

Farm Frenzy

You might have noticed a decrease in the frequency of my blogging. I am still super-busy with my 4 kids, but now that the horrible months-long-lasting illness has run its course through our house, I have more energy and time than I've had in a long time... so why am I posting less? Because I've gone and gotten myself addicted to a video game, of all things!

It's called Farm Frenzy Pizza Party, and it's addicting to play! Basically, you get this little plot of land where you choose what animals to buy and manage. Each different kind of animal drops a type of product, and you can either use these products to make other products, or you can sell them. You can upgrade your warehouse to make it store more products, you can upgrade your factories to produce products more quickly, and you can upgrade your vehicles to make them faster. The game is surprisingly complicated, yet easy to learn. Ultimately, the more difficult levels consist of making pizzas, and each pizza is made up of five types of product. Complicating the game player's goals is the fact that some of the pizza components are made up of two different products themselves, so you have to choose which animals and factories to buy and in what order to make the products with the funds you have. There are also bears that drop down from the sky that eat your animals and even trample your factories! It's really fast-paced (you get rewarded for completing the levels in a timely fashion also), and like I said, it's very addicting.

I was looking for a hobby, but this is ridiculous. I could have chosen something a little more productive than sitting on my butt and playing a video game. But this is *fun*. And I haven't let myself indulge in a hobby that's non-productive in a long time... Usually in my spare time I organize our family photos or work on our kids' school memory books or things like that... What's that you ask? What about my blogging? Well,

ok, I see your point. So I have a few hobbies now; they'll have to compete for my time. And right now, Farm Frenzy is winning! Here is a screen shot:



50 of the most important...

happenings my life for the past 50 years. Not that your things aren't important too, but it is my birthday. ☐

- 1) 1959 I was born – That made this post possible
- 2) 1983-1984 I met my future wife and married her
- 3) 1981 thru 1991 My four daughters were born
- 4) 2003 My wife of almost 20 years died (not good important, but it did make a big impact)

- 5) 2000 and 2002 Parents died (see above)
 - 6) 1981 Graduated College (set up for all jobs since then)
 - 7) 1982 First job in computer field
 - 8) 1990 Second job in computer field
 - 9) 1992 3rd and current job in computer field (no longer automotive)
 - 10) 2006 Oldest daughter got married (first "step"-grandchild let's drop the step, it doesn't mean anything to me)
 - 11) 2007 2nd daughter got married (2nd and 3rd grandkids)
 - 12) 2008 3rd announces pending wedding
 - 13) 2009 1st daughter announces pending grandkid ☐
 - 14) ... To be continued
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How Do You Solve A Problem Like...

While looking over my Firestats, I came across an interesting [link](#). I have known for years that a common misconception surrounding the song "Edelweiss" from *The Sound of Music* is that it is an Austrian folksong. This is false. It was the final lyric written by Oscar Hammerstein II and had nothing to do with Austria aside from the flower that the title comes from. The misconception seems to have arisen during the emotional reprise of the song by Captain Von Trapp during the festival near the end of the musical. In the movie, the overwhelmingly Austrian audience is moved to tears and join in song before bursting in thunderous applause. This could give the impression that the song is of great importance to Austrian people.

Also of note is the fact that the musical is not widely known in Austria. Although Salzburg makes quite a haul by giving

tours of the city and surrounding countryside to fans of the show, very few of the tourists are Austrian.

Below is a German translation of Hammerstein's original by an unknown translator:

<p>DEUTSCH Musik: Richard Rodgers Text: Oscar Hammerstein Deutsch: Unbekannt Edelweiß, Edelweiß, Du grüßt mich jeden Morgen, Sehe ich dich, Freue ich mich, Und vergess' meine Sorgen. Schmücke das Heimatland, Schön und weiß, Blühest wie die Sterne. Edelweiß, Edelweiß, Ach, ich hab dich so gerne.</p>		
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I Have Lines On Channels 2 & 7

Do you remember the days back in the 1980s and early 90s when cable television was (and some of us still think) having issues and it seemed that every time you turned around, there would be some technical problem? Ok... at least one of my commenting readers does not. Attempts made to correct the scrambled channels and finally you had to call the cable guy who seemed to take forever to arrive. This is a running gag in the deliriously ingenious comedy from the decade of excess aptly entitled *Delirious*.

The late great John Candy stars as Jack Gable, writer on a popular soap opera full of the stock characters, outrageous situations, big hair, shoulder pads, frequent plot twists, aaaaaand serious OVERACTING that frequent the suds. Everything I love to howl at while having the rare occasion to catch a glimpse of during a dull weekday afternoon is there. Through a fateful highway accident, Jack is transported into the world of the soap opera. At first, it is a nightmare until he discovers that he can control the action by simply creating scenes on his typewriter (yes, a few people still used them in 1991). So... he writes himself into the role of the adventurous, handsome (?), rogue Jack Gates.

As I said, stock characters from every soap opera imaginable are present. We have Carter Hedison, the rich industrial head of the central household (played by Raymond Burr). His bitchy daughter, Rachel (played by Dynasty's Emma Samms). Plus the two sons vying for their father's attention: the outcast with a patch and the terminally ill simpleton. On a side note, the outdoor facade of the Hedison mansion bears a striking similarity to Stately Wayne Manor (60s Batman series).

Also along for the ride are the hapless physician who is the fiancée of Rachel and the goody-two-shoes heroine, Janet (played by Mariel Hemingway). Twists and turns abound and some characters are not who or what they appear to be. One of my favorite bits is the old "Hungarian Rhapsody Number 2 in C-Sharp Minor" by Franz Liszt gag. Not familiar with the classical piece? Think Daffy and Donald and their piano duo from *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*?

I believe a similar movie from the time, [Soapdish](#), got more press but if you love to laugh at the ridiculous nature of everyday sudsers, check out *Delirious*.

Interesting... I lost a post...

I'm not exactly sure what I did, I don't remember deleting a post, but one I spent a bit of time on is gone. This will hold a place until I find the missing text. Maybe tomorrow.

Original Post Title.

The Last 50 Years.

Interesting show..

A show on PBS right now (started 10:00pm Tuesday 10-Feb-2009) is about the translation of the early Christian bible to native tongues. The Catholic Church and many countries made it heresy to translate the bible into the vulgar, but people after reading various "heretical" translations started creating many vulgar translations.

While I knew a lot of the stories and history around this, it gave more of an insight to the lives and deaths of those men who translated the bible. This of course opened the way for people to have a bible at home and allow people to study religion on their own.

Of course not only did this lead to the protestant reformation, but also led to other more radical ideas. Not exactly what the original reformers had in mind, but it did happen.

For more information on the PBS show, see [here](#).

Again a very interesting show.

The Crabby Magician

Saturday was one of the funnest days I've had in a long time. I've been having *major* zoo-fever lately, and my husband knew this and renewed our Toledo Zoo membership online before I even woke up Saturday morning. When I finally arose, he said, how about going to the zoo today? So we packed up all the kids, and took advantage of the almost 50° weather and headed to the zoo. We first ate lunch at our new favorite eating establishment in the Toledo area; a place called Nick's Cafe on Reynolds Road in Maumee. They have excellent gyros and scrumptious Greek salads, just to name a couple of their delicious dishes... pretty much everything is made from scratch. Potatoes are sliced up for french fries right there in the kitchen, gyros are off the spit, the burger meat is hand-rolled... you get the idea. Awesome food and great service too. Highly recommended from this hard-to-please food critic!

On Saturday, everyone at Nick's was staring at us because of our ~~four~~ five adorable kids – we let our oldest invite her friend along who had slept over the night before. It made for a mini-van filled to capacity, but I'm so glad we invited her because she is a great kid, a big help (especially with our little ones because in her family, she is smack dab in the middle of 5 in birth order and knows how to help in cases of sibling rivalry!), and she had never been to a zoo before! If I had known that, we would have taken her sooner... **Every kid needs to get to a zoo!** This little girl is 9-years-old and for me, a highlight of my trip on Saturday was getting to witness her experience the zoo for the first time: the cuteness of a real-life cheetah, the immensity of a white rhinoceros, the

playfulness of the baby orangutans... I'm currently reading Jack Hanna's new book, *My Wild Life* right now and it details many of the trials and tribulations the Director Emeritus of the Columbus Zoo has gone through to get where he is today. In one chapter, he addresses his many critics (people who protest live animals being held captive in zoos, as well as protesting Jack's taking animals on television show appearance tours), and Jack says something in defense of these practices which I completely agree with: Captive animals are ambassadors of their cousins in the wild. We NEED to have zoos and reach out to the public with animal tv appearances; it's the only way to get people to care enough to help with conservation.

So anyway on Saturday, after lunch, we made our way to the zoo. When we first got in, we discovered there was going to be a magic show in the Museum of Science (one of those old Works Progress Administration buildings from the post-Great Depression era; I love their architecture!). We settled in with the kids looking forward to a fun show. My husband is into magic, and we staged a magic show for our local theater company a few years ago, so I know a little bit about how some tricks are performed – enough to know that this guy hired by the Toledo Zoo last Saturday was simply *awful*. First, he began the show with a crabby demeanor. He didn't have much charisma or charm; he wasn't very good with the kids, and his tricks *stank* – everything he performed could be bought in a magic store for under \$100 – for the whole lot! And during the show, he would literally sum up his tricks with one sentence – “and that's the magic coloring book.” Also, according to my husband, he continuously broke one of the cardinal rules of magic – telling his audience what to expect ahead of time. For example, he had a ball trick where he told the audience, “Wouldn't it be amazing if the red ball were no longer on the top?” And then *magically*, it wasn't... Amazing trick, maybe; amazing magician, I think not... On top of all that, he messed up some tricks (which happens, I guess... a little hard to forgive when it involves tricks this simple,

but...), and announced the fact that he did indeed mess them up! Oh well, this “magic” show was free with zoo admission. I was a little anxious after the first 7 or 8 minutes; wanting to make sure we had enough time to see actual animals, but the kids seemed to like the show, so we did not leave the magic show before its finale. I will mention that we literally broke into a run when the guy announced that he was doing a puppet show next... Our 4-year-old was asking to see it, but I cannot imagine what that guy (his name is [Chris Clark](#) and you can click on his name to visit his website if you’re interested in renting a magician entertainer popcorn machine) would do with puppets, so we told her we missed the puppet show... Besides, we were at the zoo to see animals, and we were running out of time! Here is a picture of the crabby magician (sorry Derek for the large pics – I don’t really have time to be trying to figure out how to change code):



But not a terrible experience, because look at the amazement

on the face of our 4-year-old when she witnessed the “magic”:



Luckily, we did get out of the magic show in time to see lots of animals at the zoo. The elephants were moved from their outdoor exhibit to indoors, and in the process, they crossed the path right in front of us zoo visitors:



Then, the silverback (dominating male and largest) gorilla was sitting right up against the glass of his exhibit, and at the Toledo Zoo, the visitors are allowed to get right up close and personal with the great apes. Unfortunately, I had run out of available space on my camera after taking so many pictures of the worst magician in the world – I was worried people wouldn't believe me about how awful he was, so I made sure to snap lots of pics! But anyway, the silverback gorilla was right there, and as we did with the chimp just minutes before, we held up everything we had in our arsenal (double-stroller) that we thought might interest him, but all to no avail. Maybe he likes shiny things, we thought, so we held up our car keys. Maybe he will recognize babies, we decided, so we held up our 7 month old son... and no reaction (held up the baby with caution since witnessing a gorilla CHARGE a little boy and pound the glass really hard in his exhibit in Omaha Nebraska years ago)... This gorilla stayed cool as a cucumber

and didn't react to any of it.

My one complaint about this zoo visit (besides the magic show!) is: where the heck is the octopus? He is usually one of our favorite animals to see at the zoo, and this time he was missing – something else was in his tank. That's disappointing, the octopus was always fascinating for our family and fun to watch. I hope nothing bad happened to him...

Dinner at Steak N Shake after the zoo was also a fun treat – yes, even Steak N Shake is a treat when you live in a rural utopia like we do since the closest decent sit-down chain restaurant is an hour away. A fun treat (had to be something casual after a big day with 5 kids who had had a sleepover the night before), and Disney, our 2-year-old, went poopie on the potty for the first time EVER at Steak N Shake! That reminds me, we used to live in the same town – Normal, IL (which is actually anything but normal) as the very first Steak N Shake restaurant – it is (or at least was 10 years ago when we lived there) still in its original building – too bad I wasn't into history as much then as I am now... Oh well, anyway, extremely fun time at the zoo. And as I always ask the kids, what was your favorite animal that you saw today? Mine was the silverback gorilla. He was magnificent. For awhile, the gorillas were my favorite animal to see at the zoo. Then we visited frequently last summer and got to know the family of orangutans, especially dad Boomer (an extraordinary orang because he actually plays with and helps care for his offspring – orangs in the wild and even in captivity are very easily annoyed with youngsters). Boomer and the fam are doing great and only fell short of being my favorite animal at the zoo this weekend because of the close proximity of the humongous silverback gorilla... Maybe my preferences will reverse next spring when I visit and the orangs are back outside and pushing their button which sprays water upon unsuspecting zoo guests... Looking forward to that!

Practice, practice, practice

I've often been told practice makes perfect. I've also been told that nobody is perfect. Does that mean nobody practices enough?

Well for one 14 year old young man, I guess he practiced enough. A new [world record on Guitar Hero](#). I'm not much of a video game player, (not since Centipede and Q-Bert left the arcades) so I never had a world record. I did have a record for a time on the arcade games. It was a thrill to see your initials whenever you visited the arcade. I wonder how it feels to be all over the news. Must really be a thrill. It was good to see on the local news that he actually plays a few real instruments, but they didn't say anything about his grades.

Very Dangerous Cake

Ok, I've known of this cake recipe for a few months, but I never tried making it until tonight. The reason I say it is dangerous is that you can have a decent hot chocolate desert in under five minutes. Any time of the day, your diet can be blown out of the water. So for sharing the guilt. ☐ Don't skip the chocolate chips...

MINUTE CHOCOLATE MUG CAKE

4 tablespoons cake flour(that's plain flour, not self-rising)
4 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons baking cocoa
1 egg
3 tablespoons milk
3 tablespoons oil
3 tablespoons chocolate chips(optional)
a small splash of vanilla essence
1 coffee mug

Add dry ingredients to mug, and mix well

Add the egg and mix thoroughly.

Pour in the milk and oil and mix well.

Add the chocolate chips (if using) and vanilla essence, and mix again.

Put your mug in the microwave and cook for 3 minutes at 1000 watts. The cake will rise over the top of the mug, but don't be alarmed!

Allow to cool a little, and tip out onto a plate if desired.
EAT! (this can serve 2 if you want to feel slightly more virtuous).

Good Movie, Bad Title

I stopped my blog posting of reviews for every movie I've been watching – you'll know why when you read a post I'm writing for next week called Farm Frenzy. But I saw a movie last night that is totally worth mentioning – “The Uninvited”.

The movie has a really bad title, I'll admit that. But what a good suspense thriller it turned out to be! The best one I've seen in a long time; maybe one of the best thrillers I've ever seen! The movie is scary at times, creepy at others, and constantly fast-paced and riveting. The movie was not at all

what I expected when I came in, and I left the theater very pleasantly surprised. The plot centers around a teenager named Anna who is just getting out of the psych ward after a 10 month stint as a result of a suicide attempt. 10 months earlier, her mother was terminally ill and bedridden, her father was having an affair with her nurse, and there was a terrible fire that took the life of her mother. When Anna gets out of the hospital, her father's girlfriend (her mother's nurse) has moved into her house, and it doesn't take long for Anna to begin to suspect the new woman in her family's life is up to no good.

I can't begin to explain the mind-bending plot – there's much more to it than I've explained, but I really don't want to go into too much detail. The point is, I highly recommend this movie. Especially if you like suspense thriller movies, this one is a must-see. Seriously, with respect to its genre, it's a near-perfect movie. My only problem with it is its weak and undescriptive title – good movie, bad title, but a must-see, nonetheless!