

Counting down

It is June already and it looks like warm weather is finally here to stay. Two weeks ago we somberly said goodbye to the 5th graders, sending them off in a prayer as we laid hands on them. They finished not only the 4th/5th grade ministry, but moved out of children's ministry altogether to student ministries where they will spend the next seven years. This weekend, the third grade room remained dark, as it will for the next two months or so as we welcomed them as the new fourth grade. At our church 3rd grade and up get bumped in June for camp reasons, but the younger kids have to wait until August. I guess it is a little strange, the first weekend or so in June, to be called a fourth-grader (for example) when many have not yet finished third grade at school.

We also kicked off our summer series, Transformers. Yes, we are borrowing off of a popular movie theme (yes it was a cartoon first, but seeing as how many of their *parents* weren't even grown up at the time, let alone their own existence...). However, the name is where similarities begin and end. Unfortunately our worship band moved up with the old 5th-grade or out (the college-bound ones) so we are working on replacing them. Hmm. Actually, it was the Saturday night band that is gone, but we still did the song videos instead of the normal worship at 11:15 even though those band members were still present- I wonder why?

Saturday night I think we need guy leaders now in a big way. I was the only one there, along with two gal leaders. I know one will be coming back in a few weeks, but we could use more. My "small" group was twenty-some boys- ideally, groups should be about six or so. So anyway, the lesson was one on being rooted in Christ, and not comparing ourselves to one another. As Paul wrote to the Phillipians, he had much call to call himself better than others as he was a "Hebrew of Hebrews," a Pharisee, and zealous for his religion. Instead,

he counted it as loss, rubbish compared with his identity in Christ. As His, we are equal no matter our station, our jobs, our finances, etc.

Moving on, did I mention camp? Oh, yes I did. Less than two weeks, and I am making trip #7 out there with an all new group! There is much to be excited about, but one thing tops all others. Every year we get something new. In the past additions have included a lodge building, a zipline, pontoon boats, and a waterslide (thankfully I started there the year *after* they got permanent showers...). Well, this year apparently we got something a bit different. Raise your hand if you ever wanted to be a hamster after watching them roll around in their hamster balls. That's right, our new addition to camp is in the form of two giant inflatable ~~hamster~~, err-*people* balls called Zorbs. Here is a random video found on youtube:

and from the inside:

Now **that** looks exciting. I hope they don't roll it down too steep of a hill though. Imagine what would happen if one got sick in one of those... Or, best not to imagine.

Anyway, a new year at church, a new post. I hope you enjoyed it. ☐

I really will try to post at least once more before Camp 2011. I mean it. That I will try, that is. ☐

Who Knew In NWO?

Tonight, I joined Megs to partake in a concert performed by The Black Swamp Strings of which CC is a cellist. I remember learning a month or so ago that the concert was this weekend but I was not sure of the date, thank heaven my friend invited me to come on my SATURDAY OFF!

The music was phenomenal! It ranged from Bach's *Jesu. Joy of Man's Desiring* (one of the most beautiful pieces EVER written) to more contemporary fare such as theme from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Schindler's List*, and "All I Ask of You" from *The Phantom of the Opera*. Another favorite of mine... Brahms's *Hungarian Dance No. 5* was also presented. I know that almost everyone has heard this piece somewhere.

I was particularly impressed with the age range of the musicians. There were several who had just or were about to graduate high school who started with the group at age 14 back in its "garage days." There were also the seasoned veterans.

I don't know how long it takes to become even close to being proficient enough on a stringed instrument to perform with a group of this talent, but it seems like you would have to start at birth!

One of our neighboring audience members has a nephew who was a member of the group who is now a professional musician. He will soon be heard on the scores of two of this summer's sure-fire hits: Steven Spielberg's *Super 8* and *Cars 2*. He is also in the Santa Barbara Orchestra. I guess it is possible to achieve a life-long dream no matter where you grow up. The audience member told me to congratulate "my wife" on a great job! Sorry, she only plays my wife on stage. ☐

THANKS MEGS...Had lots of fun! And great job, wife ☐ Until next time.

Here is Brahm's Hungarian Dance for those of you who think they have never hear it!

20,000 Leagues to Dearborn, MI

Give or take a few leagues.

Last weekend, Sunday to be exact, I was attending my first Steampunk convention. To explain what this is, I tried to come up with all sorts of analogies. The best I could come up with is to think of Disney's 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. From the time they board the Nautilus, the movie turns to what is now known as steampunk. Other movies of this genre are League of Extraordinary Gentlemen and Frankenstein. All of the Victorian era clothing, marked by advanced inventions powered by steam or clockworks.

I was thrilled to spend the day with my oldest daughter, her husband and my lovely step-granddaughter. I was able to pick up some steampunk garb and blend into the convention a little more than my jeans and t-shirt allowed. I know I will wear the coat more when the weather is appropriate.

Now, I have been asked why I would want to do anything of this sort. Easy answer, it was a lot of fun. Going to the events themselves is an eye opening experience, going in "garb" makes it a total immersion. I know I will never get to the point of digging local garage sales and flea markets for pieces of brass, but the theater nut in me will complete at least one set of clothing to wear next year.

It was a step out of my usual comfort zone. And I enjoyed myself that day. Maybe next year a comic book convention. I always wanted to be a super hero, or villain.

Evil Animals



Every once in awhile, time.com has interesting countdown-style articles. The other day, this one caught my eye:

[Top 10 Evil Animals](#)

Beyond the expected varieties of insects, you'll be surprised to learn which mammals are featured (I know I was shocked by a few of the species the authors felt worthy of being on the evil animal list), and it's interesting to read about the characteristics of all the creatures included in this article. I was going to include a shortened version of the list so you didn't have to flip through the slide show, but some are so entertaining that I'm going to let you flip through for yourself – click the link above.

Yo, Adrian! NO, ADRIAN!

I KNOW that there have been VERY few musicals that have not been based on other source material. Even in the Golden Age of Broadway, creators such as Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner

and Loewe, and their contemporaries found inspiration from other works in order to bring "the classics" to the stage. *The King and I*, *South Pacific*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Camelot* were all based on well established works that came before. Although I was not around when these masterpieces were first produced, it seems to me that they all made some sense and were meant to transcend artistic genres.

That being said, there are times when (it seems to me) that things are better left alone. While it is only in the developmental stages, [Rocky: The Musical](#) is well on its way to becoming a full-blown reality. The collaborators of such shows as *Annie*, *Seussical*, and *Hairspray* along with Sylvester Stallone himself have already tabled a reading of the work (8 years in the making at Sly's request) with plans of mounting a production in Germany next year and a possible NYC debut as early as Spring 2013.

While the original series of movies do contain some musical elements (the brilliant original theme, "Eye of the Tiger," and the seemingly endless montages of *Rocky IV*), most of the music seems to have been placed in them for nothing more than selling a few albums and doing nothing to advance the plot. I suppose that the streetcorner crooners in the slums of Philadelphia could have a place in a musicalfied version.

However, I cannot see two men in a boxing ring beating the tar out of each other while singing and being taken relatively seriously. Suspension of disbelief **MUST** have its limits although a musical of *Rocky Balboa* would seem to ask you to do just that.

Goodbye to the Greasy Spoon

Lester's Diner has been a staple in Bryan Ohio since its inception in 1955. On Memorial Day 2011, it closed its doors for the last time. Like many small towns, the restaurant was a gathering place for seniors who sat around the "round table" (whether or not it had an actual round table... I think Lester's feature was its lunch bar). Not only was it a hang out for the young-at-heart, I have heard a story or two about a group of young whippersnappers who frequented the joint after high school football games.

OK... maybe they were not so young. My parents along with the former high school band director, his fiancée, and other friends would travel there occasionally after the game while high schoolers would head to Pizza Slut (err... Hut). The next day, we would be regaled with tales of "Sweaty Betty" who would make perfect hamburger patties by placing a ball of meat under her armpit. Dad said that he once found a hair in his burger. All right, I doubt if that was true but it sure made for a good laugh for a 7th or 8th grader (I was in junior high at the time)! I'm sure regulars could sit and tell tales a mile long about the "spoon."

The atmosphere and scenery of the eatery took the diner back to the fifties complete with swiveling stools at the bar, four person booths with classic mini jukeboxes, and milkshakes served with the tall silver shake cup. The giant sign outside the establishment featuring the giant "16 ounce cup" (I stand corrected, it was a "14 ounce cup") of coffee was the inspiration for the sign outside Mel's Diner on the 1970-'80s tv series *Alice*.

Yet another piece of Americana dissolving only to be a memory to those who knew it.



Watching the rain fall

There were some things I wanted to get done today, but with the weather, they just aren't going to get done. I guess I will blog.

I wrote a post some time in the past called [1 a lonely number?](#). If the numbering scheme is accurate, it was blog post number 4. This was about 3 years ago. I just saw a reply to it. It was a spam reply, but I read it anyway. The spambot was able to tell I was alone and my wife was no longer with me. It failed to pick up on the word "widower", and went into an detailed scheme to get my wife back. Of course they were trying to sell some counseling service, but I really don't think that any of the suggestions would work. Sad state if affairs when the spambot misses a very important word. If they could have picked up on that I may have pushed it through. It was almost a thoughtful post. Today it just made me chuckle.

For some reason I keep reading "Funky Winkerbean". Relationship between a widower and divorcee. Today, with all the thought balloons was very thought provoking. Funny how people think. Too many times we "think" we know how someone else is feeling, too many times we are very wrong. To quote from a Moody Blues song: "Say what you mean, mean what you say. Think about the words you are using." Words to live by, if you have the fortitude.

This wave of showers and storms seems to be finished. More on the way? I need to get to a store this evening, so I may do that soon.

I had an interesting conversation with my eldest and her husband a couple of weekends ago. May be the stuff of a blog, now that I can. One comment that came out of it, but was not part of the original conversation has me thinking. For your consideration: "A person can never have too many caring friends in their life.". Discuss.

That is all for now. More stuff and nonsense in a day or two.

Make A Gleeful Noise

Awrighty... so I have found a new show to fill an hour or two a week. During its inaugural season , I wanted no part of *Glee* because I thought it would be *High School Musical: The TV Show*. On Super Bowl Sunday, I decided to give the post-game show a try, the club was to do a routine set to Michael Jackson's "Thriller." After this episode, I decided to watch the next episode the next Tuesday night to get a better feel and a new Gleek was born.

What isn't to love? The overall theme centers around a group of misfits in the glee club as they endure ridicule at the hands of the football team, cheerleading squad, and nearly everyone else. The slushie throw is the ultimate in humiliation. Walking down the halls of the fictional William McKinley High School (in Lima, Ohio), members of the underdog

New Directions glee club often feel the cold, sticky confection in their face. So often does this happen, that some of the 12 have worn rain coats to protect themselves.

New Directions is led by Will Schuester (played by Broadway vet Matthew Morrison). An alumnus of McKinley High who has big dreams; however, he mentors the kids and often comes head to head with his nemesis...

Competing against "Mr. Schue" is the delicious, hilarious, and EEEEEEvil Sue Sylvester (Emmy award winner Jane Lynch) who will stop at nothing to crush the glee club. The cheerleading advisor has planted some of the "Cheerios" in the group to spy and concocted countless other dirty, brilliant schemes.

Some of the underdog members of the glee club:

- Rachel (Lea Michele, another Broadway vet)... the diva of the group and the most prone to the slushie throw
- Finn ... the football quarterback /glee club co-captain. Yes, there are those who do transition between the two worlds.
- Quinn ... Cheerio and Coach Sylvester's right hand
- Kurt... the male diva. Idolizes Streisand, loves *Wicked*, fashionista, ok... gay.
- Puck... the mohawk spouting trouble maker with a heart

The music performed on the show is not all Broadway standards as one might expect. Some of today's pop music as well as some 80s hits seem to be just as popular as the students compete for glory and maybe even a modicum of respect.

Also glad that Netflix has added season one of the series to its Instant Viewing selection. For now, anyway. I have been known to begin watching other shows and return to watch and see that they have been taken off.

Party Like It's 1985

I found while looking at my email today:

Teen Wolf available for download soon on itunes.

Ok, call me curious or naive, but I opened the file and... sure enough it IS going to be available for download. However, the picture definitely was not of Michael J. Fox nor whoever his leading lady was (she must have had a sterling career). So I figured that it was another in a long line of endlessly uncalled for remakes. I did enjoy the original... one of my favorite MJF films (aside from the *Back to the Future* trilogy, of course). The sequel (with Jason Bateman if I remember correctly) was a waste of the ticket price and I don't recall ever watching the cartoon. ... YES, there was even a cartoon. ☐

My curiosity led me to imdb.com where I discovered that it is not in fact a movie, but a live action television series being unveiled by none other than MTV (why it is still called Music Television is still beyond me) set to premiere in June. I think I will pass on this one. And tempting though it is, I do not think I will mention the needle in a haystack faux pas that slipped passed the sensors in the original.

Still Here... Somewhere

Realizing I haven't blogged in awhile, I've been trying to think of something to write about. I have plenty of material; I just don't feel like writing for some reason. Plenty of material, not plenty of time is part of the reason. I've even started a few drafts, but at least one ended up being a laundry list of complaint about my dogs' behavior and other things that have been stressing me lately, and I don't feel like publishing it. After all, Walmart complaints are fun, tongue-in-cheek ways to vent about how I feel ripped off after shopping at Walmart, but when I write huge rants of real life complaints I annoy *myself*, so I can't imagine my readers' feelings. Plus all the complaining doesn't ease the stress, nor does it help me fulfil the main purpose of my blog – which is giving my family a virtual diary of our lives while the kids are growing up. Sure, it shares the information, but I want their reading experience of our family blog when I'm gone to be a good one, not something like, “Hey – I DO remember when mom was stressed all the time!!”

So I wanted to drop a quick line to let it be known that I'm still here, still a part of blog world, still interested in posting blogs. My kids are not any less cute these days, nor my life any less busy or exciting... just much more stressful,

which kind of puts a damper on my creative writing spirit I think. I'm hoping maybe that will change here soon... if not this summer, something tells me I might feel better in October or November with less of the negative pregnancy symptoms and more of the 'new baby joys' to focus upon. Can't wait!