What Sets Him Off?

What sets him off? Everything under the sun and even the sun itself. I'm talking about our lovely scarlet macaw parrot. I would not recommend these things as pets for ANYONE — it's true when they say that wild animals cannot be tamed! Why we have our bird is a long story, and it's not important now because we're stuck with him. I'm not one to just "get rid" of pets unless the circumstances are extreme. It's a pet peeve (pun intended) of mine when people get animals and then discard them just because they're sick of taking responsibility for them. And in a way (though I can't dwell on this right now because I'm extremely upset with Squawky — who really lives up to his name), I love our parrot and wouldn't want to curse see him go to another home.

So that brings me to the point of this post — parrots scream constantly. They might be beautiful to look at, but their ear-splitting screams are beyond annoying. unstoppable and headache-producing, and more than once, our parrot's screams have made our kids cry. We've adjusted our lifestyle to avoid his upsetting the kids, and for the most part that works; it seems to be me who feels the brunt of the negative parrot side effects. Thank goodness we were able to move into a bigger house a few years ago where Squawky was given his own room. Unfortunately, he shares the laundry room, and since somehow I was voted the family laundry-doer (gender?), it seems that Squawky's screaming affects me the I cannot do laundry during the day because I can't bring my young children in the laundry room with me. have a basket of toys in there, and they enjoy playing in there because there's lots of light and a nice soft carpet to But we get screamed at by the parrot. By nighttime, I'm too tired to do all the laundry, so much of the time, I'm left to worry about when to do it. Ideally, I'd do some here and there in between kids' lunches, naps, diaper changes and

my errands, but then the parrot gets all riled up and screams me right out of the laundry room.

I looked to the Internet for advice, and one site suggested noting his "triggers". What sets him off and makes him scream? Making the list of his triggers hasn't helped, however. It's only made me see that getting screamed out of the laundry room seems unavoidable. Here are his triggers (if you're thinking about getting a pet parrot, use this list as reasons on why you should NOT):

the sunrise or light of any kind — it's a parrot's natural instinct to be quiet in the dark so predators won't find them. But heavy drapes and a sheet over his cage do not block out all the light during the day, and it's really difficult to do laundry at night in the dark — believe me I've tried more than once!

<u>yelling</u> — any yelling in the house gets him going — kids fighting, kids having fun, just raising our voices to hear each other when we're in separate parts of the house. He especially likes it when I yell at him for yelling!

singing — if my husband is in a show and needs to practice, everyone has to leave. And not because my husband is a bad singer — he's actually very talented. But the bird will join in, and HE is a BAD singer!

talking on the phone — any time anyone is on the phone, the bird thinks we're calling out for him I guess, but he takes it upon himself to yell. So I can forget folding laundry while talking on the phone, which was a great way to pass the time while doing this boring task.

having his door open - closing his door not only muffles his screaming, but it makes him scream less for some reason

<u>something he likes on tv</u> — he has a tv in his room, which was put in there for me to watch while doing laundry. But I can

forget about hearing anything on the tv while I'm in there, thanks to the parrot. Sometimes Animal Planet or his favorite show, The Price Is Right makes him scream along with the audience.

happiness - if he's happy, he will get rowdy and play and scream.

<u>anger</u> — if he's upset about not getting enough attention, he will scream.

<u>hunger</u> - if he's hungry, he will scream.

thirst - if he's thirsty, he will scream.

dogs barking — if our 2 dogs bark, which they do at least 4
times per day, the bird will join right in and scream.

So, I guess for now I've decided that the laundry must be a family affair. I've gotten upset several times about this same issue and came to this conclusion before, but it's never My husband works during the day, and at night, we're busy or the kids have their own chores or homework to do, so my getting help with the laundry has not been a consistent solution. The other thing we've thought of is to move the parrot out of the laundry room, but if you look at my list of Squawky's triggers, you'll see that he must be in a room with a door, which eliminates the other spare room we have on the first floor because it's doorless. I can't imagine that he'd do any better on the second floor closer to the bedrooms either. The laundry room is right below my bedroom so once he gets going in the morning, I can usually forget about sleeping in anyway.

Well, I guess I'm done venting for now. I have a good hour to catch up on laundry since we have a meeting tonight and we took the kids to the babysitters early, so I have to make it productive. I guess I will have to blast my ipod and leave my husband to fend for himself on his business call... Well, it is

HIS bird after all!

Here's a picture of the jerk:



Don't let his cuteness fool you. This is actually a "baby" picture. He's much more obnoxious looking now!

Push

For date night on Tuesday, we really enjoy going to the movie theater, and this time we were between the movies Frost/Nixon and Push. We actually decided to see Frost/Nixon, but we messed up on the movie times and ended up arriving after the movie had already started — so <u>Push</u> it was.

Push is a very unique type of movie. It is action-packed, and I was never bored, but the intricate plot did tend to go over my head at times. Not only that, it wasn't exactly a feel good type of movie, and it carried a constant theme of doom and gloom.

<u>Dakota Fanning</u> (man has she grown up!) stars as a teenage "watcher" — a type of fictional person with psychic abilities. "Watchers" can see the future which they draw on paper, and there are also "movers", "sniffs", "shadows", and "pushers" to name a few of the superhero-ish types of characters in this movie. Dakota Fanning's character, along

with a "mover" named Nick, must find a girl who holds the key to helping their type survive. And they must constantly stay one step ahead of The Division, the secret government agency who uses these psychics like lab rats. The movie is set entirely in China, so the foreign element really helps to establish the complexity of the unknown in this movie.

Like I said, Push is a very different type of movie. It was both clever and entertaining to see how the different psychics would use their powers to both work together and against each other. The most intriguing of the psychics to me were the "Bleeders" whose screams could burst blood vessels (creepily done), and the "pushers" who could get inside people's minds and make them believe things that aren't true. "Shadows" could cloak people from "Sniffs" who could smell a person from miles away using just an old toothbrush.

I enjoyed Push, which is not normally my type of movie. I would be careful who I recommend this one to as well. If you can get past a lot of violence (though worthy of only a PG13 rating), and you like superhero-like tales and/or science fiction, check out Push — you might be pleasantly surprised!

A Useless Bit Of Trivia For Today

While watching the Jay Walking segment on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, I was chatting with a friend about a device that most people use everyday. In junior high, I was taught that a gentleman named Sir Thomas Crapper invented the flushing toilet. I found out today that that bit of useless trivia is in fact incorrect. It seems that Mr. Crapper was

not a knight at all and only has patents that improved upon the device already invented by Sir John Herrington. Sir John was a 16th Century author who installed a functional prototype in the facilities of his godmother, Queen Elizabeth I.

As for the brilliant contestants on Jay Walking, here is one sterling question and answer:

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What did Alexander Graham Bell invent?

A BELL
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And another:

What was the Iron Curtain?
The Pittsburgh Steelers offense

Still another:

What is kept in Fort Knox?
Change

Finally:

What U.S. President had polio and needed a wheelchair to get around?

OH... the president in Pearl Harbor.... Churchill (not only a bad answer but another movie that we knew the ending to before it began only with the sappy love story attached)

I could have added this post to increase the <u>genius</u> blog, but hey... I needed one of my own. And I was seriously fishing which is something I could have done nearly anywhere I looked in our little corner of the world today with all the flooding.

Water, Water everywhere

Have we had enough rain yet? It was a downpour last night and I knew that my usual routes to work may have some flooding, so I left a bit early.

I was not prepared for the amount of water on the roads this morning. I had to backtrack twice when I got to places with more water than my truck would handle. Our little bridge (culvert) at the end of the drive was flowing over with water this morning. Of course I did notice there were many places that had water on them earlier, but it went down enough to be off the roadway by the time I passed.

I was worried about one place I didn't pass this morning, but did this afternoon after the water subsided. I pass one place just outside of a small town, where there is a small donkey and a few goats. When I passed the place this afternoon, I noticed that the goat/donkey pasture was under at least 3 to 4 feet of water. I did not notice any animals standing in the water, so I am assuming the owners got them out and they are all safe.

On the way home from play rehearsal today, I also had to do a couple of bypasses of flooded roads. There were a few places where I had to go through some standing water just to make it home. It felt like one of those "You can't get there from here" sort of stories.

I'm sure some of the roads I travel on will be better tomorrow, but some will be worse as some of the local rivers have yet to crest.

Stay safe if you are driving in flood prone areas. There is water, water everywhere.

Cheap Cheeseburger Rundown

We have the following items from the value menus of the local fast food chains (again Williams Co Ohio)

McDonalds - McDouble (99cents)

Wendys - Jr Bacon Cheeseburger (\$1.00) DoubleStack Burger (\$1.00)

Burger King — Junior Whopper (99cents)

Bk Stacker (??)

Double Cheeseburger (??)

A&W — No cheap burgers only KFC has 99 cent snackers (chicken/fish)

Dairy Queen — Double Cheese burgers (2 for price on one day of the week)

I've already commented on the McDonalds sandwich. One less slice of cheese than the original Double Cheeseburger at the same old price. It's exactly what you expect from McDonalds. It isn't the same comfort food I grew up with, but for the price and speed of delivery, I always thought it was hard to beat. Until....

On a whim, I stopped at Wendys for a DoubleStack and a Junior Bacon Cheeseburger. All I can say is: I think I'm hooked. Little burgers with a big burger taste. Not at all what I expected. I thought they took a quarter pound single or, in the case of the DoubleStack, a half pound Double and shrunk them. Same taste as a regular size Wendys burger. I have a new mini-price comfort burger. When I want a cheap burger, that is where I am going.

One word on Dairy Queen burgers, I've had them, and they were

OK. Not great, not bad, just OK. If I want onion rings or some specialty burger, that only they carry (The flamethrower or mushroom burgers are good), I will go somewhere else. There cheeseburgers and double cheeseburgers are just ok, and more than the dollar menu values of the other chains.

Burger King, I'll have to say I've only had the Whopper Jr. Burger King has never been my favorite stop for burgers. I've always been able to taste the "gas" from the flame broiling. It may just be me, but it wasn't a pleasant taste. On the bigger burgers the taste is less noticeable, but very strong on the smaller burgers. Not sure why that is. Their Angus Burgers, while not cheap, are quite good.

A&W — Even their Cheeseburger is more than a buck. Even at the old A&W stand in nearby Antwerp OH, I never cared for their burgers. Give me a chili Dog, Onion Rings and mug of root Beer. Great Combination, but it isn't a cheap burger.

Next Up Franchise burgers — What they sell now (Big Mac, Quarter Pounder, Whopper, Grillburgers, Single, Double, Triple) and the winner is....

Quick Run Through...

We had a quick run through of our show before starting the live performances again. Just something to work off any cobwebs that may have formed during the two days off. And by quick I do mean quick. A complete show has been running a bit over two hours without intermission. We finished the entire show in under 1.5 hours. Shaving over 1/2 hour from our show was a bit of a feat. Yes, there was fast talking, flying scene changes (only moving what was necessary) and quick moving. But it was needed.

First and foremost we had fun on stage tonight. So many times in a performance, we the actors, forget to have fun. We are concerned with getting all of our lines. Hitting all of our cues. Making all of our entrances. Giving a good show to the audience. All of that yes, but we forget from time to time to have fun. Tonight we had fun. We had fun with the characters. Fun with our lines. Fun with the other actors. That is what community theater is really about. We do this, not only for love of theater, but for fun. It is a non-paying hobby. A passion for some, but it is a way to relax and have fun. From all the plays I've seen in the past 10 or so years, the ones where the actors are having fun are the most enjoyable. If the fun of this evening carries over to tomorrow and the weekend, our best performances are yet to be seen.

The second part of this rehearsal was to get back into gear. Shake off some of the dust that had settled during those last few rehearsals, and the first weekend of the play. Go back and re-visit some of the lines. Make sure we are saying them as close as possible. Always trying to give the audience the play as it was written. Since we are human and this is live theater, we come close, but never quite perfect. We strive, but fall short. Gaffs are made, but we can't let that show to the audience. We take this rehearsal to again get comfortable with our characters.

Fun stuff tonight. This looks like a good omen for this weekend's shows.

Again.. Come see a show, it is well worth it.

Snagglepuss

Today my son is 8 months old — how time flies! Gone are the days when I could cradle him like a newborn baby and sing him to sleep. There is no better way to relax than that, and I really miss it. Yesterday when I was in Walmart, I literally almost cried when I saw the itty bitty baby outfits. Why do they grow so fast?

So anyway, today is Christopher's 8 month birthday, and he's been growing by leaps and bounds lately. He popped his first tooth a few weeks ago, and I swear, every day that tooth gets a little bit taller. He just has the one tooth so far, like a snaggletooth, so we've been calling him "snagglepuss". I don't think that nickname will stick though, it's not quite as cute as his nickname of "Beeber", which is how our 2-year-old used to say Christopher.

Here is "Snagglepuss" — note the little tooth on the bottom:



And he is finally sitting up! A little late, but it seems as if now he's doing everything at once! He can scoot on his tummy, roll from his back to his tummy and his tummy to his back, and he can also sit up by himself when he's laying down. Now that he's sitting, he can be busier because it's easier for him to play. Here he is sitting up:



And of course, after all of this activity, he gets tired, and sometimes, he doesn't quite make it up to bed:



HAPPY 8 MONTH BIRTHDAY CHRISTOPHER!!!

What The Truck?

I recently received an email forward containing pictures of trucks from Europe. These trucks are cleverly painted so that they can effectively advertise their contents. Check them out:













Preview

(imagine a picture here that I'm too tired to make right now)

A little drama in accepting assignments- is the job his, or isn't it...?

Can eighth grade LD/BD kids really be quiet?

What happens when a hand is put in front of the face of an autistic child who doesn't want to work?

Tune in tomorrow, or whenever I am not so overtired, to find out the answers… $\ \square$

A New Sunday Tradition...

Basically all my life I have had a Sunday tradition... September through January anyway... NFL FOOTBALL!!!

And that my friends, has not changed. I love watching football, I really enjoy almost every aspect of the sport. Every Sunday in the fall my heart is pounding strong!

More recently our family has started the tradition of going to breakfast together. We have done this (almost) every Sunday for the past 2 years and it has been a great way to connect as a family and enjoy even more of the bonding time with the "fam" that I love. Breakfast with the family on Sunday is even sweeter than football...

Getting to sit down to a relaxed meal together and share our week is just a delight. We get much more family time than most other families to begin with, but more is always welcome! And, the Sunday breakfast time is extra special because it is a fixed time — it is our time. Much like Tuesday nights have become a Lisa-&-I tradition of "date night". Yes, Tuesdays are equally cherished.

Anyway, back to Sunday...

Our new tradition is one that has been in the works for some time now... What is it? To go to church!

For a while my wife and I have been contemplating regularly attending Sunday service and getting involved with a church. But this is a decision we did not take lightly. We wanted a church that felt right for us. One that was inviting and open — not judgmental and condescending.

I had a **terrible** experience with the (Catholic) church growing up — one that left deep wounds and filled me with much doubt. Not doubt about God but doubt about religion. And, not about the message of religion but of it's messengers. There are good people and not-so-good people in this world and unfortunately the same is true everywhere — even in the church. I met many good people I am sure in my childhood with the church. But it was the bad one(s) that filled my mind with an incurable pain.

However, for the past several months I had been carrying a terrible burden. Someone I am not at all close with had (unintentionally?) confided something to me — something absolutely HORRIBLE — and I did not know what to do with the knowledge I had been "forced" to receive. I was losing sleep and filled with an awful feeling of uncertainty as to what was the 'right' thing to do.

This was not the kind of thing you gossip and it was not the kind of story I wanted to pass-on or burden any of my friends with... Only <u>Lisa</u> knew what was on my mind. However, one other name kept coming to mind — very oddly it was the name of someone who I did not have a close relationship with...

Mark Pittman was one of the cast members in School House Rock Live! A show which I directed with my lovely wife. All casts bond, but I had no particular closeness to Mark; in fact he and I didn't really seem to gel. Not that he wasn't nice and not that he-and-I didn't get along... I was just much closer to other cast members.

Anyhow, Mark's name kept coming into my mind whenever I would think about this 'event'. I do not know why... So, finally after discussing it with Lisa, we decided to just go with it. I called Mark who is a pastor at New Hope Community Church. we arranged to meet at his office the following day.

Mark admitted to me that he was as surprised to get a call

from me as I was to have been calling on him. Nonetheless, here we were.

I had a lenghty discussion with Mark about the burden I was carrying and the solutions (in terms of faith). I had an almost immediate feeling of comfort come over me — even with the emotional/intense nature of the issue at hand. Mark gave me advice from the perspective of the bible; which in fact was exactly what I was seeking. I had confidence in what I had to do and a peace about the situation I had not been able to find on my own.

Mark also talked very briefly about church in general. I made a comment on my past experience and the fact that I just wasn't sure about my comfort level with the church concept — because of what had happened in the past.

Although he made the assumption (incorrectly) that my wounds were related to the teachings or the interpretations of the Catholic faith — I still felt healing occur as we enguaged in a discussion about the church.

Afterwords my wife and I talked about the experience and both agreed that we should attend a service at New Hope.

The service itself was amazing. Full of energy, music, emotion, and message. The highlight of the service was a group of individuals coming on stage each with a cardboard that on one side they had written their personal struggle and on the other side their newly found saving... For example, one read "Addicted to Drugs" and then was turned over to reveal "Addicted to God's Love". This was all done to music and was very dramatic and moving. Both Lisa and I had tears flowing from our eyes.

So, yep. I think we've found a new Sunday tradition. Or maybe I should say a new Sunday tradition found us...? But I am happy to say that along with football (GO BEARS!!!), and breakfast, we will make attending Sunday service a part of our

day.

THE IMPORTANT NOTE:

The kids also had a blast. Both learning about God's message and playing with other kids their age. Each child was in a separate room with other kids in their age group. I felt this was a much more productive way for the kids to be introduced to church (through fun interaction) — versus when I was young and basically sat <u>BORED</u> and listened to sermon after sermon that I did not understand nor did I care about... *I WAS A KID;* SITTING THERE WAS BORING!!