

Say Goodbye To The Suds

Today, April 14th 2011, is a bleak day for millions (my mother included). It was announced that 2 programs that have been on television for 40+ years will soon be leaving the airwaves to make room for more inexpensive fare... or... more daytime talk shows. When I returned from work, Mom sadly informed me that *All My Dingbats* (err... *Children*) and *One Life to Die* (err.. *Live*) have been cancelled. I might have laughed and poked fun at the announcement had I not been a bit shocked. I often tell people that I sit and watch the soaps to have a good laugh but like prime time television, the daytime scene is dramatically changing with the arrival of more cost efficient less plot driven programming. I also say that if you watch one episode of any soap, you can come back 6 months later and not miss a thing. Sometimes, the show may even be on the same "day" as it was six months earlier. Christmas can take weeks to celebrate on the suds.

Actually, the soaps have been the [training ground](#) for some of Hollywood's big name stars. Tommy Lee Jones was on *One Life*. Christian Slater (of Sabre fame) was on *All My Children*. Demi Moore was on *General Hospital*. David Hass (ok, maybe we won't mention him). Meg Ryan was on something or other. So not only are there the actors who stay on the series for 40 years but there are some who actually have made the transition to other ventures.

AND, the replacements for both series have been announced. *The Chew* (rhymes with *The View*) and *The Revolution* will be polluting the airwaves by January. Just what television needs... more gab fests. At least prime time comedies (the good ones, anyway) **SEEM** to be safe... for now.

This & That

It seems that the addition one of our newest [tangenteers](#) (I see a newer addition... but it has been years since I have taken a French class) I am quickly falling behind in my posts (although she does have a few hundred to catch me ☐).

Yesterday, I noticed real progress in the continuing dissolving of my blood clot. I still feel it... not really painful but it is still keeping me at a slow clip. Madame Peters was in tonight (haven't seen her since the day before I went to the doctor nearly two or THREE (?) months ago. I assured her that I am recovering nicely... however slowly. But I will be back to my 3-4 mile walks 3 times a week before long. Telling myself that I will be able to do the things I really enjoy doing in time helps with the psychological.

My recital with the rest of K's students is less than 4 weeks away. Memorizing my very wordy but very fun piece is challenging but I am really close. I have nailed down a fine female to do the bit with and once she completes her run in *The Wedding Singer*, we will get together and get 'r done.

Well... that is all... My food is probably over done and I have to watch *The Office* which I DVR'ed... Michael Scott's farewell is looming. I think next week is the extended special episode.

Is this the moment when the series will "Jump the Shark?" How will Will Ferrell fare in the new role? Time will tell.

Remember Your First Time

Yes, I very fondly remember my first time seeing Andrew Lloyd Webber's [The Phantom of the Opera](#). It was on a Saturday afternoon in October 1990 at the Auditorium Theatre at

Roosevelt University (ok... so I had to check the Stagebill for the official venue name) in Chicago the day after our marching band performed it's halftime show featuring the music of the phenomenon.... complete with Phantom masks and capes. Tonight, as the family gathered at one of the first high school productions ever produced, I was taken back to that day 20 years ago. In the row in front of me sat a woman who turned around and asked if I was one of Emily Curtis' students. I very proudly stated that indeed I was and still am. The woman (who was a dear friend) told me that Ma2 spoke very highly of me on several occasions. We both told how much we dearly miss her. I knew that I was in for a memorable, magical evening.

I do not believe that I have ever seen a professional production of any show before I saw a high school production of the same. It has been many years since I have seen Phantom on stage (the movie does not do the musical justice AT ALL) so there were some things that I did not remember. But everything about tonight's production was shockingly gorgeous.

The set design was phenomenal. My favorite piece was the bridge used during the "Don Juan Triumphant" scene. It honestly looked like it could have been used as the barricade in *Les Miserables*. The graveyard scene ("Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again") was dark and mysterious with just a faint glow of moonlight (but no fireballs thrown by the Phantom ☹).

I was also impressed with the illusion of the Phantom and Christine's journey to the lair beyond the lake.

The young thespians on stage when PHENOMENAL. The leads both began taking voice lessons a year ago in preparation for auditions and it certainly showed. The title character had an extraordinary range. I was on stage with the young man in my first Village Players production (*Meet Me in St. Louis*) and he has come A LONG WAY since then. Every time I have seen Phantom, I measure the quality of the production on one thing: the amount of goosebumps I get when he sings his signature

song "Music of the Night." Needless to say, the high school JUNIOR nailed it!

The actress playing the role of Christine in ANY show must have a wickedly outrageous voice. The runs in tonight's delivery of "Think of Me" were crazy good.

I must say that my least favorite character in the show is the third leg of the triangle: Raoul, Vicomte de Changy. He always seems to me to be a whiner. But again, a fine performance.

NOW for the real stars of the show: Msrs. Firmin and Andre, the theatre owners. They are the comic relief that holds the show together and their timing as well as their voices were impeccable. The outrageous "Notes" and "Prima Donna" pieces in which there are like 50 melodies at one time (ok... not THAT many) were handled very nicely. In younger days, I would have so gone out for the big two roles; however, after a little high school show that I was in (not a post about my on stage experiences), I definitely know which roles I am so suited for.

If I had one complaint, it is what could not be done in this production. Do not go to be blown away by HUGE theatrical spectacle. Some of the big stage pieces simply are not possible on a stage and budget of a small school and most are there (just no fireballs). Yet, if any school in my little corner of the world could pull it off, it was this one at the most glorious setting we have to offer.

My 6 year old nephew's favorite scene: "the dummy who dropped from the ceiling on the noose." Ok, that was enough for him who slept through the last 10 minutes.

Yes, a small school CAN produce extraordinary things. Thank you to the lady in front of me for taking me back 20 years and making me remember how special my own "Angel of Music" is to me. Emily would have been ecstatic!

Are we there yet?

The next story will be totally made up from bits and pieces of the stories I heard about the road trip....

Many years ago, my oldest daughter was around 9 (almost 10) and the next daughter was 5. They took a road trip out to California with their grandparents. It was the oldest's second trip out. What I remember from the stories is that the youngest on the trip would be able to find any McDonalds, even with her eyes closed. They were able to visit relatives. There were fireworks, but somebody slept through them. I think Uncle Butch had a Hot Tub. There littlest sister was born that year (I think). If the little sister is correct, then a new cousin was waiting for them in California. It has been so long, I think I need input from the people who actually went. I have bits and pieces in my memory, and it must have been some road trip for the grandparents. Maybe, just maybe I will transpose different people and really make the thing up. ☐

Ready for a road trip of my own...

Seemed Like Old Times

Last week, our primary nighttime closer turned in her two-week notice. I was called into the cubby to discuss the issue. "You have another opportunity coming your way." An opportunity that I DO NOT WANT! I came out and told me employer that once my leg is fully healed, I am going to look for another job suited toward not only my gifts but also my

epiphany of the last month or so. I also told her that my outside commitments would not allow me to close 5-out-of-7 nights. I think I am so at the point where I am almost burned out by retail. I don't know what it is. I love interacting with people but I really want something different.

I guess my feelings on the matter were not taken into account as I will be closing every day I work (interfering with everything I am involved in outside of the store... board meetings, voice lessons, however my Sunday schedule will allow me to attend church). But I am not complaining since this is the best I have at the moment. I do have another week to hopefully arrange something with my vocal coach since I do have a recital for which I have a female lined up to perform a number with.

The boss has hired another adult. Someone I am well acquainted with since she worked with me not only the last time I was at the store but also at the ol' Wal*Mart. I got to refresh her in some areas of the store... grinding meat, reducing meat, a little on the register, and a few other things.

Perhaps she will be inheriting some of these closing nights once she becomes better refreshed and more acclimated to the new owners. Making an observation and not complaining but if I were managing a store with no more than 15 total employed, I would ask if it was acceptable to change someone's schedule so dramatically, especially when the person affected has had a prior commitment approved on Thursday nights for nearly a year. Some sort of compromise could still be reached.

Really not upset. This just reaffirms my belief that there is something out there just waiting for me to grab hold of.

ACM Awards – 2011 Edition

Was it really 11 years ago already that we got to attend the 2000 Academy of Country Music Awards in Los Angeles? Newcomer Brad Paisley won that year for Best New Male Vocalist, and he's now a country music veteran who took the Top Male Vocalist prize in 2011. Someday, I'd like to attend the recording of another live awards show. Nothing beats the excitement in the air and participating in a live tv show taping where anything goes. And never in one place will you see so many super performances by a variety of outstanding performers – both from country music and also outside the genre. But my 4.5 kids keep me grounded, and I don't travel as much as I would or as much as I used to. So until the day when I can get back to a live country music awards show taping (and I will be in no hurry to go to the ACMs until they move it out of Vegas!), I will enjoy watching and voting along at home.

This year was a super show; I had a nice time watching it last night. And a surprise awaited me at the end...

Some highlights:

– Brad Paisley opens with a performance, and then he's joined by none other than – ALABAMA!! They were so awesome; this number really got my country blood pumping!

– Some unlikely duos performing this year:

Unlikely duet #1 – Jennifer Nettles from Sugarland and pop star Rihanna. Their duet made for an interesting performance. Not my favorite kind of music, but they sounded good.

Unlikely duet #2 – Country music sweetheart Carrie Underwood screaming alongside Aerosmith frontman turned American Idol judge Steven Tyler. The first song wasn't great; it was more for Tyler than Underwood, in fact, I thought it a waste of her

lovely voice. But their "Walk This Way" duet was toe-tappin' fun!

Unlikely duet #3 – Zac Brown Band and James Taylor. I'm really starting to enjoy the harmonies of the Zac Brown Band, and their performance with James Taylor tonight was thoroughly enjoyable!

– Probably the first time I've cried while watching the ACM awards – Darius Rucker's song backed by a chorus from the Lifting Lives music camp was incredibly uplifting and awe-inspiring! I loved every minute of it!

Overall, a wonderful show! Except one thing – where the heck was Rascall Flatts?!?

And oh yeah, that surprise at the end – Taylor Swift won Entertainer of the Year. No surprise there; if I had paid attention when I filled out my fan ballot and realized that the Entertainer award was fan-chosen, I would have picked Swift in a heartbeat. But I spaced and chose Miranda Lambert (still beat Hubby on the ballot 7-3, just sayin') for some reason. The real surprise came when they announced the nominees for Entertainer of the Year, and I actually found myself rooting for Taylor Swift – what was going on? I've never been a fan of Swift's music, and I hadn't voted for her, so what gives? My 6-year-old daughter was enjoying the show with me, and every time Taylor Swift came on or her name was mentioned, Sammie got SO excited. So I told her I would let her know when "the big award" was coming on, and you should have seen her face when Taylor Swift won – she cheered! It was adorable, and I cried. I cried at the ACM awards twice last night, what is wrong with me? Oh yeah – pregnancy will do that to you. Probably a good thing that I was watching from the safety of my own home.

At Least I Have No Regrets

Spring break is over, and for me it flew by- and it was wonderful. I had my concerns about being so tired and keeping 4 kids from getting bored and restless, and those fears mounted last week when I saw the weather forecast – 40s all week, scarce sunshine, and maybe even a little snow. I was especially concerned that spring break would be my own personal forecast to what summer break will be like because hard as I try not to, I have times where I dread the summer a little bit.

For one thing, there is a wonderful Christian camp that we've been hearing about from a friend, and we've been trying to let our kids go for years now, but it hasn't worked out for one reason or another. This year, it seems that the dates will work, but the fees are a little steep, and the 45-minute trip to the camp x4 (there-back-there-back for two kids) might hurt the wallet a little bit with the price of gas the way it is. Add to that a trip to Nashville Indiana with extended family – SO fun, but 8 more hours of driving, plus groceries and supplies to buy, plus 4 round-trips to South Bend Indiana, and I calculated my mileage from July 4-23 at 1388 – That's one thousand eighty-eight miles in 20 days. Factor in our van's crummy gas mileage and all the pregnant lady bathroom stops, and OUCH. But then I got to thinking about it, and I think I'd rather spend my July driving around the tri-state area than locked away in my air-conditioning with 4 rambunctious kiddos. As I said, the trip to Nashville will be lots of fun, and most expenses have been paid thanks to a generous Christmas gift. So what if I have to miss the 4th of July fireworks for one year (next year we do have to pick a different date though guys if you are reading this ☐ 4th of

July is one of my favorite holidays!). And the trips to South Bend mean that Grandma is taking the kids – so that means fun for them, and a break for us. So what if it's not all 4 kids gone at the same time anymore – that's just one of the small trade-offs for having such a large (wonderful) family. And I'm STOKED that the kids finally get to go to this camp – they are so excited too! So what if we have to leave Nashville at 5am just to drive the 4 hours to get Sammie there on time? But the main reason for optimism for summer vacation was spring break – it was awesome, and it flew by.

For me, the month of March dragged on and on, and I think much of it had to do with my prenatal dr. appointment on the 31st. I just could not wait. Part of it was excitement – this stage of pregnancy is tough in a different way than the rest of it because many of the changes are internal, and you have nothing to show for it. I spend my time looking up sketches of what my baby might look like these days, but unless you count fatigue, nausea, moodiness, or tears, there aren't any outward signs to get excited about – and no, leftover baggage from previous kids does not count as a “baby bump”. Also, I've been extra worried about this pregnancy – I can't put my finger on it, maybe it's that stupid stat I heard somewhere that keeps sticking in my brain – “1 out of 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage”. This is my 5th pregnancy, so that panics me. I wish I didn't read the news so much. Maybe the worry is because of how incredibly difficult this pregnancy has been on me (and my family) compared to the others. Whatever it is, I've been especially panicked, but I've been building a great relationship with my new doctor – she is very understanding and so much more of a problem solver than my previous doctor. But either way, spring break saw me at my prenatal, and everything looks great! Baby is measuring at exactly 12 weeks, right where s(he) should be. AND... I got to see her (him) dance!! The baby keeps sneaking us ultrasounds – I wasn't scheduled for one, but the heartbeat couldn't be detected (my understanding doctor warned me of this ahead of

time, or I would have panicked. Again.), so she took me into the ultrasound room. There, we saw baby on the screen, and my little 2-inch miracle was *dancing* – I saw her legs moving and everything! I keep thinking and saying “she” and “her”, but don’t place any bets – I’ve been known to be wrong about my children’s genders in the past – *before* they’re born, of course, sheesh.

So I took the kids to the zoo on Monday of this spring break, and last night I’m still on cloud nine from seeing my baby dance, and the more I thought about it, the more I realized that I could not resist going back to the zoo on the last day of our season’s pass. We aren’t going to renew because as much as I love the zoo, it feels like a waste to renew right before summer, especially when I’m pregnant and (probably?) won’t feel like going as much. And I know I won’t be able to go after my surgery for a month or so... So I took the kids to the zoo not once, but twice this spring break, and I didn’t even feel like I was going to keel over by the end of today, which means that my first trimester fatigue *might* be fading (afraid to get too excited). I even took an extra kid with me to the zoo both days, a gamble that paid off both times since we all had a blast – even if I was late getting Ellyn home today (that’s why I didn’t stop to chat Justj – I’ve been kicking myself ever since. I really wanted to see your daughters! But I was late, and you just don’t expect to run into a friend 60 miles from home so I was caught off-guard).

So yes, I missed the Chicago Cubs opening day game taking my kids to the zoo, and I’m proud of it! Nevermind that I was looking forward to that game for months. Hubby recorded it for me, and I watched it as soon as I got home anyway. And I’m telling you what, the Cubs did not play badly (except for Dempster – if I still cussed he would be on my you-know-what-list), but they lost. But as I said, they did not play badly, so there is MUCH hope for the season – you can’t tell anything decisive on opening day. Well, except for last year but we’ll

leave that out of it. But the best part is, I have no regrets. I can't imagine how I would have felt had I missed my last chance to take my kids to the zoo in order to watch a game where the Cubs lost.

Super decision on my part, and if this spring break was any kind of predictor for summer vacation, BRING IT ON!

Welcome to the 2011 Season

I was planning to do this yesterday amid all the fanfare of Opening Day but in all the excitement, I totally forgot!

Excitement that built itself up until 1:05PM: The Tigers and the Bombers were standing on their respective baselines. The young lady sang the National Anthem. And then suddenly and without warning there was this "**TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE SUN!**" It must have been a freak occurrence as I heard nothing about it from anywhere else but it got very dark, I couldn't see a thing and moments later when it got light again, the Detroit Tigers and New York Yankees were **BLACKED OUT!** What a way to spoil a perfect opening day. I was informed that the game was on the Detroit feed of FOX Sports, unfortunately, we do not have the service. I do have the ESPN app on my ipod which allows me to get updates which was no where near as fun as watching or listening, but it sufficed. And the "EVIL EMPIRE" (cue the "Imperial March") pulled off a 6-3 victory!

Warmer weather may be yet to come but the MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL SEASON has begun (for some). No matter who you root for good luck to all teams in a fun, exciting, safe, and SCANDAL FREE 6 month run! Number 28 and what is this UNDERDOG stuff!

OK... so the video is a few seasons old but it was the best I could come up with featuring the theme.

A Language All Their Own

WOW – two posts in a row from me, what's that about? My kids are on spring break, and the older ones are playing with the younger ones, giving me some unexpected spare time. I wouldn't dare schedule a household project; everyone knows the magic would end and I would suddenly find myself in the middle of an undone project. Don't worry, I already know it's a fluke, and I don't expect it to last long. In the meantime, I enjoyed this video and wanted to share it. Almost makes me want twins someday. Almost.

I think the one twin got an idea about climbing on the kitchen appliances, and the other twin is telling him how he'd fall, get hurt, and how much mommy would yell at both of them. Whatever they're saying, they are adorable!

I Want To Be A Glass Is Half-Full Kind Of Person

...so I'll start with the Cubs. Because goodness knows in my own life, being an optimist is too exhausting. I wake up feeling crummy, determined to make the best of my day, only to have had to step in to referee not less than 10 fights before I even make it to lunch. And I'm not talking about MY lunch – that comes much later (if I'm lucky) after I've served up umpteen helpings, cleaned up infinite messes, and responded to various other distress calls. But the point is that at a time where I could really use my time and energy to focus on me and growing a healthy baby, much of said time and energy is wasted on what feels like mundane, pointless referring and the like.

But with the Chicago Cubs opening day mere HOURS away (ok, dozens of hours, but still countable by hours!), I came across the following article which did indeed fill me with cautious optimism – not for my own summer, no, for there is no doubt I'm going to feel like a huge pregnant balloon, warm beyond reason, lazy beyond doubt. I know that I will have 4 little kids to chase around, and I will have to pry myself out of my chair a little earlier in the chase if I'm going to have any hope of catching them to stop the trouble or keep them out of danger. The optimism isn't for me – it's for the Chicago Cubs. If you're a Cubs fan, read the following, and tell me

if you agree. I especially like the line that says, "...allow me to put on the ol' rose-colored glasses and search out reasons to be hopeful that 2011 will be a better year than 2010 for us Cubs fans. For one, it can't be much worse."

Excellent point, that. After all, I had to write off my Cubbies after watching what was the debacle they called opening day last year. Not that I ever tend to give up on the team, I am a Cubs fan affter all, but well, if you saw them play, er um, "play" baseball on opening day of 2010, then you would agree. Check out the rest of the reasons for optimism here as written by Bob Warja for the Bleacher Report @ bleacherreport.com:

[10 Reasons for Cautious Optimism for the Chicago Cubs in 2011](#)

And GO CUBS!!!

