

A day with Family and Friends

I spent most of the day at the home of my eldest daughter and her husband. They were having an Open house for friend and family. Since it was close to 90 today, and they have a pool, it was a good day to be there. I spent too much time in the sun, I ate too much, and I had a wonderful time.

I met more of my daughter's in-laws (again for the first time, the wedding doesn't count). But since her husband is 1 of 17 children, I don't try to keep them all straight. I would just get them mixed up anyway.

I didn't count how many of the siblings were there, but there were a couple of faces I didn't recognize. There was also a friend or two that I didn't recognize either. So putting people into families was difficult. The funny thing I don't think it matters much at my daughter's house. It seems like the people who are invited in are family. They may be that long lost cousin you sometimes wish was still lost, but they seem to be family. It is a very inviting place to visit.

Now, over the years I've had reservations about my daughter's choice of friends. I don't recall mentioning this too often. This was of course due to fear of having her cling to them more than she was. We all know how some teenagers can get. If the parent approves, avoid. If the parent disapproves, attach. My eldest had this little quirk. If she still does, well when/if she reads this blog, she may avoid a lot of friends. You see, I approve of her friends. They are characters to be sure, and they would tend to agree with that statement. But they are good friends to my daughter. And as with everything in my family, that is important.

It doesn't really matter what I think, or don't think of the people my girls hang around with. What is really important is how they treat my daughters, and what my daughters thinks of

them. It has been that way for as long as I've had daughters. This is one of the reasons I never said anything about my daughters' friends. As long as they were happy, it was good. Even if I noticed something a little off, it was good. Now that 3 out of the 4 are legal adults, and 2 out of 4 are actually of legal drinking age, I've noticed that this way of thinking about things really paid off. All 4 can make very wise decisions on who they want to hang with. They know who they like, and they try to avoid those they can't get along with. It's good to see parenting work out right every now and again.

Now I guess I should write about the food. They really did it right. Burgers, dogs, chicken, salads, deserts, chips, drinks, everything for a summer gathering was available. (except nobody brought watermelon, I should have gotten watermelon, why didn't I get watermelon... Oh yes, the last one I brought was turned into a vodka-watermelon slushy.) We ate well. There was one funny thing. I was thinking of having an iced coffee today. Normally I think iced coffee is to be left somewhere, not to be ingested. Every once in a while I get a taste for it. My daughter had some freshly made when I walked in the door. What a lovely coincidence. I couldn't have planned that better if I had called ahead. So today was a good day..

Hiccups

With less than two weeks to go until opening night, I would say that our community theatre's production of [The Nerd](#) is coming along quite nicely. Today was the first rehearsal during which no scripts were allowed on stage. For the most part everything went rather smoothly, but of course there were those few "hiccups" as the director called them. But a large

portion of the lines are so incidental that it is really difficult to time and memorize. There are lots of "What"s, "Excuse me"s, etc that may not seem important but as scripted they add so much to the humor of the piece. And pooooo Rick, I don't know how many times he has to explain the rules and procedures of a game called "SHOES AND SOCKS." One of his FAVORITE parts of the entire play along with his display of musical prowess. But once again, he is just indescribable.

The gentleman who is playing the role of Willum is also beginning to come into his own. He brings a nice sense of bewilderment to the scene. Not sure of what he should do under the circumstances he finds himself under; just trying to make everyone in his home (welcome or unwelcome) happy.

Tansy is growing as she finds herself trying to stand by her man but at the same time becoming really frustrated at Willum's ineptitude. She really is like a chicken running loose running from the kitchen to the living room. I would have a hard time remembering what I need to bring, when I need it, and when to bring it on stage. Just take a breath and do it. Above all CONFIDENCE.

So... only 12 more days till curtain. I know I am not going to be favored by all involved for counting days; but, I would be even more excited if I were on stage. Yet, I am beginning to become secure in my role of helping make sure everything runs smoothly behind the stage (not totally... never that, but adequately so. More on the remaining cast later.

18 Kids – Are They Crazy?

They don't seem to be, they just like kids, I guess. You might have heard of the Duggar family from Arkansas. They are

kind of like celebrities. Their claim to fame? Having 18 natural children. No adoptees or fosters. The 18 includes 2 sets of twins and one on the way; there are 7 girls and 11 boys – they don't know the gender of the new baby yet. Their story interests me because with 4 kids myself, I thought I had a lot of kids. It's interesting to me to see how they go about their daily lives with 20 people living in their house. Their house is custom built, they actually built it themselves as a family project. They have lots of things in their house that help organize their lives and make everything run more smoothly, for instance, they have 4 washers and 4 dryers in their laundry room and one communal family clothes closet where the clothes are sorted by size. Their kitchen has 2 convection ovens, 2 microwaves, 2 warming drawers, 2 dishwashers, 2 sinks, and a fridge/freezer. And that's the small kitchen. The industrial kitchen is outfitted with 4 ovens, 2 griddles, 4 freezers, 2 refrigerators, 2 sinks, a pizza oven, a deep fryer, and a popcorn machine. They even have their own buffet line; that's how they serve their food. Each kid goes through the line and gets their own food, well, the ones who are old enough, anyway. They also have a drink counter in their dining room with a fountain pop machine.

Even though they have all these things in their house that help to accomodate such a large family, it's amazing to me that they can still function with all those kids. The kids are home schooled and also take piano, violin, and harp lessons. I think the key here is scheduling. The family has a daily schedule that they follow which is supplemented with reward charts and checklists for each family member. Each person has a jurisdiction within the house that they are responsible for cleaning during family cleaning time. It sounds like a well-oiled machine, but I'm sure they run into their share of snags. I just have so many questions about their situation, though, like how can a woman want to go through the birthing process 16 times (remember, 2 sets of twins)? How is her body even able to carry and give birth to

18 children? Is she addicted to pregnancy? Do they have a money tree in their yard? What is their grocery bill? When do they have time for grocery shopping and who does it? Do they have a vehicle that fits them all, or do they have to travel everywhere in a caravan? Does Jim-Bob (the dad) work outside the home? It's kind of funny, isn't it, that his name is Jim-Bob, he's from the south, and he has 18 kids. Talk about illustrating stereotypes.

But seriously, they must be rich, or at least *were* rich before they had all those kids. Not only would their grocery bill be outrageous, but they built their own large home and they need furniture to accommodate 20 people – that's 19 beds alone! Oh, and I almost forgot to mention that all the children's names start with the letter j. Well, anyway, I just thought I'd write a little about the lives of this interesting family. If you want more information about them or want to look at pictures of them or their cool house, they have a pretty nice website. They also make appearances on news shows frequently and had a reality show on the Discovery Channel that followed them as they built their house. I wonder if they plan on sending all 18 kids to college? And if all 18 share their parents' views of contraception, they are going to have *hundreds* of grandchildren!

In The Dawg House

Earlier tonight, the family and I attended the wedding reception for my cousin who probably is the most adventurous of the entire clan. For instance, the entire affair was located in a field in the middle of nowhere which serves as the headquarters for a group of motorcycle enthusiasts known as "The Dawgs" (wonder where they came up with that name) ☐

Let me just say that the gathering was never dull. I did miss what was sure to have been the highlight of the evening. The bride's step-mother arrived on the back of a bike in a skirt and other wedding appropriate clothing. The hog was being driven by a gentleman in kilts worn in traditional Scottish style. LuAnn was not sure what she should have held onto during her ride.

While a large number of the guests looked like the stereotypical Easy Rider types: leather vest, boots, jeans, etc. many seemed friendly enough. Somehow, we encountered someone who has a familial tie on my father's side. This was odd because the wedding was for Stacy, the daughter of my mother's brother. Then a few tables in front of us sat a gentleman who we THOUGHT was my father's nephew (obviously, one of those relatives whom I have never before met). The man's father shared the same name with my uncle who is dead... so definitely not related. Later on, I came across the best man who was laying on top of a picnic table looking like he had been celebrating a little too much too early. However, he chalked it up to indigestion. And I did see a few guys with long beards that looked like they could have been rejects from [ZZ Top](#)[✖]. OK... moving on.

The best part of the entire gathering was seeing two of my best friends, Britt and Jan, whom I have not seen in probably two years. The strange thing is that they live only like an hour away. So we caught up briefly and B and I both agreed that we were TOTALLY out of our element. I considered inviting them to the game night I was going to attend; however, she felt that she was needed there to help with her step-sister's reception. That part of the family tree is a loooong story that I probably should not get into on this blog... aaaah, family.

Plus, my cousin from Sandusky commented on my post about the [Ghostly Manor](#). Apparently, he passes by the haunt quite frequently; however, he and his wife have never braved the

interior. I just dunno why these people who comment in person don't post in the comment box. They must be unable to do so while they read the blog while at work. I also cannot fathom why the people from far away lands don't comment. I see on my stats that I get a number of hits from Sweden, Germany, and other countries. Surely, something draws their attention or they would not keep coming back.

Moving The Choo-Choo

If you've grown up in Chicagoland as I have, then you'll know what I'm talking about when I describe a few staples of a typical suburban 1980's Chicago childhood. #1 – You've attended a taping of the Bozo show. As I've stated before, the girl I went to the show with was put on the waiting list for tickets when she was a fetus. We went to the show taping when we were 9 – that's how long it took for her name to come up, thus illustrating how popular the experience was. #2 – If you had perfect attendance in school, you won tickets to a White Sox baseball game. Even I, a true-blue Chicago Cubs fan, ventured over to the south side as a youth to cheer on the men in black as a reward for not missing any days in a school year. Don't tell anyone though; it's not something I'm proud of. #3 – You got your grilled cheese served to you by a miniature train at the Choo-Choo restaurant in Des Plaines.

Now that it's 2008, I doubt they give away major league baseball tickets for perfect attendance in school anymore. I know for a fact that the Bozo show is no longer around, but I also know that the Choo-Choo restaurant is alive and well – for now anyway. The Choo-Choo is a small diner that serves typical american fare – hot dogs, grilled cheese, burgers, and the like. If you sit at the counter, your food is delivered

by a miniature train that circles the dining room and disappears into the kitchen. It seems they are thinking of moving the Choo-Choo to build a new police department. Not putting it out of business, thank goodness, but they are considering moving it. I hope this does not happen because I'm not one to favor change, and I can't help but feel that if the restaurant is moved, it will suffer loss of business which will eventually lead to its demise. I don't understand why the proposal involves moving the entire building; from what I remember it is a very small crowded space, and the magic is in the train serving your food, not in the building itself. Since 1951, this little diner has been there, and many generations have enjoyed it. I think it would be a shame to move it as it would lose at least a little bit of its nostalgia for some people if it were in a different location. Leave it there in its tiny building. Let people stand in lines that often run out the door in order to get a counter seat where the train runs as they've done for decades. People are more likely to return with their children and later on, their grandchildren if it's left exactly the way they remember it.

My husband and I had very different upbringings; his was a life of "privilege", getting every material item he could ever want, although his parents were never home. Mine was the opposite, a loving family always together although we had to stretch the already tight budget just to be able to afford such luxuries as an occasional happy meal from McDonalds. But we are both products of Chicagoland, therefore we share the memories of the Sox tickets perfect attendance prize (not that my husband ever won any; this is no surprise if you know anything about his school years), being at the Bozo show tapings, and our visits to the Choo-Choo restaurant. My kids have been to the restaurant also, and I hope it's still there for them to visit with my grandchildren someday.

Catching Up

A while ago, my husband suggested that I blog everything I do. While that seemed a little outrageous and time consuming to me, I am going to share this email I just typed to a long lost friend from high school. I got an email from her the other day out of the blue saying that she had just gotten married, so I sent her back congratulations and a brief summary about my life for the last 12 years. I got a reply from her and found out she's still in school (poor thing – we're 30!). I typed back such a long response that I thought it might as well be a post on my blog as well – 2 birds with one stone, so they say... Now you don't have to hack into my email to read my personal stuff! That's a thinly veiled reference to my last post about the dueling newscasters, one who was hacking into the other's email. Here's the email I sent to my friend – in case you're wondering why it gets random in places, those are answers to questions she asked me.

Great to hear back from you! So are you going to be a lawyer when you're done with school? Where are you guys living? We are living in a little town in Ohio – I think it just might be the most perfect place to live, for us anyway, we hated Illinois and city living. It's very rural out here. Everyone knows each other; they're all very friendly. It's small, not even 9,000 people, and it's surrounded by farms. But we love it; we still have Walmart, restaurants, a movie theater – all the modern conveniences. It's so nice to send the kids to school and not worry about them like I would at schools in the Chicago area.

So you are planning to have kids then? I wouldn't say I'm ahead of you – maybe in the insanity department, it gets pretty loud and crazy around here! But seriously, being

pregnant is actually kinda fun, especially when you can feel the baby moving. I had pretty good pregnancies; though I had gestational diabetes with 2 of them, and I had to take shots of insulin. Of course that wasn't fun, but it's pretty easy to do things when you know it's for the good of the baby. I can't say much about the deliveries. My first one was really long, my second one was awful, my third one was very easy, and my fourth one was horrible. If I have any more, I'll probably have to have another c-section, but at least then I don't have to go through labor. It's different for everyone. I have a friend who has 5 kids and she never needed any drugs with any of her deliveries. Her longest delivery was 2 hours from start to finish, shortest was 20 minutes. Not only that, but all her kids starting sleeping through the night before they were a month old! She makes me jealous! But anyway, it's all worth it in the end. My last delivery was so horrible, yet I'm already back to wanting more kids... if only they'd let us sleep... And it's so neat to see how different the kids' personalities are. My second oldest, Sammie, was so crazy in the womb it felt like she was kicking my organs around. She is still crazy and is our most challenging kid. Disney was a really easy delivery, and she's our sweetest kid – so happy, friendly, and cuddly.

Our marriage is going great! My only regret is not marrying him sooner – we had a long engagement, otherwise we would have celebrated our tenth anniversary last year or the year before! He is still perfect – he helps around the house (understatement) and takes care of the kids... we definitely have a 50-50 household. Lots of husbands don't do anything but work, so I consider myself very lucky. He works from home, has his own business, which can be challenging because I have to keep the kids away from him while he's working. He is very good with computers and has lots of great ideas, so he supports us while my work is taking care of the kids. And I'm never bored – there is always plenty to do with 4 kids to take care of. I think about going back to work sometimes, but only

when I get sick of watching Barney and talking to a 2-year old all day. I don't think I'd like to go out and work outside the home though, unless it was at a zoo, and the zoo is an hour away. Who knows what I'll do when all the kids grow up and go to school all day. The blog I'm doing that I sent you the link to makes a little bit of money, and I'm happy doing that in my spare time when I can get it. We also do lots of volunteer work in the community. We hold a few board positions for various community organizations, and we do lots for the local community theater group – Chris likes to be in plays. He's a great actor and singer, and he's also written several plays. I like to do behind-the-scenes stuff; we've directed shows together, and I like to produce and stage manage also. I'm too shy to get on stage myself, and I'm starting to realize that my feelings on that will probably never change.

So what's your new last name, did you change it? Did you go to our 10 year high school reunion? I didn't because I was pregnant with Disney – she was born 10 days after the reunion! I don't have many fond memories of high school anyway; I didn't really know a lot of people, compared to how big our class was. Aside from you, Kristen, Kelly, and Sarah, the people I hung out with most of the time went to Glenbard West.

Did you have a big wedding? Where was it, in IL? Where are you going to school? Do you still talk to Kristen or anyone else from high school?

It's been fun catching up with you – send me some pictures of your wedding! I will send you some more pictures of my family. Our last family picture was taken probably over a year ago, but we will be due for another one soon so Christopher can be in it. I'll probably want one for Christmas cards. When I get one, I will send it. Take care!

They're Looking For A Few Good Souls

✘ Here's one for your next game of Balderdash. [Chopper Chicks in Zombietown](#). The title alone says it all. A gang of female motorcyclists are the only thing that stand between a horde of zombies who have (acidentally of course) been let out of their secret cave and are heading to a nearby town to wreak havoc. Sounds like a thrill a minute.

This epic, direct-to-video masterpiece was written and directed by one of the masters, [Dan Hoskins](#) who was also responsible for that other one great cinematic achievement, [Pretty Smart](#). Both of these must-see extravaganzas have some recognizable names in the cast. In Chopper Chicks, we have [Billy Bob Thornton](#), [Lewis Arquette](#) (who has a long list of other acting gigs, most notably guest appearances on tv shows), and [Martha Quinn](#) (who many will remember in her days as a founding VJ in the previously mentioned days when MTV still was Music Television). The all-star cast of Pretty Smart includes [Patricia Arquette](#) (daughter of Lewis and brother of David) and [Joely Fisher](#).

So for an evening of prime video entertainment or for synopses of "Marvelous Movies" don't forget the Chopper Chicks protecting us all from the approaching zombies. But be warned, they are NOT readily available from [Blockbuster.com](#) nor probably any other retail chain. So if you are one of the select few who own a copy, consider yourself lucky?

Time and Numbers

Every so often I write something to try to get some of the lurkers, who read my blog, to stop and say hi. This is another of those posts.

I am a numbers person, so I am fascinated by the statistics that are generated for this blog. Some topics seem to bring more people. Books, Haunted houses, Star Wars, Indiana Jones, Moon Landings are all big draws. Big of course is a relative term. This blog has been averaging about 15 readers per day. My maximum in 1 day (that I know of) was just over 80. The average this week was around 25. I realize that some of the 'readers' I am seeing are just robots or data mining sites, but when they find something that, in the programming, is found interesting, they leave blog replies. Some of the people who come to read just won't do it.

I know a couple of the 'shy' people, and I don't really expect replies from them (they know who they are). There are others that I think would be very interesting to hear from.

Things I would like to know about you. How did you find this blog? What do you want to read here? What country/state are you from? Do you come back often? Am I boring you? Just pop in to say hello. Again, until you are 'vetted' (good political term, no?) your replies will only be seen by me, or maybe the owner of the place, he once 'hacked' in for a April Fools joke... But he is a good friend of mine, almost like a long lost brother. So if you don't want them to be seen, let me know in the response, and I'll get rid of it. Me, I'm just curious...

Other things I want to know. Why is a site in Russia interested in my blogs on Superman Movies? Why isn't the same site interested in Batman? Just wondering..

This is just stuff I was thinking about this Saturday morning...

Loaded with tags, just for fun? Just having a bit of fun, that's what blogging is all about.

Stage Fodder

There's a story that's been in the news lately that I think would make an awesome play... now I just have to get my husband, an accomplished playwright, to pen it...

Have you heard the one about the dueling newscasters? For 4 years, Larry Mendte and Alycia Lane co-anchored the evening news together at KYW-TV, the CBS affiliate in Philadelphia. Last December, Lane was fired because she allegedly got into a scuffle with an NYPD officer. Somehow, details of her arrest were leaked to a Philadelphia Daily News reporter, along with other details of her personal life which has included 2 divorces. She complained to the tv station that someone was reading her emails, but they treated her as if she was paranoid.

It turns out that her co-anchor, Mr. Mendte, had bought a keystroke-logging device to get her passwords in August 2006 and was intercepting e-mails from Lane's two personal accounts and one work account. He was fired also – a shame because the duo was making gains on their competitor, longtime leader news leader WPVI-TV, the ABC affiliate in the area. Mendte is now facing criminal charges and has pleaded guilty to one count of illegally accessing a computer. His motivation? Jealousy over his co-anchor's \$780,000 yearly salary because his was only a measly \$700,000. I had no idea news anchors make that much! But anyway, there's an extra little tidbit to this story that wouldn't even need to be embellished when writing it into a play: Mendte's wife Dawn

Stensland is also a news anchor; she works at the Fox affiliate in Philadelphia. Coming to a stage near you!

Expect The UNexpected

One of the most beloved stories and movies is about to be presented at one of Ohio's most acclaimed professional dinner theatres. Beginning August 27, you can join the [Carousel Dinner Theatre](#) in Akron as they transport audiences "Over the Rainbow" along the yellow brick road to the land of Oz. This interpretation promises to be faithful in essence to the 1939 cinematic masterpiece but at the same time feature new elements that have never before been seen. One of these is the use of puppets. The press-release also promises an audience interactive as Dorothy enters the Emerald City. As the artistic director, Sean Cercone states:

We (the creative team) have to understand that when the audience comes to see the show, you are entering with a certain expectation of what you are going to see and experience. THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN DEVELOPING THIS SHOW FOR THE CAROUSEL STAGE.

Indeed, there have to be very few people with access to television, movie screen, or books who have before never encountered the fantasy created by Lyman Frank Baum and first published in 1900. As with any high profile and well-known work, audience expectations will be enormous.

You can follow the creative team on their quest to create their vision of *The Wizard of Oz* by reading Mr. Cercone's [blog](#). Plus find ticket information on the theatre's website.

