throw candy at the movie theater — you might be surprised to find out it's NOT kids!

The lights dimmed, the previews came on, and my son dirtied his diaper. By the time I got back from changing him, I had already missed a preview — my husband and I love the previews. Oh well, better than missing the movie, I thought… little did I know we would be missing that too. So my son, who is 8 months old and just starting to crawl, didn't want to sit still for a movie. He was happy munching on things, but he was pretty rambunctious when I was holding him. So I spent most of the movie trying to calm him down and keep him busy. My 2-year-old daughter, who is usually the problem (and the nudist) at the movies, actually fell asleep. My husband went to put her in her seat to sleep so we could enjoy the movie, and there was a horrible gushing sound followed by gasps from the people behind us. Apparently, my husband's pop had gotten

knocked over, and wouldn't you know it, it was almost full and of course it poured directly into the lady's purse who was sitting behind us. 00PS! How can you possibly apologize for something like that, especially while trying to be quiet so others can watch the movie? All the commotion of course woke up my daughter, so now we had her to deal with again. Not more than 20 minutes later, my son made a lightening-fast grab for my drink, and I didn't catch him in time, so SPLOSH — another one bites the dust. At least this time it was in MY diaper bag and not the woman's behind me again — that would have been lawsuit-worthy! But now we were drinkless, had 2 rambunctious kids, and were only about halfway through the movie!

Well, we made it through, my 2 youngest daughters fell asleep before the movie was over, and my son was out about 10 minutes before it ended — he waited long enough to keep me from seeing the movie, and long enough to wake up when we left and screw up his nap cycle. But I guess I learned yet again that my kids are too little to go to the movies — at least all 4 at one time. And the lady behind us didn't say anything when she left, thank goodness. But I wouldn't take my word for it that Monsters VS Aliens isn't anything special — I didn't see most of it!

Shocking Lamp In A Shout Out

Before turning in for the night, I like to periodically check the guide to see who is going to be on the late night gab fests. Sometimes, they pique my interest (Jack Hanna on Letterman in which case I have to pass the word to tangent's own animal lover, taylhis). Last night, Jay Leno had the curiosity named Lisa Lampanelli. I was introduced to this

overtly shocking comedienne while on our trek to NYC and all I can say is WOW! She stepped out and fondled band leader, Kevin Eubanks and was quick to make a heated quip about first guest, Vin Diesel ("tall hairless man, don't know whether to nurse you or spank you"). However, she kept to her goal of making it through her set without being bleeped, but came awfully close.

Before the guest came out, Jay's "Headline" segment always is worth a view on Monday night. One of the pieces was a playbill from a high school production of Kiss Me Kate. One of the things I like about some playbills is the shoutout/pat on the back spaces friends and relatives buy to give encouragement to the performers on stage (something that has been mentioned in our community theatre but...). In any case, the playbill presented last night included the rather encouraging line:

Don't bother coming home because you suck.

Love, Mom and Dad

OUCH... even if it was meant as a joke what a message to send a young person. No wonder the country's youth has self-esteem issues.

Or maybe I am...

Earlier this evening I was saying that I'm not much of a geek. Shortly after I wrote that post, I had 5 computers running in the house, and I was using all of them. Timeshare to be sure, but I was popping from one machine to the next just relaxing...

Yes, I did say relaxing. I was into my 4th or 5th setup of

Puppy Linux, trying to get it to recognize and use one of my wireless adapters. No go so far, even when two of the adapters are readily recognized by my other versions of Linux. It looks like it recognizes it, but for some reason it will not log on to the network. I guess I have more studying to do.

I had my other Linux box working updating some software to try out for video editing. If it works out on the current box, Linux may replace Windows on my main box. I like the software so far, but I want to make sure it does everything my current programs do.

I was doing some picture and video filing on my main box and that was just computer time intensive. I was just there to press the OK button.

The 4th computer was my main laptop. It was busy moving files to and from the 5th and final computer. I was also busy touring the internet while all this was going on. I switched back and forth between my laptop and my Working wireless Linux box. Depending on which one had the most/least processing going on.

I think I was able to turn off the text messaging on my cell phone. I'm fairly certain it got my daughters' phones too. Oh well, it was pay by the message, so I won't miss it, I hope they don't. If they do, they can get their own phones. They aren't the ones paying for it, so I get to choose. [evil grin]

New York Trip Diary Volume 6

The World Trade Center Chapter

NEW YORK TRIP — MARCH 20-23, 2009 — TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos

(continued from previous posts)

Sunday, March 22 — I already blogged about this day, but I had skipped the part about us visiting the World Trade Center site (aka Ground Zero) because it just didn't seem to belong in a happy family's trip diary. So consider this your warning; the following post will be emotionally heavy!

On the way there, I was just in visitor mode — on a mission to just get there. I didn't really stop to think about how emotional and how gut-wrenching the experience would be. I'm very glad we went, but man, was it emotionally taxing, to say the least. The site itself is a pit in the earth — not even a hole, they're already begun building new buildings, so really it just looks like a construction site, though if you look carefully, you can see that one piece of equipment has a hook painted like an American flag (click on the pic to make it bigger — actually I don't know that you can see the flag-painted hook in this one, sorry!):



There are fences all around, and it's difficult to even see

past them until you go into the World Financial Center and look out a window and down into the site (click on any of my pics to make them bigger):



On the way to the site, we passed (yet another) street vendor, and this time, they were selling commemorative books about the 9/11 terrorist attacks. We flipped through the books, and they actually seemed interesting, so we bit and we bought. Those ended up being a great purchase though, because they contain some pictures of the catastrophe that I haven't even seen on the internet. One of the pictures in the books is of a cemetery located only a block or two from Ground Zero. The picture was taken on September 11, 2001, and the cemetery is covered in an inches-thick layer of ash and debris. that same cemetery on our way to Ground Zero, and it was eerie to see what it looked like on that day. Across the street from Ground Zero, there is a statue of a business man with a briefcase; I guess it's supposed to symb0lize the "every man" quality of the victims, I don't know, but there it was and here it is:



Also across the street from the site is a fire station, Ladder 10, which was heavily damaged by the attacks and collapsing skyscrapers — it actually served as a rest station for many wounded firefighters that fateful day, I later found out. The station has a memorial on the side, but we (regretfully) didn't stop long enough to take a picture. But the garage was open, and there was a firefighter who was more than happy to let our kids climb up on the fire engine, and he graciously posed with a picture of them — what a great guy! I wonder if he was with Ladder 10 during 2001 and how many of his friends were lost?



And then there was the museum. I was worried the kids would be bored, but they said it would only take 30-45 minutes to get through, and I can't be happier we went. First of all, the kids were not bored in the slightest. They enjoyed looking at the memorabilia: the damaged items, the kids drawings of support, and even the wall of "Missing" posters

that victims' loved ones had posted after the attacks. I figured September 11, 2001 is a day my kids should learn about, so why not start now? We did spare a few details, though, like the one about how people were responsible for all of it. If they had asked, I wouldn't have lied, but we just told them that planes crashed into the buildings. After we were almost through the museum, our almost 5-year-old asked me a question I'll never forget. She said, "Mom, can God put people back together?" I hugged her and explained that sometimes people get to go live with God, and that was good enough for her at that moment.

At least one thing I found cool about the museum is that they had a section about what Muslim-Americans went through after 9/11: the discrimination, the victimization, and the violence.

One thing I somehow didn't get a picture of from the museum was some silverware from the restaurant at the top of one of the towers — the spoon had a hole burned directly through it.

Here are some pictures of other things they had in the museum:



Above is a picture of an airplane window from one of the planes that hit the twin towers. Below is a picture of what was once an elevator plate labeling a floor in the Trade Center:

And below is a picture of some items that they found in the debris pile, a stuffed lamb they used to sell in the Trade Center — searchers who found him said "If he could be spared, why couldn't the people?" Also pictured are someone's car keys, IDs, and most eerie, a brochure from a meeting being held in the "Windows on the World" restaurant in the top of the building — note the dates say September 9-11, 2001. The thing on the right is just a melted mass of metal, concrete, and whatever else:



If you're going to New York, I highly recommend visiting the Ground Zero museum. I don't know the exact name of it, but it's on Liberty Street across from Ground Zero. Bring tissues, but if you forget, they have some on the walls, and I was grateful for that. It was a very emotional experience, but I was fine until I saw a letter in a child's scrawl dated 4/2000, before the attacks. The letter began, "My hero is my

daddy because he is a fireman…" The letter was written by a kid who lost his dad on 9/11, and that's when I lost it.

I can't imagine what those people went through, especially after seeing what happened to some of the objects that were once a part of the World Trade Center. A very humbling experience; one I will never forget...

God Bless the victims of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 and their families left behind...