

No Mr. Bond, I Expect You To DIIIIIIIE!!!

Tonight saw the return of our semi-regular game night. I will not comment on the night itself but on one of the challenges I was asked to perform outside of the games. Somehow, we got off on the tangent of James Bond. I was asked to list all of the villains in the 21 (now 22) OFFICIAL films. In order to set the challenger's mind at ease (or else to illustrate my Bond geekiness) i will attempt to do just that and throw in a few henchmen where I can.

1. Dr. No (the title character... no real henchman, unless you include Professor Dent)
2. From Russia With Love (Kronstein (sp?), Rosa Klebb and her boot, and "Red" Grant with his evil watch, plus the first appearance of Ernst Stavro Blofeld... some of him... and his white pussy... cat)
3. Goldfinger (Auric Goldfinger and his industrial laser beam "that emits a light not to be found in nature" that nearly dessicates 007s manhood and his man servant, Oddjob with his bowler)
4. Thunderball (Emilio Largo... and again some of SPECTRE Number 1, Blofeld)
5. You Only Live Twice (Blofeld's first full on screen role along with the beautiful but deadly Helga Brandt)
6. On Her Majesty's Secret Service (Blofeld back for more along with the evil Irma Bunt... NOT SO LOVELY)
7. Diamonds Are Forever (Blofeld yet again along with the strange duo of Mr. Wynt and Mr. Kidd)
8. Live and Let Die (Dr. Kananga/Mr. Big, along with his gang of voodoo worshiping henchmen and woman)
9. The Man with the Golden Gun (Francisco Scaramanga aka... the title character with henchman Knick Knack (who you may remember as the little guy who played Tattoo on

Fantasy Island)

10. The Spy Who Loved Me (Karl Stromberg and the first appearance of steel-toothed giant Jaws)
11. Moonraker (Hugo Drax plus Jaws gets a Dolly)
12. For Your Eyes Only (Aristotle Kristatos)
13. Octopussy (Kamal Khan played by Louis Jordan since someone asked... plus Mad General Orloff... I don't consider Octopussy and her bevy of beauties to be true villains)
14. A View to a Kill (Max Zorin and May Day... deplorable)
15. The Living Daylights (General Koskov and Brad Whitaker (played by Joe Don Baker who would return in later films as a CIA agent)
16. License to Kill (Franz Sanchez and Milton Krest... plus an appearance by Wayne "Figgy" Newton)
17. GoldenEye (Alec Trevelyan and Xenia Onatopp who likes it onatopp... literally)
18. Tomorrow Never Dies (Elliot Carver and Mr. Stamper)
19. The World is Not Enough (Elektra King and Renard)
20. Die Another Day (Gustav Graves, Zao, and the most iconic name of any henchman, Mr. Kill)
21. Casino Royale (Le Chiffre... who once again nearly brings Bond's manhood to an end)
22. Quantum of Solace (have yet to see)

Ok... ok... say what you will I can handle the jabs. And, no I do not sit around and watch a Bond movie every night although most of them (with maybe 5 exceptions) are better than anything on television with the exception of Thursday nights and Saturday and Sunday afternoons). Now... how many did I cheat on? Honestly, Two. Maybe next time I should go through the names of the Bond babes. My favorite villain: I really enjoy Goldfinger's over the top character and evil scheme. Thank you Mom and Dad for introducing me years ago when I used sneak down and ended up sitting at the top of the stairs and listening when they would play on regular tv (edited for broadcast and all) past my bedtime.

Gas Prices

Unlike previous posts of mine, this one is being written to compliment the status of gas prices these days. Here in NW Ohio, we 're paying \$1.99 for gas – it was actually weird looking to see a 1 up there on the price board at the gas station.

But I'm really happy about it, of course, seeing how gas prices have been cut in half from only a short time ago. All of a sudden, it's taking me twice as long to pump gas – but I am NOT complaining! Also, it's now feasible to round up to the next dollar amount when topping off your car's gas tank. Did you notice that when gas prices were so high, one squeeze of the gas pump cost, like 6 or 7 cents? If I wanted \$15 worth of gas and I stopped the pump at \$14.96 or above, there was no way to get it so I'd be paying the \$15. One squeeze of the pump and my total was now \$15.03 or above all of a sudden! So now, even though it takes me twice as long to pump gas, I appreciate being able to choose a dollar amount to spend and be able to stick to it. And when I was in Illinois last weekend, I asked my grandpa what he remembers the gas prices being when he owned his gas station way back when. I don't know what year he was talking about, but he said he remembers gas being 19¢ per gallon!

What was the reason for the sky-rocketing gas prices, and how did the problem seemingly fix itself? Something to do with politics, I'm sure, but I don't really care as long as they keep getting lower. Since I spent so many posts complaining about the gas prices when they were horrible, I thought I'd try to send out a little bit of good karma by noticing and sharing my appreciation for the low gas prices we have now – cross your fingers that they'll stay!

pass this way

Life is a journey, be it driving down the highway, or sailing the seas. Not always a smooth journey, or the most pleasant, but it is the the path we must take.

For me the journey is made easier by those who share my path. Our paths converge and diverge with others all through our lives. We call these people family, friends, coworkers, associates, enemies. Do the paths just cross, or do they stay together for a long time.

Pass my way, or I can go yours. We can laugh. We can cry. Most of all we can share.

Life is a journey, make the most of it, for we can't ever go back to the beginning.

Look back to see who you are, look forward to see who you will become. Life is a journey, pass this way with me.

More Of The Best

My dad got home from the hosptial this afternoon (HOORAY!!). I think Mom was getting annoyed driving the 45 minutes to see him sleep and mumble through the day. Yesterday, the doctor was concerned that Dad's blood pressure was erratic (at times high at others low). Mom asked the doctor when he might be coming home and he just looked at her as if to say... "You must be joking." So today, after her shortened day in the beauty shop, she set out again. Apparently, Dad was better, blood

pressure stabilized, everything good. Being a good boy for a change. Terrible patient. When I got home from work, it was as if he hadn't just gotten out of the hospital. He was walking around, bending over, picking things up off the floor. I asked Mom if he should be doing this. The only restriction he has is on driving. I will not be surprised to see him go across the street tomorrow to do his school crossing guard duty. The town was SUPPOSED to get someone to do it for him the last 4 days, but I was informed that some of the time no one was there... How nice. It's like I'm sure the whole town knows what is going on with him (the town is not that big) plus Mom called yesterday to tell them that he would not be doing it today. Oh, well... at least he is home and things will get back to normal... whatever that is. BTW... thank you all for the warm wishes and support. Knowing that all my loyal friends and readers are thinking of us sure helps a lot... you are all "The Best."

That's ten laps for you- go!



Wednesday was one of those special days. That is, subbing for a gym teacher. But first, let me talk about the days before this one. Monday, I took a full day job at one of the furthest schools from me. It was a bit of a mixed bag as well as a slight disappointment. I knew this was an 8th grade teacher so I was prepared for that. What I wasn't prepared for was the fact that this was a half-day job that was mistakenly entered in as a full day, so I ended up only working half the day. Actually only a couple of hours. This allowed me time to seek a half-day elsewhere, but I didn't find one. I did find a half day for Tuesday and took it knowing that a job would be hard

to find that day since most school districts had off for Veteran's Day, but not for Monday afternoon. The mixed bag for this day was the teacher taught both math and science. When he came back, he taught social studies. Jack of all trades here, like an elementary teacher? ☐

So next day I didn't set my alarm as my half-day was in the afternoon. Just after six, r-i-n-g! Job assignment opened up for the morning. Cool. 8) So after quickly eating breakfast and getting ready since I had to be there in an hour, I filled in for the special-ed reading teacher at a junior high. Unlike my two periods yesterday, I had to work four periods. Breaking even I suppose. These were actually two block classes so it didn't seem like four periods anyway. Then I was off to my afternoon assignment. Arriving there forty minutes early (it was almost down the street with a start time an hour after my end time at the other school), I sat in the lounge and had an early lunch. This assignment was pretty much like my assignment last week for two days. I met with a couple of groups of kids in the teacher's mini-room, typical of some special ed pullout teachers, and went to help in another room later on. Well, I tried anyway- it wound up being another pullout. The last students of the day didn't need me, so I had an extra break at the end. ☐

Back to Wednesday. The gym teacher was still there when I arrived, so he explained what he wanted me to do with the kids. They started off with laps around the gym then moved into kickball. I had 5th grade at the start, and they of course knew what they were doing. The second class had a lot of home runs because the teacher set the bar for home runs pretty low. At least for the older kids. I'm sure with the younger ones the zone is fine, but with so many 5th graders kicking home runs it really needed to be set higher. This reminds me of playing kickball outdoors when the weather is nice. It is really different. No walls, no ceiling, no automatic home runs, no ground rule doubles when the ball hits

the basketball backboard... Anyway, back to the present. The second half of the morning was Kindergarten. After they did their five laps, we practiced basic motor skills like hopping, skipping, galloping, etc before going into kickball. From 5th to 5- quite a difference. Now I had to teach them kickball, but they can only take in so much at once. The real teacher will have to reteach them I'm sure, adding rules I didn't cover. There were a few who had played before, but to most it was a new thing. The afternoon was quite different. There is a student teacher in this class who was out observing another student teacher in action at another school in the morning. In the afternoon, they swapped positions and came to this school. Kickball struck out and the new home run was dodgeball. Bad baseball analogy aside, it wasn't regular dodgeball, but a variation with two medics on scooters (those square things on four wheels sat on by gym students across the nation, not a Razor if you're wondering) who can tag their teammates who are out to get them back in. Additionally there are pins set up at the back of either side that can be knocked over. If all of them get knocked over, the other team wins. During the afternoon I of course took a back seat in all of this, but when the student teacher inserted himself into the game, I just had to join the other team. ☐ Too bad I am terrible at most sports, dodgeball included, but it was a blast anyway. I'll have to join in more in the games on the weekends at church.

Today was 7th and 8th grade LA/Lit. More on that tomorrow though since I will be doing the same thing.

Windy City White House

“Windy City White House” is more of a reference to our visit to the Windy City rather than a blog post about the recent election – it’s over and done with, and although I won’t talk much about the outcome, I am happy to not have to hear about it on the news anymore. While in Illinois, my mother-in-law kept talking about what huge news it is that Obama was elected and how his pick for Chief-of-Staff, Rahm Emanuel is a fellow Chicagoan – making it a ‘Windy City White House’.

But back to our family – it’s my blog, after all. We scheduled an early Christmas with our family in Illinois this past weekend (the early Christmas theme is something that seems popular with tangents.org bloggers), and overall, it was great. There are a few reasons we decided to do things this way – 1) We’re sick of the hustle and bustle of opening our presents from Santa and then rushing off to Illinois on Christmas Day – add to that having the flu during this trip twice and UGH. Best to travel *before* flu season. 2) My daughter was off school Friday for parent/teacher conferences 3) We wanted to beat the rush and other travelers. Overall, it was a really great decision, although the trip was last minute, and so we did forget a few of the presents which we’ll now have to send. We left Ohio on Friday morning and after a bit of traffic-sitting (of course), we got to my grandparents house about 40 minutes past schedule. But no matter, they’re fully aware of the traffic problems plaguing their area. We were treated to a delicious lunch of my grandma’s sloppy joes (love ’em), and the girls got to open presents. My grandpa gets tired really quickly, and so we didn’t stay too long there, and then it was on to our hotel. My husband uses hotwire.com and got us a suite at the Sheraton for \$49 – a nice price for the area. When we pulled up to our hotel, we were pleased to see it was the same hotel where we spent our wedding night – that was a nice surprise. My mom and my

sister brought her two boys over for some swimming, and we all had a blast even though their indoor pool was chilly. Luckily, I had thought to turn up our room's thermostat so when we got back to the room we didn't freeze, although it was quite crowded trying to get 10 hungry people changed out of bathing suits and trying to order pizza at the same time. It was a suite, but it was probably the smallest suite I have ever seen, and we had 6 little kids and 4 adults in there. My mother and sister wisely decided that they couldn't wait for the time it would take to get pizza, and they got something to eat on the way home. That was a good idea because my mom had to get up early the next day and didn't want to be out too late. They know their area well enough to realize that pizza delivery on a Friday night would take over an hour – and they were right. My poor kids were starving and I had to raid my diaper bag. I found a little bag of oyster crackers and two small bags of peanuts, so I divied everything up 3 ways (Survivor-style) and it quieted them a little until the pizza came. Overall, the kids were kind of spastic all day, especially my oldest for some reason... My husband blames the tension of the Chicagoland area, but then again, he hates it as much as I do. We love seeing family, just wish we could visit them somewhere else!

Saturday morning we were up bright and early to meet my mother-in-law for breakfast at Uptown Cafe in Arlington Heights – the place has the best eggs benedict in the nation. And I know this because way back when, before we had all these kids, my husband and I used to travel constantly, and one of the things we would look for was good hollandaise sauce. We never found any that came close to Uptown Cafe's. And the owners remember us – we used to go there a lot when we lived in the area; I was pregnant with my first daughter. They are surprised every time they see us because we usually have a new baby or two. After breakfast, we went back to my mother-in-law's house, and I felt badly for dropping in on my husband's sister and her family without any notice. This is one of the

details that was overlooked in the last minute planning. But it was ok; I didn't have my gifts for their 3 kids, so I'll have to send them. But our kids had lots of fun playing together, and it's important to me that my kids know their extended family, especially since a lot of hatchets have been buried over the years on this side of the family.

Next, it was time to see our good friend, the author of the sublife blog on tangents.org. It was great to see him, especially on his own turf, but he's right in his blog – there really wasn't much time for chatting. The kids wouldn't have allowed us to just sit and talk peacefully, and we wanted to take them somewhere fun, so we went to an overflowing Chuck E. Cheese. After waiting in line to park, I realized that I hadn't seen our camera since I took a picture of the kids on the luggage rack at the hotel that morning. Sound familiar? Yes, I have terrible luck with digital cameras. And worse, this one was not mine – I had borrowed it from Jamiahsh for the trip, so I was sick about losing it. Luckily for me, it turned up when we got home though – YAY! I was especially upset because I knew that I had put it in my diaper bag – I really thought someone had taken it. Pessimistic of me, you'd think, except that we did have our tokens stolen from our table at Chuck E. Cheese with my husband less than 5 feet away. Takes all kinds to steal game tokens from little kids, doesn't it... at least they didn't also steal my digital camera. We got lunch at a Vienna Beef hot dog place in Arlington Heights called Jimmy's – highly recommended you get real Chicago-style beef sandwiches and 'dogs if you're in the area – YUM!

The ride home was uneventful – the kids slept most of the way, thank goodness. We did manage to stop and get me my crave case of White Castles, and so our car reeked of steamed onions – thank goodness we weren't pulled over or we may have gotten a ticket for disturbing the peace. Maybe I wouldn't have stopped if I'd known what White Castles would do to a 2-year-

old's diaper. I tried to deliver some to my friend Carol who graciously pet sits for us, but for some reason, she neglected to pick them up. My husband says that not everyone likes White Castles. We picked up the slyders (as White Castles are known) in Dolton, Illinois; not the best area, but it just off the expressway so we made it unscathed. Ironically, something made me talk about Dolton just before the stop; I was telling my husband how it's gotten to be a really bad area and that I knew a family that had left there in the '80's because it was getting so bad, so imagine it now. Then we saw a sign that said "Dolton Bowl" right across the street from the White Castle, and we laughed at the irony. But overall, a nice trip, especially considering the area where we had to take it. One positive thing I will say about the area is that they have excellent food.

Three quarters of my kids on the luggage cart:



CMA Awards – LIVE Blogging!

Many of you have read a live blog before; ie people posting comments while an awards show is airing on tv. But have you ever read a live blog that is being composed within the vicinity of 4 crazy kids? The following represents my best

shot at attempting the previous description:

PRESHOW

7:30 pm – It's Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban on the red carpet. They're a cute coupl... wait a minute, they look weird together. Well, actually, just Nicole Kidman looks strange. Kinda like Janice from the Muppets meets the thin spaced-out version of Anna Nicole Smith. It's mean to be critical of people based on their appearances, but in this case, I suspect a nasty mistake in the plastic surgeon's office. Since she did it to herself (and spent thousand\$ to do so), no holds barred – I can joke all I want! And Nicole doesn't seem very comfortable with playing second fiddle (it's a country music awards show – appreciate the fiddle joke!) on the red carpet. I give this marriage 3 years, 4 tops.

7:35pm – Jack Ingram? Who IS that? If you read my previous blog post about the awards, then you know that I don't get to listen to that much radio lately, and I don't have the slightest idea who this is!

7:37 – Fans overwhelmingly choose Carrie Underwood to take Female Vocalist – both hubby and I agree. That reminds me, it will be a tight race in our household tonight – my husband and I only have 3 votes different from each other! And a reader / fellow blogger asked in a comment what the winner gets... we will have to choose our stakes before show time...

7:38 – So THAT'S the other half of Sugarland

7:38 – Julianne Hough from Dancing With The Stars? Didn't she just have her appendix out? She's hosting the pre-show with Craig Morgan? Isn't THIS the pre-show?

7:45 – Awww – Alan Jackson has a cute family. One of his 3 girls is off at college this year though. What is with male country superstars having 3 girls? Alan Jackson, Garth Brooks, Tim McGraw all have 3 daughters each, to name a few...

7:46 – Every time I see her, Reba looks younger. Glad to see she can afford a better plastic surgeon than Nicole Kidman. Reba better watch out though – any more nose jobs and she'll end up with a nose (or lack thereof) like Michael Jackson's.

7:53 – Charlie Daniels – that's my guess when Kid Rock (my new favorite artist – kidding) says he's going to have a very special guest guitarist.

7:56 – Taylor Swift is growing up... after the things I've read about her since her breakup with the Jonas Brother, she might make a creepy adult.

7:58 – Ew, I can't stand Reese Witherspoon. What's she doing here? Oh, she grew up in NASHville and is promoting a movie.

7:59 – My husband leans over and says, "Reese Witherspoon? I can't stand her."

7:59 – Time to switch to the network for the real show!

2008 CMA AWARDS!

8:00 – We are off! Brad Paisley and Keith open the show with their much hyped collaboration. I like the blue glitter guitar. The song is nothing special. I dig the duel guitar solo at the end.

8:06 – Our hosts for the night – Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood (from American Idol to HOSTING the CMAS? Whatever...) She looks like a Barbie.

8:07 – Brad makes a "boots to fill" joke involving Dolly Parton – he did say *boots*. Hahaha – that's the joke. Country music stars are creative song-writers... we never promised anything about their comedy skills. But I liked the joke, because the country music awards show I saw live (it was an ACM awards show though) was hosted by Dolly Parton.

8:10 – What are Hollywood A-listers doing here to present the first award? Oh wait, Nicole Kidman is married to a country

music superstar. So what is with the random Hugh Jackman appearance though?

8:11 – Strait wins the first award of the evening for Single of the Year. 0/1 are we since we both guessed Sugarland. But who was that man George Strait kissed before his acceptance speech?

8:17 – Is it Kellie Pickler or a bad Madonna impersonator who sound like Belinda Carlisle? I don't like it.

8:18 – My husband leans over and says, " This is like an American Idol performance." Ironic, because he relies on me for pop culture info and therefore did not know that this is Kellie Pickler who IS from American Idol! Glad to see she got herself out of the dress she said it took her hours to get into before she had a bathroom emergency.

8:20 – Alan Jackson – probably my favorite country artist of all time, ever since Garth Brooks sold out. Not sure what I think of his new song Good Time, though... It seems like a run-of-the-mill Alan Jackson song, which isn't a bad thing, just heard before. My husband feels badly for Kellie Pickler whose awfulness had to be followed by Alan Jackson's legendary stage presence.

8:23 – What the heck is with the college-age line dancers lining the aisles – that's stupid. Are they trying to make a new linedance? This one looks just like the electric slide with a little wiggle thrown in... dumb. Alan Jackson squints into the camera – he's getting old.

8:25 – the Cyruses, yuck. Saw Billy Ray live in 2002 when he was still a has-been playing town festivals. He ignored the ~~legions~~ dozens of fans trying to slap him five on his way to the stage. At least my daughter is a big fan of Miley's – that makes this tolerable.

8:26 – Stay wins Song of the Year, and I'm 0/2, possibly my

worst ever. Husband is up and I have only 2 more chances to catch up... mood turning sour... at least it's a good song.

8:32 – Miranda Lambert performs. I like her. And I like these simple performances of songwriter sings simple song with guitar – songs like these are building blocks of country music.

8:35 – Reese Witherspoon is *crying* about Miranda Lambert's performance? Really? Or is she acting? What is she doing here again?

8:36 – Oh good, Lady Antebellum. I was wondering who they are and what they sing. They sound just like a '90's band – I can't think of who right now! Any ideas, please comment – it'll come to me! Hubby says the lead singer looks like Lance Bass. At any rate, they're nothing to write home about. Can't see them having staying power – not country enough. 2/3 of the group too replaceable, remaining 1/3 not that noteworthy.

8:40 – getting a little greedy with the commercials – here's yet another.

8:43 – Martina McBride is introduced by Brad Paisley, who could use some acting lessons from his actress wife; his script-reading is terrible. Martina is one of my favorite singers

8:44 – and she's singing a VERY ordinary song. See my plea in a previous post – Martina and Alan Jackson NEED to seriously come out with some good stuff and soon!

8:48 – Rodney Atkins – HELP! This is the guy who sings about kids eating nuggets in the car and other mundane every day tasks... He is the kind of singer country music bashers use to make fun of the genre! AND HE'S OFF-KEY!

8:51 – Heidi who? Someone should pass her a cover-up in case

her dress finishes falling down.

8:53 – PUT ME ON THE BOARD WITH MY FIRST CORRECT PICK FOR RASCAL FLATTS – VOCAL DUO! I really enjoy their music... please tell me they're performing later! I hear that Kid Rock will be performing "the song we've been singing 'All Summer Long'". I love that song, however upset I was to learn it was Kid Rock's music I was enjoying... Opening another window to download a sample of 'Werewolves in London'.

8:59 – Taylor Swift performs. I love the stage, the costumed dancers, the dancing... the song sucks though.

9:03 – Is Taylor Swift lip-syncing? Why are the dancers suddenly surrounding her, do they know she gets off sync in that part of the song? Unless... COSTUME CHANGE! I was SO right! Called it seconds before it happened! Bool-yah!

9:04 – My new favorite song – All Summer Long – is cool as a live performance. But where is the guest guitarist we were promised? Was it someone I didn't recognize? And Kid Rock probably smokes too many cigarettes, judging by his singing voice.

9:13 – Carrie Underwood has found herself a sarapi. Isn't that what that type of dress is called? I don't know how to spell it, can't find it on a search...

9:14 – I like George Strait's new song more than I've liked most of the other live performances. But why do country stars keep attempting to emulate Jimmy Buffett's laid back beach style? It's been done, and done very well, I might add! Let's stick to country – especially you George Strait!

9:17 – Jason Aldean – one of those newcomers I'm not quite familiar with. Ah, I see he's of the bad-a** variety style of country... I'm familiar with it. As a person who vents anger by performing 80's and 90's raps in the solitary confinement of my car, I appreciate the wailing guitars and the bad-a**

attitudes that are breaking onto today's country music scene.

9:21 – Best New Artist – goes to Lady Antebellum. Darnit, I really thought we had a shot for this one. We picked Kellie Pickler, and she is a good friend of presenter Taylor Swift and everything! Dang nabbit – I didn't even like the sound of Lady Antebellum. Well, eat it up kids – you won't last in Nashville.

9:28 – God bless the late great Jerry Reid – I'm sorry and ashamed to say that I've never heard of him.

9:30 – an enjoyable performance of “Cowgirls Don't Cry” by Brooks and Dunn and Reba. And I like what these entities do together. We saw them perform in concert together twice – awesome both times. Too bad Reba's plastic surgery doesn't look as good as Nicole Kidman's under the stage lights. They seem to have opposite effects – Reba's new face looked great on the red carpet, Nicole's was horrifying. Reba's was nothing short of freaky on stage, whereas Nicole's looked almost humanesque. You could have convinced me that Brooks and Dunn had a Reba animontronic made for this performance. Anyway, enough about the obvious plastic surgery plaguing us tonight... I should save that sort of commentary for the Oscars since there's always plenty of fodder there...

9:35 – We both get another point since Sugarland wins Vocal Duo – BOOLYAH

9:40 – Darius Rucker – yes, he was in Hootie and the Blowfish and they were good. So what brings him to country music? I like him better as a blowfish. Wait a minute... when I heard this song he's performing on the radio, I always thought it was Daryl Worley, who sings these types of songs. You mean to tell me the whole time that it was the work of a blowfish? A fish out of water, I would say – HA. He looks as out of place as he feels, and Alan Jackson squints up at the stage again – this time because he can't believe there was actually an

African-American on stage at the Country Music Association's awards.

9:45 – Brad Paisley performs a mediocre tune

9:48 – LeeAnn Womack and Josh Turner show up to present the award for Album of the Year – one of the few categories where hubby and I differ. Good to see that Ms. Womack has tamed her bee-hive hairdo. YEE HAW!!!! I am back in the saddle with my George Strait pick; we are tied! Although it was announced that we both lost out on Video of the Year... shucks. I am not doing so well but still tied with hubby.

9:56 – A thought that crossed my mind as Brad Paisley introduced Keith Urban's live performance – is it just me, or is Brad Paisley doing a lot more hosting than ~~Barbie~~ Carrie Underwood? I wonder about the politics involved in the decision to let those two be the hosts...

9:58 – Keith Urban's performance, like so many before him, is mediocre at best. Thank goodness he's an awesome guitarist. And they still use his song, "Somebody Like You" in my favorite dinner show at Arabian Nights in Orlando Florida – that's what sold me on the show in the first place!

10:00 – Is it just me or are they giving everyone a standing ovation, as seen after Keith Urban's performance?

10:01 – A woman talks about her husband who was killed in battle. She gets a standing ovation. Sadly though, at the beginning of her speech, people didn't know who she was or what she was doing, so they kind of chuckled, thinking she was joking because they didn't know who she was. A silent moment to reflect upon loved one's lives lost and those who fight and fought for our country...

10:08 – I missed the second half of Carrie Underwood's performance and whatever followed that because of a kid "emergency". But now I see Vince Gill hands an award to...

10:09 – Carrie Underwood. As predicted by both of us in this house. And conveniently, she was waiting in the stage wings after performing, seemingly in position to rush on stage to accept her award. Curious...

So far, my husband and I are tied at 5/8 – not bad. Our personal tie-breaker will come down to Musical Event of the Year – a category that I joked existed only to flaunt the compromising of the big-name record labels. We both guess Kenny Chesney. But my guess is his collaboration with George Strait, and hubby's guess is his Reba duet – Stay tuned to see the winner!

10:18 – Sugarland's performance has been wailing on my tv in the background while I typed some other stuff. Not very impressive. I'm beginning to wonder if it's me or if all the performances tonight have been somewhat lackluster. Not only that, but the songs being performed aren't that great to begin with.

10:20 – Just Got Started Lovin You is one of my favorite new songs! And James Otto is milking his big performance. Otto's range in the song reminds me of Josh Turner, but I don't give him credit for staying power. It's a good song, but he doesn't have the best stage presence.

10:29 – Whoa, my channel cut off Carrie Underwood. Anyone else's? Kenny Chesney is performing his Jimmy Buffett knock-off routine with the beach combing sh*t. Sorry for the language. I need to see a really GOOD musical performance. This sounds like a callypso version of an elementary school chorus concert.

10:32 – My husband leans over and says, "Does this guy have eyes?" – referring to Kenny's accomplice. I don't think he likes the beachcomber crap any more than I do.

10:33 – Strangely, the intro to Trace Adkin's performance sounds like a Carrie Underwood single, "Jesus Take the

Wheel". Subliminal marketing maybe. Conspiracy theories abound, the more tired I get...

10:37 – Another standing ovation? This time for Trace Atkins... ok, whatever.

10:37 – Reese Witherspoon – I can't stand her.

10:38 – Reese Witherspoon gushes, "I am SOOOO glad to be here!" My husband leans over and says, "I can't stand her."

10:39 – Brad Paisley wins Male Vocalist of the Year. We are now tied at 5/9 since we had Keith Urban.

10:41 – Ooh – more hints about the surprise person. Evidently, they are going to present the Entertainer of the Year award. This marketing ploy has intrigued me, although you know that the astonished faces reacting to the surprise guest they show in the commercials have nothing to do with who it is – this is a live show!

10:44 – Ooh – Lost premiere January 21. Wait, do I still watch that show? It's been so long, I forget.

10:48 – mediocre Eagles performance. What is with their new tidy look? What is with me and thinking all the performances are mediocre? Is it just me? Not in this instance – the Eagles in their suits suck – they look old and tired. Good music from a great group, they just need a smart manager – oh, big surprise, ANOTHER standing ovation. Is that just what you do nowadays, the stand'n'clap?

10:54 – The best selling female country recording artist of all time is Shania Twain? YUCK! Another standing ovation! And they haven't even given out the award yet!

10:56 – And now they have... Entertainer of the Year goes to Kenny Chesney, yuck! But at least we both got it right!

10:59 – "The votes in tonight's award show were cast by the

six thousand members of the Country Music Association"... kinda like our local theater group, the WCCT.

But what the heck? Seems we are missing a category detrimental to our outcome? Does anyone have the results for Musical Event of the Year?!? That was our tie-breaker, and evidently we missed it, so break the tie for us!

Ok – Krauss and Plant won for Vocal Event – neither of us had them chosen. So, it ended in a tie. Overall, an entertaining show, as always. I really could have used some more good musical performances, however... Good night!

And as a final footnote – I got my sample of 'Werewolves in London'. The melody is obviously borrowed for 'All Summer Long', but I do like the new Kid Rock song much better. Who knew that plagiarizing two popular songs and then splicing them together would earn critical acclaim instead of a lawsuit?

Tidbits From The Earth

Each week the hometown newspaper has a column entitled, "Did you know?" It is a list of little known facts (little known to the general public... there maybe some who do know everything). A few of these are facinating:

Did you know...

- that until 1978, Camel cigarettes contained minute particles of real camels (Always wondered how they came up with that name)
- that in 1943, a Parisian street mime got stuck in his imaginary box and consequently died of starvation (I would have guessed suffocation or claustrophobia)

- that you should never hold your nose and cover your mouth while sneezing, as it can blow out your eyeball
- that aardvarks are allergic to radishes, but only during summer months (I like to think that I am allergic to them year-round)
- that approximately one-sixth of your life is spent on Wednesday's (why could it not be on a Friday or Saturday on game nights?)
- that polar bears can eat up to 86 penguins in a single setting
- that every three days a human stomach grows a new lining (what happens to the old ones?)
- that watching an hour-long soap opera burns more calories than watching a three-hour long baseball game (must be from the laughing one does while watching the suds. I would have to disagree especially when watching a football game at C & L's... of course that is not baseball)
- THAT IN SARATOGA FLORIDA IT IS ILLEGAL TO SING WHILE WEARING A BATHING SUIT (why and how about singing in the nude... not that I would want to push the envelope)
- that about one-third of all Americans flush while still seated on the toilet (ok...)
- that on average, every chocolate bar contains at least three insect legs (mmm.... good)

Now that I have educated you all, go out and have a Snickers bar, go to Saratoga and sing in your bathing suit, and laugh those calories away watching a soap opera.

Our Friend, The Doctor

With 4 kids, many of them small in years, we are at the doctor's office lots. We are so lucky to be really happy with our pediatrician, especially since we see him often. Today was another such visit – time for our 2 year and 4 month check-ups for the little ones.

Disney (2 yrs. old) liked the fishies in the waiting room and the Dora sticker she got at the end but that's about it. She didn't want the doctor near her, she didn't want to be weighed, measured, nor have her heart listened to, and she didn't want to walk in front of the doctor like he asked. Best we could tell during all the kicking and screaming, she is 2 feet, 10 inches tall and weighs 25.5 lbs.

On the other hand, Disney's baby brother Christopher seemed to love the doctor's office. Then again, he smiles all the time, so it's hard to tell. He smiled when they measured his head – both times, since the nurse forgot the measurement from the first time (43 cm). He smiled when he was weighed (15 lbs. 6 oz.), and he smiled some more when his length was measured to be 25.5 inches. He's a really good baby – the doctor says he acts more like a 5 month old than a 4 month old because of the strength in his limbs and how he uses them.

Disney's a great kid also, but she is two years old. And "terrible two's" is not just one of those sayings; it's based on truth. Disney was the sweetest baby and toddler you could imagine... then she turned two. And she's still sweet, she just has a miniscule amount of patience and tolerance for things that don't go her way. She could be chatting happily about doggies one minute, and the next thing I know, she's melted onto the floor into a puddle of two.

But there must be something going on with the body chemistry of two-year-olds. Everyone knows they're like that, and it's

not just an unearned bad reputation. If it weren't for the "terrible two's", I think I would want an even larger family – but it's the dreadfulness of the terrible two's that give me pause – only one more bout of terrible twos to battle, if we can survive Disney's, of course!

CMA TIME!

It's fall – time for the CMA Awards already! If you don't know that CMA is short for Country Music Association, then you have my permission to skip this blog post – it will only bore you anyway!

For other country music fans like me, this is one of our two biggest nights of the year – the Superbowl for country fans. I get really excited, and unlike other awards shows like the Oscars, I don't like to ~~tape~~ (I am a child of the '80's) record country music awards, and I especially don't like to miss anything – the live performances are some of the best parts! I always play along and try to choose the winners, but I don't think my picks are going to be that strong this year because I'm listening to country music radio less than ever – I enjoy talking to my kids in the car, or they're watching dvd's. At home I'm usually listening to Dora, the DoodleBops or Noggin. But the CMA Awards show will be a blast to watch, as always, and there are only two nights like this a year – cross your fingers for me that my kids decide to act like human beings tonight and let me watch the show. My picks for the winners, however uneducated they may be, are made obvious by my *comments in itallics*:

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

Kenny Chesney – *ok, so he doesn't dominate this awards show*

like the ACMs, but I'm going with him anyway – just because he is not one of my favorite singers and I'm not expecting the show to go well for me

Brad Paisley

Sugarland

George Strait

Keith Urban

Top Female Vocalist

Alison Krauss

Miranda Lambert

Martina McBride

Taylor Swift

Carrie Underwood – I called her from one of her first appearances in American Idol. I said – she's going to win Idol, but she has a voice for country. Now she's established herself as one of the best female country singers out there today.

Top Male Vocalist

Kenny Chesney

Alan Jackson – my favorite of those nominated, but what's he done lately?

Brad Paisley

George Strait

Keith Urban – my pick to win – tough call between Keith and Brad, but you gotta congratulate a guy for a successful stint in rehab

Vocal Duo of the Year

Big & Rich

Brooks & Dunn

Montgomery Gentry

Sugarland – their unique sound will win them many awards – just one question: who else is in Sugarland besides Jennifer Nettles?

The Wreckers

Vocal Group of the Year

Eagles

Emerson Drive

Lady Antebellum

Little Big Town

Rascal Flatts – *tried and true, these guys have talent. So do Brooks and Dunn, but they haven't come out with anything lately*

New Artist Of The Year

Jason Aldean

Rodney Atkins

Lady Antebellum

James Otto

Kellie Pickler – *another American Idol reject—crossover*

Album Of The Year [Award to Artist(s)/Producer(s)/Record Company]

Carrie Underwood's Carnival Ride Produced by Mark Bright

Brooks & Dunn's Cowboy Town Produced by Tony Brown, Ronnie Dunn and Kix Brooks

Alan Jackson's Good Time Produced by Keith Stegall

Kenny Chesney's Just Who I Am: Poets & Pirates Produced by Buddy Cannon and Kenny Chesney

George Strait's Troubadour Produced by Tony Brown and George Strait – *gotta give him something*

Single Of The Year [Awarded to artist and producer]

"Don't Blink" Kenny Chesney Produced by Buddy Cannon & Kenny Chesney BNA Records

"Gunpowder & Lead" Miranda Lambert Produced by Frank Liddell & Mike Wrucke Columbia Nashville

"I Saw God Today" George Strait Produced by Tony Brown & George Strait MCA Nashville

"Stay" Sugarland Produced by Byron Gallimore, Kristian Bush and Jennifer NettlesMercury Nashville – *not really sure of the difference between single and song of the year, but Stay has to win one of these. I'm going with Single, I guess.*

"You're Gonna Miss This" Trace Adkins Produced by Frank Rogers Capitol Nashville

Song Of The Year [Awarded to songwriter and primary publisher]

"Good Time" Alan Jackson EMI-April Music/Tri-Angels Music

"I Saw God Today" Rodney Clawson/Monty Criswell/Wade Kirby Big

Red Toe/Extremely Loud Music/Steel Wheels Music/Blind Mule Music – *like I said, I don't think Strait will walk away with nothing tonight – just hope I didn't reverse the single and song of the year!*

“Letter To Me” Brad Paisley EMI-April Music/New Sea Gayle Music

“Stay” Jennifer Nettles Jennifer Nettles Publishing

“You’re Gonna Miss This” Lee Thomas Miller/Ashley Gorley EMI Blackwood Music/New Songs of Sea Gayle/Noah’s Little Boat Music/Songs of Combustion Music

Musical Event Of The Year [Awarded to each Artist]

“Another Try” – Josh Turner featuring Trisha Yearwood MCA Nashville

“Every Other Weekend” – Reba McEntire and Kenny Chesney MCA Nashville

“Gone Gone Gone” – Robert Plant and Alison Krauss Rounder Records

“Life In A Northern Town” – Sugarland featuring Little Big Town and Jake Owen Mercury Nashville

“Shiftwork” – Kenny Chesney (duet with George Strait) BNA Records – *What does ‘vocal event’ mean anyway? By the looks of how they wrote the nominees, I guess ‘vocal event’ means ‘when record labels lease their stars’. Chesney always wins big at awards shows, but I personally prefer Jimmy Buffet’s beachcomber style over Kenny Chesney’s knock-off version. I’m guessing the Country Music Association does not agree.*

Music Video Of The Year [Awarded to artist and director]

Don’t Blink Kenny Chesney Directed by Shaun Silva

Good Time Alan Jackson Directed by Trey Fanjoy

Stay Sugarland Directed by Shaun Silva – *everyone knows by now that Jennifer Nettles cried real tears during the filming of this video, is it enough to win her the award? My vote is yes, but maybe it’s just wishful thinking.*

Waitin’ On a Woman Brad Paisley Directed by Jim Shea

You’re Gonna Miss This Trace Adkins Directed by Peter Zavadil

Musician Of The Year

Jerry Douglas, Dobro – Drums

Paul Franklin – Steel Guitar

Dann Huff – Guitar – *will win. But then again, this is the blind lottery award for viewers. Like I know who any of these people are, so I just picked the name that jumped out at me, and Dan Huff it was.*

Brent Mason – Guitar

Mac McAnally – Guitar

For sure, a great time will be had by all. I might update my blog with winners as I watch tonight. And after reviewing my reasons for my picks for tonight's awards, it needs to be said that it's been way too long since some classic artists (and my personal favorites) came out with anything noteworthy! Alan Jackson ~~Garth Brooks~~ and Martina McBride, you know who you are!