

# I Can Play On My Bagpipes?!

This afternoon at the high school, the entire student body and members of the community (too few in my opinion) were treated to a concert by America's Finest Singing Machine, The Bowling Green State University Men's Chorus. Although its size has dwindled and it is now under a new master from when I was a member, I am pleased to say that the tradition is alive and well. Starting off with the ever traditional "Sing Dem Herrn," I got goosebumps as the men marched double file to the risers filling the air with music. The repertoire has not changed a bit: some classical (even a Gregorian chant), contemporary, gospel, and novelty bits. There were also appearances by the chamber choir (something new to me) as well as the two varsity quartets. I am sure that the long standing lists of quartets who have traveled on to contests is still alive and well. The chamber ensemble performed a Halloween themed medley ("The Addams Family, and "Ghostbusters"... I wonder how many of the men actually remember the movie). I actually was seated beside a woman whose son is a member.

At the halfway point the director, Dr. Skoog Got on his soap box (a well needed one) to speak on Arts in the school (or lack thereof). Today in over 60% of our local schools there is no arts program. No music, no band, no choir, no drama. That is a shame. As Dr. Skoog pointed out, in the next 20 years if the trend continues there will be no need for ipods or mp3 players because our children will not be taught in the arts. Grant it, literacy is important but there are students who have a natural inborn talent that if the decline in arts education continues that talent will not be cultivated. Ok... on to the highlight.

The second half of a BGSU Men's Chorus concert is devoted to the more light-hearted, crowd-pleasing, traditional fare. This afternoon was no exception. As Dr. Skoog invited any chorus alums to come to the stage, the lady beside me

immediately stood up so I could make my way to the gymnasium floor. After I shook the director's hands and pulled out my white gloves, I THOUGHT I knew what was coming. But no, the announcement was made that we would be performing the traditional initiation piece (true that the new members learn it the night before the first time they perform and it is one of the hardest songs you will ever learn). EVEN BETTER!!! I cannot go into detail in case anyone who reads this blog may one day wish to become a member of the chorus. But if asked, performer that I am, I could be pressed into doing it.

So... a fantastic blast down memory lane... and as a friend and teacher pointed out to me after the concert... "You never missed a beat. You never forget do you." Nope... just like I never forgot "Oops pardon me, blondie" or "Baloons for sale; Baloons for sale; RED, YELLLOW and GRREEEEN BALOONS!" I just wish Emily had been there. She never got to see me perform with the chorus.

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## **Vacation Diary – Chapter Three**

Tuesday, Oct 21 – We visited Universal Studios, Islands of Adventure, and the Out of Control Magic Show at Wonderworks. Universal and Islands are right next to each other, but there is a lot of walking between the two. A lot of walking and not so much for the kids. But they did have fun, especially Disney who got to see Barney Live. I missed the Animal Actors show this year, but I was more in the mood for rides, and we got to ride plenty. The new Simpsons ride is actually better than I expected. It's the old Back to the Future ride except you are now riding through Springfield. The waiting area is

themed well, and you get to watch little Simpsons snippets while you wait – talk about making the time go by fast! The ride is very cool, and you actually feel like you're riding around Springfield. The Mummy ride is still my favorite thing in both parks, and it's as cool as I remember. I especially like sitting near people who haven't been on it before – it's a blast to see the reactions to the haunted house meets roller coaster. Over at Islands, we got positively soaked to the core riding the Bluto boat ride, but that was expected because I rode it twice – those huge raft rides are my favorite type of water ride. My 4-year-old Sammie hated it, much to my surprise because she was just playing in the sprinklers at Epcot the night before. But she felt better after going on one of the kids' favorites, the Cat in The Hat ride. Our two-year-old loved that one too. We were a bit strapped for time and didn't get to try some of the coasters and other rides I've never been on over at Islands, but oh well, we still had fun. And my husband got chosen again (4th time now) to be an "actor" in the skit they do before the Earthquake ride which is now known as "Disaster". They redid it and added a cool hologram of Christopher Walken. And they chose my husband to be the "hunky" lead actor – but then, I always knew that ☐

The magic show was a lot of fun and it made me want to produce something like it locally for our community theater. It's kind of like stand-up comedy AND magic in one, with lots of audience participation. My husband, daughter, and our friend were all chosen to go on stage, and I filled up the camera's memory card trying to record everything. And a note to Jamiahsh – you really don't know me well enough by now to not point at me when they're asking for volunteers?!? You are so lucky he didn't pick me – I would have blamed you and had your head! Just kidding... well, kind of, but don't do that again!

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# Vacation Diary – Chapter Two

Monday, October 20 (Disney's 2nd birthday!!) – Started off bright and early in Orlando with a time share presentation – yuck. We've been to a few of these, and we try to schedule at least one every time we're in the Orlando area because they pay well. This time, we got \$100 cash. It took over 3 hours, but hey, that's over \$30/hour – well worth it in my opinion. I could go on and on about time share presentations because there are always certain things they do to get you to buy one – there must be a formula to the presentations. And let's face it, they're one of the biggest rip-offs that exist. The last few we've gone to, we've played a little game where I think of a random word my husband has to say to the time share people. This time it was "gondola". Unfortunately, we didn't get the word in because the presentation took much longer than they said it would (big surprise) and we had our friend jamiahsh waiting for us. This also saw us getting to Epcot later than we would have liked, but we still got to do most of everything we wanted at Epcot. If you've been to a time share presentation (or 2 or 3 or more), then you should check out the South Park episode about it. I'm not a huge fan of the show, but the time share episode is hilarious. It was actually recommended to us by a time share salesman once!

The manatees are my favorite thing at Epcot. My husband makes fun because we have manatees right here at the Columbus Zoo in Ohio, but that's 3 hours away and I've only been there once. Besides, I've been to Epcot a bunch and I'm starting to get to know their manatees. Last time I was lucky enough to see them hugging! A peaceful feeling comes over me as I watch them swim. We did miss the Crush (from Finding Nemo) show, and we meant to go back for it but forget – oh well. And for those of you who've been to Disney World before, you should know that they've updated the Spaceship Earth ride – that's the one in the big huge golfball that is Epcot's signature. I don't

like the new version nearly as much as the old one. The ride needed updating. It takes riders through the history of human communication, and one of the scenes had become outdated as time passed because people don't communicate in the ways that they visualized we would when the ride was built. Soarin' is my favorite ride at Epcot, but it always has HUGE lines. This time we were able to get a fastpass, but we could only ride once and my husband wasn't able to ride because our 2 year old was in a Daddy-clingy kind of mood. We ended the night at Epcot by running all over the park in a desperate search for a soft pretzel. Our 4-year-old was being so uncharacteristically well-behaved that I was willing to get her anything she wanted, especially since she was asking about it nicely.

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## MacGyver . .

Full shows available on the internet. Who would have thought of that. I also have enough speed to watch one as long as I don't make the screen too big or watch anything else.

I really liked that show when it was on. What I thought was great, is that some of the things he did would actually work.

I can't remember how many I tried out. Yes, even as an adult I did try some of the MacGyverisms. My wife thought MacGyver was good looking, so she didn't have a problem watching the show either. She got mad when I sprayed a lightbulb with water once. Hot lightbulbs explode when they get wet. Who would ever have thought that would work in real life. Glass shards all over the place... I was more careful after that. I waited until the house was empty to try new things.

Well anyway you can watch whole episodes of Macgyver on an IMDb link [here](#).

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## Stress

I feel like I can barely keep my head above water these days – I'm so incredibly overwhelmed with things to do! To top it all off, our dog had a huge swollen lump on her face that just kept getting worse so we had to take her to the vet. It's an abscess tooth, and the vet also found a few other problems. In short, we have to decide how much we can afford to fix. This dog is like one of our kids; we got her before we were even married, and at the time, we had trouble adopting a dog because we were so young and lived in an apartment, so shelters wouldn't let us adopt. But finally, we found Charity, and they let us adopt her, and she was the most terrible puppy you can imagine. We stuck through her puppy years, and by age 2 she was the best dog ever. She is now almost 11 yrs old and a major part of our family, to say the least. So anyway, she needs some treatment at the vet and at home, which will increase our busyness considerably. Add to that some household stuff I've been backed up with for months (still haven't unpacked all my hospital stuff from when the baby was born in July!), and it just keeps getting worse. It's really hard to do all the laundry and meal preparation and cleaning up after a family of 6 when I have two little kids to watch all day! Thank goodness the other two are in school, but between errands, feedings, diaper changes, cleaning up spills and messes, and playing, I don't have enough time left over for household duties, much less stuff I'm backed up on... And forget about hobbies; which is why I might have to let my blog go. I really don't want to; I enjoy writing on it; especially cuz it gives me a nice way to

preserve memories for our family. But right now, it's a source of stress as it's just another thing I'm trying to work in. I wish I could be more passive about housework and laundry and stuff like that, but it just bugs the heck out of me when I let stuff go. And for good reason – I never have the time to catch up on stuff that's put off until later! But enough of that, I'm just venting my stress, and also warning you that my blog posts are going to become even more infrequent. It's a shame too... I have a lot left of our trip to FL to share that I'd also like to record in my diary... might not be able to write about it until 2009!

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## **Halloween and this time of the year**

This is one of the strange seasons of the year. I've always enjoyed Halloween with all the ghouls, goblins and ghosts associated with it. But this time of year also brings to mind some very sad memories.

In 2000, just prior to Halloween, my mother passed away. In 2001, just after Halloween, my father passed away. In 2003 around Halloween, my wife was struggling with all sorts of problems that a cause could not be determined. She died before the start of the New Year. Sad thoughts sometimes fill my mind at this time of year, and will haunt my thought through the end of the year.

Will these thoughts be with me 100% of the time? Not anymore. Time does, after a fashion, heal all wounds. What they never tell you is that you may not like the way you heal. Break a bone and you may have re-occurring pain whenever the weather

changes. Lose a loved one and you may feel that grief sneak back in when you least expect it.

When the fall leaves start changing and falling on the ground, I tend to think a lot about my father. This was the time of year we spent cutting down trees and moving wood. We did this together because it made the job a bit easier. It is still hard work, but we were able to laugh and joke during it. Laughter makes light work.

Sunday afternoons, I sometimes find myself thinking of my mother. Sunday dinners with the family were always a welcome addition to the day.

There are many times, places and events that bring back memories of my wife. Watching our daughters is one of those events. While others see my features in my daughters, I tend to see their mother's features. That is sometimes uncanny.

The smell of baking apples, or hot cider remind me of my wife. Hot tea at night remind me of her also. I could spend days writing about all the things that remind me of her.

All of these memories, plus memories of other loved ones who are no longer with us, are generally good memories. They are, however, memories tinged with a bit of sadness. Things that won't happen again. Places in the past that just live in the corners of my mind. Sadness that new things won't happen. There are no new stories to tell about them.

This weekend, my youngest will be involved in her school's show choir. They are giving a show for some group. I'm not even sure yet if I can see it. This is something her grandparents, and mother would be waiting to see. The stories of the show would be family conversation for a good long time. There are many voices that have been silenced. I miss their viewpoints.

There may be more "memory" posts to come, who knows where or

when this mood will hit...

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## Early to rise, not early enough to bed



This has been an early week for me. I know a friend of mine over here always gets up at 5 or 5:30, and once upon a time I had a job where I had to do that, but these days I am just not used to it and exhaustion leaves its mark on me by the middle of the week. Such as today. Fortunately I was able to nap for a little more than an hour so I am good for the moment.

Let's see, by Sunday night I had no job for Monday so I had to go to bed at around 11 with my phone by me. Sure enough, I got a wakeup call at about 5:30. I would be needed in a middle school so I could not go back to sleep, and up I went. I did have a chance to catch up on my newspaper reading before work. How was the day? It was actually quite interesting, thanks for asking. It was a class where there were students with semi-severe learning disabilities- about as disabled as students can be in this district as they hire out a special education company to handle more severely disabled students unlike the other two districts I work in. There were two assistants in the room and a student teacher, so I didn't have so much work to do other than walking around and helping out. There were three grades represented so it was a little crazy, though not as crazy as last Thursday when I did ELL. I'm not sure why I didn't write that one up. It wasn't so crazy because of the students, but because of the school play. That Thursday and Friday they were showing the school play, *Around*

*the World in 80 Days* ([link to random theatre company that performed it](#)) ([link to publishing company page](#)). Between the two days all three grades had to see it. Let's see- two days, three grades- how did that work? Well, they had 8th and 6th grades go on separate days, then split up the 7th grade. Now how does that work when half the ELL class, comprised of all three grades again, would see the play one day and the rest the other day? You see? Quite a mess, especially when the absent teacher made no note of how she wanted to do it- no mention at all in fact about the play. Oh, and the play lasted for three periods, not all of which the students were in this room, so no, we couldn't just say, "We'll all go today and tomorrow you'll all have class." That would have left some students missing actual classes one day and having no classes the next while their team or grade was at the play they already saw the day before. It wasn't easy but we worked it out.

So back to the topic of early starts. The next day I was scheduled in the district that starts middle school really early. So, up at 6AM. I worked as a 7th grade LD teacher. All the classes were either team taught or resource, so I didn't do any teaching. In fact, even the guided reading groups I was supposed to do were vetoed by the other teacher who was concerned about behavior of the students. She was scheduled to be observed- apparently the administration was impressed at how she teaches her class and set up other teachers to observe what she was doing. Yeah, If I were her I'd probably be worried too about how the kids would act with a sub when I was trying to lead a group (we were both supposed to do groups). Resource was just simple reading together and students answering questions about the reading. Again, I was not alone with the kids as there was an assistant this time. Better than a homework period I suppose. Math was like language arts- walk around and keep students focused.

While yesterday I was like an assistant but getting paid as a teacher, today was the opposite. Like Monday I didn't have

the job set up by the next day, so I set my alarm for 6 so I could get up and look for jobs if I didn't get called first. Problem is, my mind was awake before 5:30 and there was no way I could get back to sleep for the half-hour until the alarm would go off. Up I went again. I searched for jobs in vain as none showed up this morning. I got caught up on my reading again while I checked every five minutes. Ironically, it was a phone call at 6 that gave me the job. Low paying, but more than a half-day which is probably all I would get otherwise at that point, though I still kept an eye out for a better job in another district up until 6:15, after which I knew I could no longer cancel the first job (two hours before starting time). Again, no time to go back to bed, so I finished the paper and opened the book I was reading until it was time to eat and finish getting ready.

I was really hoping I was not going to be a one-on-one assistant. I really dislike those jobs. I got my wish. This teacher getting paid as an assistant (seriously, if they are going to give her so much responsibility they should pay her as a teacher (and on that note the subs like me... ☐ )- I have done less as a sub for a regular special ed teacher, and I don't mean because there was a student teacher either. All day I was pulling out groups for reading or math, three different grades, taking them to a different room to work with them. There was supposed to be an intervention group as well after lunch, but I had no plans for that so they cancelled it. If I were to hazard a guess at why she doesn't get paid as a teacher, she probably doesn't do much planning, but I wouldn't be so sure. My mother worked as an assistant for a couple years and they gave her some planning as well so I guess districts are allowed to do this.

That brings me to now. I have two more middle school days. They are at a close school so I get to sleep in until a late 6:15. Okay, still early. I will be glad for the extra hour on Sunday. Next week I will also have a day off as all districts

are taking off election day. All but one are taking the next Tuesday off as well for Veterans Day so I will likely have that day off as well. Nap days. ☐

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## The Smurfiest Smurf That Ever Smurfed A Smurf

Can you believe that the Smurf's are 50 years old and will soon be making a big [comeback](#)? They were officially created in 1958 by a Belgian gentleman named Peyo. There is going to be a new feature length motion picture as well as a new animated series. However, gone will be the hand painted animation of the 80s and early 90s. The little blue creatures will now be given the 3D treatment. Also in the redux will be other Smurfs of the gentle sex. Although I do recall a smurfling named Sassette who joined Smurfette and I was just informed that there was a Nanny Smurf. As I recall, [Smurfette](#) was originally not a Smurf at all but was a creation of the evil wizard Gargamel in one of his nefarious plots to capture the blue critters and make gold.



**I'm tired.**

Maybe tomorrow...

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# Vacation Diary – Chapter One

Because Disney World and the Orlando area in Florida are our favorite places to vacation, we make it a point to go as often as we possibly can. The last few trips we've made, I've been careful to keep a trip diary – a notebook log of things we do as well as hints that might help us make the next journey. Each trip to FL sees me taking a notebook for our trip diary, and I write about various things in it, depending how much downtime I have to write while the kids are sleeping. Here is an excerpt from the diary for this trip:

FRIDAY OCT 17, 2008 – Left town about 5:30pm. Unfortunately, our local Burger King we decided to get for dinner took about 30 minutes! Kids were rambunctious, so we stopped at a McDonald's Playland in downstate Ohio, wondering how we were ever going to make it the remaining 1,000 miles and back again (at least I was!). The good news is, the Playland seemed to tire out the kids and they fell asleep. They woke around midnight, but a trip into the gas station seemed to comfort Disney (almost 2 year old) and the kids slept until about 8 am Sat morning.

SAT OCT 18, 2008 – We stopped at another McD's Playland to blow off some steam, but it was raining, so their outdoor playplace was closed. The kids handled it well. This was north of coastal Brunswick, GA, so we made pretty good time the night before – thanks to sleepless driver Chris! Since the weather was nice, when we saw a sign around Jacksonville, FL that the beach was only 4 miles away, we decided to stop. We had a great time, and the kids had lots of fun wading in the ocean and collecting seashells. After that, it was on to Orlando, and we stopped and picked up the key for our condo rental when we got there. We then made it to the condo –

which was over 10 miles away, much to our surprise – where our faithful driver promptly crashed leaving me to facilitate the activities of 4 well-rested kids. But no problem, I was glad to do it. After all, I had been afforded a nice nap in the car on the way down, a luxury my husband didn't get. Of course, I'm a person who does best with 8-10 hours of sleep, not that I ever get close to that, but still... So I'm doing my best to summon all the patience I have so I can watch the kids who would not let me nap, and I ended up taking the younger two to Walgreens with me to get some supplies. The place we stayed in was very nice, but it didn't come with anything – no soap, shampoo, paper towels, beverages... for a family of 6 staying for a week, these were necessities I would need at the local Walgreens. I killed some time there, got lost on the way back, and by the time I had unloaded kids and groceries, my husband was rested and ready for some fun. We went to Golden Corral for dinner... delicious. Reminder for those of you who live in urban areas – we're not used to a variety when it comes to eating out. So, when we eat out, even at major chain restaurants, we appreciate them in a way we never did when they were available constantly.

SUN OCT 19 – slept in, had lunch at Golden Corral. Read my post about the previous night's activities if you don't understand why we had two meals in a row with Golden Corral. I would say the lunch is even better than the dinner. So then we went to Old Town, which is a row of shops fashioned like an old fashioned Main Street – there's even a general store where they sell little glass bottles of Pepsi for 50¢. When we first started going to Old Town 10 years ago, those little bottles were a quarter, but I'm not complaining – there's something about the glass bottle that makes that Pepsi taste extra good. Maybe it's the thirst quenching relief it provides after walking around in the Florida heat, or maybe it's the always much needed caffeine boost – whatever the reason, that little bottle always hits the spot. The Main St. part of Old Town is about 4-5 blocks long, and at each end,

there are carnival rides. The roller coaster is jerky but fun, and I went on the swinging boat ride which was scarier than it looked! My fearless daughter, who always wants to try the big rides but isn't tall enough yet, was shaken enough on the swinging boat ride that she cried. We sat on the end, which I knew would be more thrilling than the middle, but I didn't realize how much more mild the middle would be until I rode there with our friend Jamiahsh. We had lots of fun at Old Town and kinda lost track of time. We wouldn't have been late for the dinner show Arabian Nights if we hadn't left the tickets back at the condo... oops. We had to walk around in the dark and missed the first few minutes of the show. At least they let my husband in, who let us out at the door and had to park the car. The worker in the parking lot told him to give all the tickets to me, but when my husband tried to get in, they gave him a hard time without a ticket! Thank goodness he was able to get in and also find us in the dark. [Arabian Nights](#) is a great show. Think Medieval Times (if you've been there) without the chivalrous games. Well, there is a chariot race, but there are more acrobatics and horse dancing – the horses are gorgeous. My husband calls it Medieval Times for girls, and all us girls in the family love it. My husband was able to get a good deal on tickets online, so the show cost less than a regular dinner! And their food is really good. It's served with all-you-can-drink pop, which backfired a little bit because in the dark with the show going on, it was difficult to notice that our 2-year-old Disney was drinking A LOT of pop. So next thing I know, she's walking around, and she starts going up the stairs and tells me she'll be right back. I said, no, Disney let's stay in our seats, and then she YELLED at me – "I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!". It wasn't a really angry outburst, but if you know sweet little Disney, it was so out of character for her that it was hilarious. She was all hepped up on sugar and pop. So there's our first 2 days in Florida. We started Monday off with a time share presentation – ugh – so I'll take that as my cue to stop posting for now. This post is long enough, wouldn't you say?