

Nothing Worse...

Than having to care for sick kids when you are a sick parent. Ok, so there are plenty of worse things, but this is one of my least favorite things about daily life, getting sick at the same time as my kids. The hits just keep on coming – is it December or what? (in case you aren't aware, this is in reference to my family's annual dose of uncanny bad luck that seems to show its ugly face every December)

This time around, it's a nasty stomach virus, which means loads of extra laundry and some very crabby kids. The two little ones were up all night last night, and even though Hubby was the one who got up with them, I was still awakened all night, so neither of us got much sleep. Today was a take-it-easy day, and somehow I found the energy to get through it while being sick and on little sleep. I'm slightly concerned about the little ones being kept up all night again because it's the night of our oldest daughter's birthday party, and we have 8 screaming, shrieking 5th graders running around the house. But they seem to be having a blast (while us sickies keep our distance), and that's what matters. Now I just have to figure out how to talk them out of wanting to watch Twilight Eclipse, which in my opinion, does not seem appropriate for a bunch of 10 and 11 and one 6-year-old.

In a way it stinks getting sick on the weekend- there goes any chance we have of a fun family outing tomorrow, and I'm going to be really upset if I have to miss teaching my Sunday school class on Sunday morning – those 1st graders are adorable, and we have so much fun together every week; I really look forward to seeing them. But on the other hand, getting sick on the weekend means that Hubby doesn't have to worry about missing work, so that's a positive.

Well, here's to hoping that we are well soon and that there is some way that the rest of the family (2 left standing) does

not come down with this. I guess if there was a weekend in December for the whole family to come down sick, this was the best one. We have my daughter's birthday party, but nothing that involves travel like the weekends in the rest of the month.

Take care of yourself and your family in this, the lovely month of December!!

A Vocal Workout

I am happy(?) to inform all that my voice lesson today was ALOT of HARD WORK ☐ I loved every minute. During my warmup (does sound like a workout, yes?) I was offered three pointers on reaching those high notes:

1. Bend your knees slightly (already knew that)
2. Hold your hands out palms down and turn them up as you hit that soaring note (I tried that once and it DID WORK!)
3. Squeeze your glutes together. (Haven't tried that one)

Today, I chose to work on some of the "power pieces" which I am on good standing to perfect. Boy oh boy maybe next week I'll mix it up with some novelty songs. As it was, we only made it through two selections but a lot of work was put into polishing them up. I think it is much more draining to perform a song that is driven by heavy emotion than lighter fare. But one of these pieces is one of my favorites so of course I am going to focus a bit on it but man what emotion it carries with it!

I even surprised myself by the emotional impact I created. When it was over, I did feel like I had been on a roller

coaster of turmoil and angst. And I don't want to perform them until Spring?! Imagine the possibilities! I did get to have a little gingerbread cookie on my way out! Who could ask for anything more?

An Afternoon With The FBI

It seemed like something out of a movie, our visit to the local FBI office yesterday. Except that it wasn't a movie, and the office wasn't exactly local...

Let me back up. It's December, and don't you know, that seems to signal a yearly torrent of bad luck thrown our way. Shortly after turning the page on our calendar this month, we found out (among other things) that my husband's website (and our family's livelihood) had been attacked. And I don't mean a little harmless virus or an annoying spam attack – it's a DDoS – simply put, someone targeted this website, and essentially used thousands of computers around the world to overload this website and crash the server. It's enough of an incident to capture both the interest of the local media and the FBI, both of whom politely requested interviews yesterday. So we drove out to the city, found the government building that houses the FBI offices, walked inside and checked with the doorman who wanted to know who we were there to see.

"I have an appointment with Mr. X at the FBI (*name changed for privacy*)." said my husband, and once it was confirmed that he was on the list, the doorman stated that he "would get us up." He led us to the elevator and punched in a special code – can't just push the floor number for the FBI these days it seems. We got off the elevator and waited around for a few

minutes, entertained by the FBI's 10 Most Wanted posters. One in particular caught my husband's eye. "Doesn't that look like our neighbor?" He asked me, and I had to agree. I began to read the description and was surprised to see that it did seem to describe our neighbor – he's into sports like golf and dirt-biking, and it's strange because my husband and I would often notice the neighbor packing up his car for weekend trips and coming back, unloading things like helmets, golf clubs, and lots of other sporting equipment. Such is life when you don't have kids, we thought, and I guess you should know that the reason we pay so much attention to this neighbor's activities is because he happens to have a nasty cat that terrorizes our neighborhood. So while keeping tabs on [that darn cat](#), we've observed some of our ~~most-wanted~~ neighbor's behavior. The kicker of this whole coincidence is that the Wanted-by-the-FBI guy was listed as possibly having bi-sexual tendencies, and that fits in with what we've seen about our neighbor as well. Don't get me wrong, I don't think it's him, but it was an entertaining wait, to say the least.

So then an agent comes out of a door and asks if we've been helped. We said not yet and repeated the name of the agent we were there to see. We were led to a door, and there was a sophisticated series of security measures that the man went through to enter (not going to repeat them here on the internet out of respect for the security of the FBI – not that I even knew what he was doing anyway). In this small waiting area, there was a metal detector, which began to go crazy every time this guy went near it – I forgot to mention that he's carrying 2 or 3 very large bags. He disappears behind a door, and the man we were supposed to meet with appears and introduces his assistant – a lady carrying a notepad, a pen, and oh yeah, I shouldn't forget to mention the large gun she was packing tucked into the back of her skirt. What kind of assistant is that!?



Two of the most famous fictional FBI agents in pop culture history: Agents Mulder and Scully from the X-Files. Ok, so our agents were not Mulder and Scully, but I couldn't resist making the comparison.

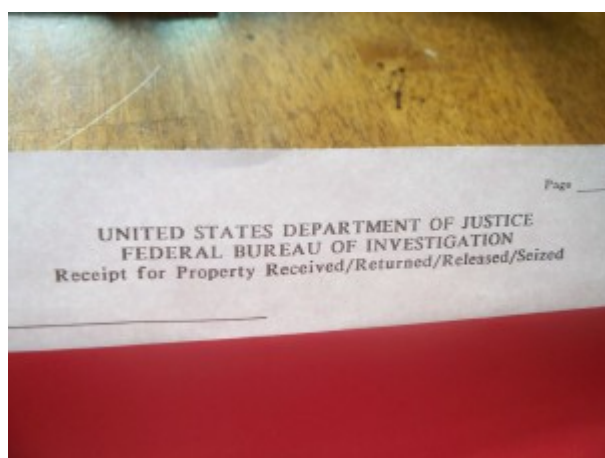
So we go into a conference room of sorts, and the interview begins. The agent and his assistant are not unfriendly, and they want to know the facts of the case. They are both taking notes, but probably most surprising to us is the absence of laptop computers – these FBI guys (from the cyber crimes division) are taking notes with pens on Steno pads, and that's not even a joke. But it is hilarious.

The entire day had a Men in Black-like feel... If you've seen the movie, then you remember the part where Will Smith is recruited to be a man in black – he goes to this bland looking government building that turns out to be very sci-fi on the inside with all the security measures and things like that. Such was the case here – lots of doors, signs about authorization, keypads, things like that, very sci-fi, and my husband told the agent so at the end of the interview. Mr. X seemed to chuckle (we wondered on the way home, are FBI agents trained to drain themselves of personality?), and he told us that we could just take the elevator back downstairs, no special code needed – thanks for the advice.

All in all, a very interesting trip. Made me want to do things like see Salt (a movie about the FBI) or read [Special Agent: My Life on the Front Lines as a Woman in the FBI](#) again. Did the FBI interview do any good for my husband's business? We don't know yet. It depends if they catch the

people who are doing it. The FBI disclaimed several times that it doesn't seem as if the damages the business has incurred will be recovered, and we of course are praying otherwise. Whatever happens, this is part of learning to trust God's plan for us, isn't it? Easier said than done. I'm really hoping that the stress on my husband dissipates soon...

And oh yeah, a little souvenir from the FBI (the property we gave them was received and not seized, in case you are wondering):



Mars, Venus, Whatever You Call It

It seems like men and women can be from different planets at times. During a series at youth group called "Lovesick", we were shown the following videos, and they illustrate the differences between the opposite sexes hilariously – Enjoy!

[cartoonconversation-outtoeat.mp4](#)

[cartoonconversation-pant.mp4](#)

December Blues...

Well, it is December and the Bears are 9-3... However, I am not feeling particularly joyful.

For one – one of my major clients has vanished with a large unpaid bill. A payment we were really relying on and our budgeting included. I sure hope she is ok. I am worried that something has happened; though hopefully it is just that she doesn't want / cannot pay her bill and is avoiding me. That has happened several times before with clients.

For two – my (other) server is under a **major [DDoS attack](#)**. And, while I am not going to post the site name here (don't want this server to get attacked) it is my site that outs online scammers that got threatened and then attacked. It has already cost me one client and will undoubtedly cost me tons in terms of losing visitors. The two major sites on that server get a LOT of visitors through Google. But, since it is now basically offline, it is only a matter of time before Google de-lists my sites costing me potentially tens of thousands in revenue. I have worked so hard to get those two sites to be major forces; I am SO BUMMED.

For three – my health has been icky-poo. Nothing serious, but with all the other stress it is just something else I don't need. I have had headaches on most days, back pain which sometimes mounts to a sharp-pain-attack, I have some weird cracking noise and pain in my knee, and my eyesight has gotten blurry, and my stomach is often aching. I guess I am just THAT old.

For four – my investor has bailed. I had a partner/investor on a project and he wants out. This means \$7500 must be paid

(back to him). \$7500 that is long ago invested. Now, legally, I do not have to give him a thing back but ethically/morally I have to return his money. After all, I am delayed more than FIVE MONTHS on the project. This just comes at a really bad time for that.

Last December I suffered a catastrophic HD failure when my HD crashed, was low-level-formatted and then when I went to restore from the backup – it was damaged. It cost me several clients, lots of money, and a very big headache.

Last December Charity, the dog we loved as a member of the family, died.

December has always been one of my favorite times – Christmas! And, now that we celebrate for the real reason (Jesus), Christmas has become even more special. However, after these past two Decembers I don't know. I just don't know. In every way other than Charity dying (which is a HUGE one), this December is much worse than last one. I cannot remember a time I felt so un-optimistic in my adult life.

I have no choice but to work hard to try and salvage and fix what I can and to lay the rest at the foot of the Cross. I have trust in God's plan for me and know that He will keep His promise not to give me more than I can handle; just as He has kept it all my life.

After all, I am still **very** blessed. I have been given much; so much is to be expected of me. I have an amazing wife, loving children, dear friends, I live in a free country, I have a roof over my head, plenty to eat, and much more. Too many blessings to even list...

And, the trials I face are nothing compared to the issues some of my friends and family have had to face or are facing. Some have lost loved ones, some have friends moving away, some have serious medical issues, some have stress and pressure well beyond mine. And some have not come to know Christ yet and to

accept His sacrifice.

So, even though I am feeling sorry for myself, I won't complain. I have TONS of reasons to give worship and praise to our Creator! Especially at Christmas time where we celebrate the greatest gift ever given.

Derek, do you see who that is in the video!? Christ Saves!!

In thinking of life.

I'm never sure that I have any answers to life's questions. I've lived a more than a few years now, and I keep finding things I have no answers for. A part of life, i guess, to be constantly looking for answers.

I hope to find them, I hope they can be found.

Growing up, I thought my father had all of the answers. To my young eyes, he appeared to be the best of everything. As I grew older, I realized my father had a lot of things that he could teach me, but there were things he didn't know. His life experiences were not the same as mine, so he had no knowledge in same areas. I had to learn those things on my own.

As a father, I would assume my children thought at one point in time, I knew more than I actually did. As the grew, I'm sure that they found my life experiences not quite fitting the lives they followed. They needed to find their own answers.

I hope to give one more piece of advice. Unasked for? Maybe. Not needed? Perhaps. Good advice, ahh, that is up to you. It is advice for anyone who needs it. And actually it came from my Dad.

"When you are in a situation where you will be making a choice, it is best to stop and think before making the choice." Maybe my Dad did know everything after all.

A Person Is A Person No Matter How Small

Another fun-filled weekend! Friday, I invited a trio of lovelies to take in Elizabeth's elementary school's production of *Seussical, Jr.* It was a cute show and what A LOT of work!

THIRTY-FOUR songs and a group of 58 youngsters on stage the entire time. I have no idea how much more is involved in the full-scale edition of the musical but I remember how daunting a task of a 21 song show was especially for the director. For those of you who do not know, the musical combines the tales of Horton the Elephant who Heard a Who and Hatched the Egg.

Along with Horton, we were entertained by the Cat in the Hat, JoJo (the son of the Mayor of Whoville and his wife), Gertrude McFuzz, Mayzie LaBird, and other characters from the pages of Theodore Geisel. I have found myself humming the signature piece from the show "Oh, the Thinks You Can Think" for the last few days. Unfortunately, the youngest of my three companions did not make it through the entire 90 minute production.

Saturday night, I was the leader at mass which went really well as celebrated the Second Week upon the journey to celebrating the Birth of Our Savior.

Following mass, I headed out to another fun-filled game night with an 80s flare. I decided to wear my Indiana Jones t-shirt. One of the other party-goers was REALLY creative and came as the White Cosby in slacks and colorful sweater. He even brought a box of Jello Instant Chocolate Pudding (after his search for Jello Pudding Pops turned out to be fruitless).

While playing Life, we had *The Goonies* playing with no sound which somehow made it go quicker. After Life, the 9 of us formed teams for a round of Trivial Pursuit 80s style while *Christmas Vacation* went on without sound. About 1:30AM without a clear champion, the game broke up and I bid *adieu* since I had to be up in 5 1/2 hours for work.

A fun weekend filled with great friends!

Bon Voyage, Boo Boo

After a fun weekend, I just found out that one of my very good friends is leaving to make a new home for herself Down Under.

It has been some time since I have seen Britt but I do think about her often. We met when she was in junior high and sat from time to time with my cousin. In high school, she worked at the grocery store and I came home on the weekend from school to work and we often were scheduled the same shift.

"Boo Boo" spent her senior year in Australia as an exchange student something she wanted to do since she was in elementary school but took her that long to make her dream a reality... ironically, she was among the first to welcome in the millennium. While she was gone for the year, we wrote back

and forth and I got to hear about her cool experiences... kangaroo hunting, going to the beach in January, and all the rest.

She is also a relative. My uncle and her mother married several years ago. Last summer, Britt returned to Australia and Lu went along for the ride. Shortly after her return (or even before), Boo Boo decided that she wanted to move there! WOW! Talk about shooting for the stars and going after your dream! Some others could learn from that example.

She is also a very staunch supporter of your truly! One who saw me as Rooster as well as some beyond. Teaching and coaching at a school in a city school a hour or so away kind of makes it difficult to make it to a lot of shows when you are in as many as you can.

Godspeed my friend. You will be missed!

Finishing what I started

Last evening I was feeling a bit of insomnia invading my room, so I decided to try to finish a [book that I blogged about some time ago](#).

Step one accomplished, I did finish around 3:00am. My view of the work itself changed very little. I can't honestly say that it was a sleep problem cure, but it never captured my interest. So here you have it folks, my final thoughts on Timothy Frost's "Final Passage".

So in my humble opinion:

The book had enough plots and subplots for multiple books. it was busy. Because of this, the character development actually

suffered. I never really cared what happened to any of the characters. I found that I didn't like or dislike any of the characters. I was ambivalent. If they got in trouble, I wasn't driven to find out if they made it through. In fact at one crucial point in the story I was thinking, "Just shoot them all, it doesn't matter." Any other character could have stepped in to finish the story.

The initial plot, brought forth in the prologue, didn't seem to have any importance at the end. Oh, I do understand how it could have been important if revealed earlier, but too much other 'stuff' happened, and I no longer cared about that either.

I guess I won't give this book the "Insomniac Relief Award" now, I can't say that I would recommend it either. In some ways I feel a bit saddened by this. The prologue of the book grabbed my attention. I waded through many chapters in the hope that the book would turn back to that beginning. When it finally got back there, I no longer cared.

Goodbye To Ron Santo

People who don't pay much attention to baseball and the MLB, particularly the Chicago Cubs, might not realize who Ron Santo is or that he is gone.



Ron Santo, legendary Chicago Cubs supporter, has passed away at the age of 70. Gaining popularity first as a player then as an outspoken sportscaster, Ron Santo became the voice and face of the Chicago Cubs in recent years. Always saying what was on his mind, Santo's gravelly voice was the easiest way to find that Cubs game on WGN radio 720 in a hurry. As a Cubs fan, I will miss it.

Sadly, Ron Santo did not live to see himself inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, nor did he see his beloved Cubbies win the World Series. If you'd like to read more about Ron Santo or about his crusade against juvenile diabetes, [here is an article](#) in the suburban Chicago newspaper, The Daily Herald.

Condolences and prayers to the Santo family.