

Changing the past/future

Yes, I'm watching the [Back to the Future](#) trilogy. Fun little group of movies. But what I want to talk about is time travel and the little word 'if'.

If you could go back and change something, would you? These thoughts have been in and out of my mind for the past 5 or so years. There are times when I would want to go back and try to change things. But I've always had the feeling that things would change for the worse. Kind of like the [Back to the Future II](#). Change one thing and oops there goes everything else. Would it work like that. Most likely.

So knowing I couldn't change anything that would make any changes. What about little things? Sure wish I could at times. Little things like being a better husband, a better son, a better father. What would it take, and what would that change?

Things going through my mind at this time. Changes to make or be made. I guess that is really the question. Every time I think about changing the past, I start thinking about changing the future. things I can change to be better than I was in the past. Worth while investment in time that. Instead of wondering about the what ifs, maybe I should wonder about the what wills. What will I do tomorrow, next week?

Food for thought.

Walking in a Winter

Wonderland

I have been hoping and wishing for snow ever since it has gotten cold, but each and every time it has snowed, it has always melted shortly after it stopped snowing. Or, it fell but never stuck to the ground to begin with! I was working today and it was snowing, and it was beautiful! I was so happy, but refused to let the hope that wanted to bubble up and fill me, since it didn't seem to be sticking. As I was walking home from work, I noticed that the snow was sticking and I might be able to start to hope that it will stay around for awhile. I would love snow for my birthday and of course, Christmas. But I also don't want to hope to find it gone tomorrow morning! I just want snow so badly, but every time I feel like we will have snow, it never stays. So, hopefully it will be with us for awhile this time!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

My Thanksgiving Curse :)

I think I was somehow cursed last Thanksgiving. I fell ill the day after Thanksgiving, and just as I was starting to feel better a few days later, I felt another virus coming on. This cycle continued until just before Christmas, and because I was pregnant and exhausted, I tried to rest a lot and get well during that time, but it was stressful because I had a 1½-year-old to chase after. And while I was sick, I was unable to eat any Thanksgiving leftovers. So then all during the year, foods like turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and even creamed onions (which I used to love) just haven't seemed very appealing to me. I think I subconsciously associate the Thanksgiving fare with being sick, but I thought I'd be over it by now – wrong. Thanksgiving dinner was great and

everything, but I'm just not as enthused about those leftovers as I want to be. On Thanksgiving day, the turkey was delicious. That leftover sandwich I had on Friday was pretty good. The cold turkey snack on Friday night was ok. I didn't finish the turkey snack on Saturday night, and today for dinner, I will have *anything* but turkey or Thanksgiving leftovers. And I am blue in the face from reassuring my husband that it was ***absolutely nothing*** he did wrong with the cooking or the fault of any of the guests who brought delicious side dishes. It's just my Thanksgiving curse, and I hope it's gone by next year. But even if it's not, no biggie because my Thanksgiving will be made more special than food by the wonderful people in my life. Maybe I should "train" my body to accept the Thanksgiving food by making turkey and creamed onions more often...

At any rate, the helpers in the kitchen on Thanksgiving day were adorable – check them out:



And below are my two oldest daughters waving to Santa at the Welcome Santa Parade from the day after Thanksgiving:



And if their names were numbers that ordered them by birth, below is a cute picture of #2 and #4:



How You Can Accuse Him Is A Mystery

Last night, I spent a few hours at one of my favorite places to play some games. I must say that [The Office](#) DVD Trivia Challenge is a BLAST. I may have come in a distant third with 5 Schrute Bucks, but it was fun nonetheless. I will have to start rewatching episodes Tuesday nights on TBS to hone my knowledge of Michael Scott and associates. However, I will not bother to say who won the rest of the games.

We also discussed the choice for the upcoming summer musical production. C asked me if I was going to audition. I immediately answered "No." Honestly, I cannot believe it came out as deadpanned serious as it did because the reaction I got was... "YOU JERK." I broke out in laughter. Of course I am going to audition but he better be, too. To which taylhis responded about his low self-esteem and the fact that he will complain that his audition was terrible. On this note, I must agree.

My friend, you have inspired me soooooo much in the past few years... I'm not sure I have mentioned all the ways and I will not elaborate here. I just do not understand how one that has inspired not only myself, but I am sure other members of this blog site can be so goofy. I have seen first hand this TOTALLY UNFOUNDED quality in you more than once and it drives me CRAAAAAAAAAZZZZZZYY!!!!!! Man, you are so unbelievably talented and 'I know nothing any of us can say will change your mentality. However, I do expect you to be right along with me in May when we BOTH go to audition. Amen.

Sleep With The Angels

The title of this blog post is based on a book called *To Sleep With the Angels*, which details the horrible tragedy of the Our Lady of Angels school fire in Chicago, Illinois. Ninety-two children and three nuns perished on December 1, 1958 – 50 years ago tomorrow. The incident became the precedent and the inspiration for sweeping changes in laws and regulations regarding fire safety; such as the installment of sprinkler systems in public buildings, automatic fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire drills, and the end of grandfather clauses which eliminated older buildings from having to comply to fire

regulations. Our Lady of the Angels had undergone a fire inspection just a few weeks before the fire, but because it was an older building, it did not have to comply to all the fire codes because of grandfather clauses. I came across [this website](#) about the tragedy, and it's full of fascinating info related to the inferno – photos, news articles, maps, models, survivor lists and stories, and more. Here is a little excerpt from the website olafire.com about the cause of the fire:

Was It Arson?

Although the cause has never been *officially* determined, all indications point to arson. A boy (age 10 at the time, and a fifth grader in room 206) later confessed to setting the blaze, but subsequently recanted his confession. He was more afraid of confessing to his mother and step-father than to the police. The boy confessed to setting numerous other fires in the neighborhood, mostly in apartment buildings. In his confession, he related details of the fire's origin that had not been made public and that he should therefore not have known. While there was strong evidence that he was indeed the culprit, neither he nor anyone else was ever prosecuted, at least in part because the catholic judge in the case felt he should protect the Church. Officially, the cause of the fire remains unknown.

I'm curious if the boy who confessed is listed in the survivor lists. Somewhere else I read that another reason the judge didn't convict the boy is because it would have meant a sure death sentence for him. One thing remains true – this was a tragedy of great proportion, and the damage is still being felt by those who witnessed the atrocity and those who survived and their families. This is evident when you read some of the survivors' stories on the website listed above. Many of them have not spoken much about that day, and it seems that almost all of them remember it like it was yesterday. My husband and I both grew up in the Chicago area, and we agree that most people we knew were associated with the tragedy in one way or another – whether they witnessed it, survived it, or watched it unfold on television. It's been 50 long years, and there are still raw wounds. It was agreed upon by all those that knew Michele McBride, a survivor of the Our Lady of Angels fire, that she died of her wounds sustained in the fire, and that was as recent as 2001. From

olafire.com:

Michele was burned over 60% of her body and hospitalized for four and a half months. She underwent numerous operations which continued for years afterwards. The fire that ravaged her body left her in continuous, lifelong pain. Her pain finally ended in July 2001 when she died of multiple organ failure, no doubt a result of damage inflicted by fire so many years before. In 1979 Michele wrote a book ("The Fire That Will Not Die") about her experience the day of the fire, and her life thereafter. Michele's sister, Dae Hanna: "Michele died on July 4th 2001, from long term physical problems suffered from the fire many years ago. May she rest in peace. She never had a day without pain in her legs and joints. May she rest in peace. She disagreed vehemently with many of the theories in the 'To sleep with the angels book'. Her book THE FIRE THAT WILL NOT DIE was certainly well titled, and the only first hand account of that day. May she rest in peace."

I was reminded of the 50th anniversary of the Our Lady of Angels school fire by an article in the dailyherald.com, prompting me to do some research into the tragedy and to share with others the olafire.com website which contains so much helpful information. My thoughts and prayers are with all of the families involved in this horrible chapter of Chicago's history.



Walmart Saves The Day

What?!? Believe it or not, the title of my post does not have the slightest hint of sarcasm! Walmart really DID save the day for us yesterday! It almost makes me sorry for my many rants against Walmart and their shady practices designed to put small companies out of business... almost sorry, but not quite there.

It all started when we decided to take the kids over to Fort Wayne, Indiana, which is about an hour away. We pulled into a stall at the Sonic drive-thru for a light lunch and some slushies (Sonic has awesome slushies and drinks), when we realized we had forgotten my husband's wallet, which left us

without money or credit cards. Luckily, we had picked up the mail before we left the house and brought it in the car with us. And luckily², we had gotten a commission check in the mail. So we braved the 'big city' Walmart customer service line on the Saturday after Thanksgiving to see if they would take pity on us and cash the check even without my husband's ID. We were gifted with even more luck when they accepted my driver's license to cash my husband's check, and we were able to eat lunch. Except now it had gotten really late and we were all really hungry, so we decided to skip Sonic and go to the Golden Corral that was in the Walmart outlot instead. If you braved my posts about our vacation diary, then you know how much we like Golden Corral. And I'd say that the one in Fort Wayne is of the best quality out of any of the others we've been to. After lunch, we took the kids to a McDonald's Playland, but it had only one little tunnel and one small slide; prompting our 4-year-old to proclaim, "Dad, this is *boring!*" But our 2-year-old loved it, and soon there were more kids to play with and everybody had lots of fun – including mom and dad since there was also a foosball table. When we left the McDonald's, we noticed there was a Burger King across the street (when isn't there?), and that Burger King had a 3-story play area! Oh, well, we had fun where we went and we can remember the BK for next time. We quenched our thirst with drinks from Sonic, and there was a cool looking car wash next door, so we treated the kids to a car wash also -they love watching the soap, brushes, and water cascading off the car. The second we pulled out of the wash –*ding ding* – our low fuel bell rang – uhoh. My husband and I just looked at each other because it wasn't like we had unlimited money with us. In fact, we had spent the last of the check money at the car wash. Thank goodness gas prices are decent these days because with the change we were able to scrape together from my wallet and the car, we had enough to get us gas to get home... whew! Perhaps it can even be considered a blessing in disguise. When you compare the variety of shopping Fort Wayne offers to our hometown choice

of Super Walmart and... well, just the Super Walmart, unleashing us in a larger city with all those shopping varieties could have been disastrous to our bank account!

And by the way, the Walmart customer service line wasn't too bad, all things considered. Most of the line consisted of a family who had 6 kids and one on the way -wow. And I thought I had a lot of kids!

A parade

I'm not really big on winter parades unless I'm parked in front of a TV with a mug of something warm. I imagine going somewhere warm to see them would be OK too. Today I did get to see my hometown's holiday parade of lights. Wagons, tractors, sleighs, horses, mules, donkeys, ponies, miniature horses (which are different from ponies – so I've been told) and reindeer. And lights, every thing being pulled and in some cases the things doing the pulling had lights.

Armed with a large Mocha, with extra Espresso, I braved the cool evening to watch for my youngest. She was on one of the wagons with most of her show choir. They sang Christmas carols for the parade. Unfortunately, they didn't stop long enough for a complete song. That was disappointing, but somewhat expected.

After the parade, I did get to go and see the reindeer. Wonderful creatures, reindeer. Their wide hoofs and thick fur make them ideally suited for harsh winter weather. Interesting thing about reindeer, the females also have antlers. The two reindeer in the parade were females, as the males tend to be more aggressive. Not good when small children want to pet

them. Very soft fur, and extremely nice animals. Except of wanting to move their heads to all sides (to see who was around them) they made no moves to hurt anyone. Getting whapped by their antlers could be painful, but they seemed to try to avoid that. The handlers made sure to keep a decent grip on the heads too. I really like these beasties.

Who Wants To Open The Door On Black Friday?

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (CNNMoney.com) – Wal-Mart – expected to benefit this holiday season from its deep discounting in a tough economy – had its Black Friday marred when an employee was trampled to death as thousands of people rushed through the doors at the opening of the store in Valley Stream, N.Y.

Police said the man, identified as 34-year-old Jdimytai Damour, was a temporary employee who lived in New York City's borough of Queens.

In addition, police officials said a pregnant woman was taken to a local hospital, but was expected to be released Friday.

Video footage showed as many as a dozen people knocked to the floor in the stampede of people trying to get into the Wal-Mart store, according to Nassau County Police detective Lt. Michael Fleming. The employee was “stepped on by hundreds of people” as other workers attempted to fight their way through the crowd, Fleming said.

“We expected a large crowd this morning and added additional internal security, additional third party security, additional store associates and we worked closely with the Nassau County

Police," said Hank Mullany, Wal-Mart's vice president for the Northeast, in a statement. "Despite all of our precautions, this unfortunate event occurred."

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those impacted," he added, saying the company is cooperating with authorities in their investigation. ([Full story](#))

Around the nation, shoppers descended upon Wal-Mart ([WMT](#), [Fortune 500](#)) en masse in hopes of scoring Black Friday discounts. From New Jersey to Dallas, there were reports of hundreds of shoppers lining up before stores opened, looking for \$2 DVDs and flat-panel TVs priced just under \$400.

At the Fairfax, Va., location, the scene was social. Hundreds queued up before doors opened at 5 a.m., with some having arrived the night before in order to be among the first to shop.

"We skipped Thanksgiving dinner," said 30-year-old Arash Habiezhadeh.

Wal-Mart, which operates more than 4,100 U.S. stores and 3,100 international locations, is expected to be a big winner this holiday season as its discounts resonate with budget-conscious shoppers. The company has been aggressively courting customers by lowering its prices and introducing holiday-gift sections in stores.

"Even with the economy, you've got to go with the deals," said Robert Balboni of Centreville, Va., while loading his shopping cart with a 42-inch flat panel TV, a portable DVD player and a Philips 2GB MP3 player.

Wal-Mart has already shown signs of benefiting from the economic slowdown. Same-store sales, or sales at retail stores open at least a year, gained 2.4% in October, beating the company's own forecast.

Overall, the U.S. retail sector is expected to endure one of its worst holiday seasons in years. Sales are projected to climb just 2.2%, according to the National Retail Federation, making it the weakest sales gain in six years.

Unfortunately, the holiday temp working at a Wal-Mart store near New York City drew the short straw and found out first hand what a stampede feels like. He obviously stood in the wrong place as the thousands of shoppers stormed the store at 5AM on Friday morning. I worked at a Wal-Mart store for 6 years and only once had the pleasure of witnessing the mad rush enter the store in search of items at ridiculously low prices. What got me was the fact that once the employee was down, the herd did not stop but kept on going. When the store decided to shut down for rest of the day to investigate, shoppers were indifferent. Some had been standing in line since Thursday morning. All this for a \$9.00 Incredible Hulk DVD?

While I worked at a Wal-Mart, I had a very good friend who actually volunteered to unlock the door to release the hounds. Most brave on her part. Now, the last I knew, she is the Manager of the Automotive Department.

I learned of the tragedy on Friday when I ran into another person whom I worked with. She had just heard it on the news. There was also a pregnant woman who was knocked down and taken to be examined; however, she and the baby were uninjured. Perhaps [taylhis](#) was right in not venturing out into the battlefield?


Five Years ago Today (part 2 – The blur)

Those days between Thanksgiving and Christmas were a blur. Seemed like non-stop travel from home to hospital, or home to in-laws. When my wife was released and scheduled for cancer treatments, she had to stay within an hour of the Ann Arbor Hospital. Our house did not meet that restriction, so she stayed with her parents. So between work (we still weren't accepting the forgone conclusion), taking care of the girls we would drive to see her often. Ann Arbor is about 2 hours away, her parents 1 hour. That meant a lot of time in the car. Often in very poor weather. It became a blur. Very few days stick out in my mind. I remember the blur.

The stretch of 23 between Toledo and Ann Arbor has been in my nightmares. I saw that road too many times during that month. I've had dreams of car crashes, getting lost or stranded on that section of road. It was not a road I traveled often before that November/December, but it became one to avoid if at all possible. It brings up memories of the Blur.



Journey Beyond Your Imagination

This evening, I went with my family to watch the Santa parade here in town. One of the nieces was somehow scared to death of Santa until grandpa took her up. Then you could not get her away. While we waited for the free photos to develop we watched the junior high band play carols in the fire hall (my oldest niece is now in the **7th GRADE**).

Following the festivities, we went back to the house and learned that [The Polar Express](#) was playing on network television. Once again, if you want to watch a good movie watch it on video with out the butchering and commercials. The movie is fast becoming a holiday classic and a tradition as has the book by [Chris Van Allsburg](#). It tells the story of a doubting boy who boards a magical train on Christmas Eve and travels to the North Pole and Santa's home. On the train, the boy meets a trio of other children each of whom have a specific reason for being on the journey. On the trip, the quartet have a series of adventures inside, outside, and on top of the train. I loved the idea behind the personalized tickets... each passenger is given a ticket which eventually reveals something meaningful.

My favorite character is the lonely young boy who in his own words claims that "Christmas just doesn't work out for me." The hero boy, hero girl, and lonely boy sing a beautiful number entitled "When Christmas Comes to Town."

Plus, the coolest actor ever has at least 5 roles in the movie. When you watch it, pay close attention and see how many roles you can hear Tom Hanks give voice to. It is just a beautiful film to watch every year while you prepare to celebrate the most joyous time of the year and believe in what can and, more importantly, what you can't see... that which is in your heart. After all... The thing about trains... It doesn't matter where they're going. What matters is deciding to get on.

 	<p>The Polar Express (Selections from the Motion Picture) Music by Alan Silvestri, Glen Ballard. Songbook for voice, piano and guitar (chords only). 72 pages. Published by Alfred Publishing. (AP.PFM0428)</p> <p>See more info...</p>
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