

A Gold Star For Me

So the last two nights have been dedicated to walking through [Miracles](#). We were warned that we would be “using book as little as possible.” However, it was more of a see how much we know with less than 3 weeks to go! It is so difficult to feel comfortable until we get on the stage. The VPs do not get the stage until 2 weeks prior to curtain... probably the one thing I do not enjoy with the group. However, I am really pleased with the amount of memorizing I have been able to do thus far. I surprised myself. Still some work to be done there but I was pleased.

Many of the dramatic beats are coming along nicely as well.

Even I can't believe where they are at this point! Imagine where they will be in a few weeks. I'm really going to surprise a lot of people... myself included. I got a gold star Monday night and heard some “WOW”s from the director tonight.

Even a “Well done, Mr. Shaf.”

I must say that this is my most emotionally draining stage experience to date. I will definitely be ready for a lighter show very soon. But I am lovin' the challenge of the drama.

I wonder if the countdown widget is back! Time to add one.

Blah!

I really don't have much on my mind right now, but I have this urge to write, so here I am sitting at my computer staring at my screen hoping something will pop into my head.

My life is pretty much boring. I usually sit at home by myself because Tony is scheduled to work when I am home and vise

versa and Amie is either at work or somewhere else. So I sit at home with my four cats. At the moment, I have most of the windows open and the front door, enjoying the beautiful weather. My kitties seem to be loving it as well. They love to try to steal window seats from each other. If one cat is in a window, the others try to take it. It is so entertaining. Darth loves to try and sneak behind me to get to my milk cup. They are all so cute and lovable.

I guess I will be rambling again, but nothing interesting is coming to my head. I have a movie in and once it's over, I am thinking about climbing out the upstairs window and reading on the roof. It will be nice to read outside and watch as the cats decide who will be the one to sit in the window and watch me.

I am not sure what to do. When Tony isn't around I can do things, but I get bored so easily. Maybe if my kittens decided they wanted to cuddle more often. I don't have very many friends, but I seem to need them to have fun! ☐ No, not exactly what I mean. There are times I love to be alone, but right now isn't one of those times. One of those times would be when I am in a mood to clean or take a walk or something, but since I walked home from work, I have no desire to walk, though I would take a walk with Tony. We haven't walked together for a long time. We did go to the mall last week and walked around there, but that isn't really the same thing as taking a walk outside, in nature. I guess I'll always be a country girl even if I am now living in town. I want the country back, the lawn next to the house, not another house. so many wildflowers, rabbits, deer, ducks, frogs and so many other animals running across the yard!

Well, I guess I should go. I think my movie is almost over and then it's time for some reading, or writing. Not sure which one at the moment. Adios!

Zoo Snoozin!

Last week I got an email from my friend Carol – she had planned a field trip to the zoo for a ‘Zoo Snooze’ and a few of her students backed out at the last minute. Since the trip was pre-paid, the spots were paid for, and Carol wanted to fill them – so she thought of me, her friend, the zoo lover, and I of course JUMPED at the opportunity!

I took my two oldest daughters since the age requirements for the trip excluded my 3-year-old Disney and of course my almost 2-year-old, who I wouldn’t have wanted along anyway. Poor Hubby had to stay home with the little ones, and how I missed him! (and the little ones) But other than that – Best. Zoo. Trip. EVER!!!

Because of legality reasons, my daughters and I were not allowed to ride the school bus with the rest of the group. So my friend Carol graciously arranged for us to ride with one of her student’s parents who were chaperoning – they were the nicest people! They were actually going to take their pickup truck, but upon learning that they’d have 3 hitchhikers, they switched vehicles to their SUV without complaint – how accommodating! We followed the bus to the zoo, and we hiked across the zoo carting our sleeping bags, pillows and backpacks, and I was EXCITED beyond belief!! We set down our stuff in Nature’s Neighborhood (where the birds were screaming) and walked over to the primate building where we got to watch the primates after zoo hours and listen to a zookeeper talk about her interactions with the primate families. We then went into the Museum of Science building (this is at the Toledo Zoo, don’t know if I mentioned which zoo it was...) into a classroom in the basement to listen to a worker tell about 3 animals – a box turtle, a salamander, and

a rat (my girls were more than happy to volunteer the info that they had FOUR pet rats at home!). After listening to facts about the animals, we got to touch them, and I had already promised myself I would touch it no matter what – not a big deal, I love animals, so I don't have a problem touching regardless of species... except for my fear of frogs, but had there been a frog, I was going to touch it! We switched classrooms and did the same thing with 3 more animals: a cockroach, an agama (type of lizard – cute!), and a fox snake. Because the group sizes for Zoo Snoozes are supposed to be 25-50 people, they had actually paired our group of 11 with a rather large school group from Northern Michigan. When we were in the classrooms doing the animal activities, they separated our groups, and I was so glad because it would have been difficult for our kids to see and touch the animals if we were still combined with the huge Michigan group.

Next we went to the Carnivore Cafe (used to be an exhibit building that housed animals and they left some of the cages up for kids to eat in – they get a big kick out of this) for our snack of pizza, raisins, juice, and animal cookies.



the kids eating in an
animal cage at the
Carnivore Cafe

We then went for a night hike, and walking around the zoo in the dark under the full moon was amazing. We could hear the lions roaring, the snow leopards making cat noises, and when

we walked past the cheetah exhibit, they were quite active. One sprayed a tree, and then he began stalking us, slowly walking toward us and then running at us and jumping on the fence! I didn't have my camera out when he jumped at the fence, but here he is stalking us – listen for the little cheetah “meow” at the end:

The zookeeper said that the cheetahs like to stalk toddlers who can barely walk, and they especially have fun with this during the zoo's Halloween celebration when parents bring their kids who dress up like cute and cuddly things – like little bunnies or other tasty cheetah snacks.

So we took a night hike to the aquarium, and it was neat to see the keepers turn on the lights for us. Even the fish were acting differently at night – some fish appeared that we don't normally see during the day when we come, and others were swimming in schools when they don't usually do that during the day.

After the night hike, we made enrichment treats for the animals – there were four to choose from: melon bombs for the elephants (you make holes in watermelons and stick carrot sticks in there), pumpkin cookies and paper towel tubes for the primates, and snack bags for the elephants. My oldest daughter made primate tubes, and Sammie and I made elephant snack bags – you put an apple, a pear, and a handful each of peanuts and popcorn in the bags and roll them shut and decorate them. We were incredibly surprised the next morning when we watched Louie the elephant (and it was his 7th birthday!) take our treat bags and pop the whole things into his mouth (bags and all!) without even opening them first! Here is a video of Louie eating our bags – too bad I couldn't get out from behind the girl with the ponytail:

After making the enrichments, we went back to a classroom and played an animal training games using a training clicker – I have to get myself one of those and follow the puppy around for a day or two to housebreak him! Wonder when I'll find the time for that? After the game, it was finally time for bed, and we got to choose if we wanted to separate from the Michigan group. We chose yes, leaving them to sleep with the screaming parrots – I get enough of that at home! And sure enough, they reported to us the next day that the birds were up and screaming at 5am. I would not have been too happy about that, especially since we didn't get to bed until 1am! So we took our stuff and slept in one of the classrooms in the basement of the Museum of Science which was pretty neat – it's a well-kept 1930's Works Progress Association building, and we got to wander the winding basement hallways back and forth to the bathroom. Never mind that the building is home to hundreds of frogs and toads – they were upstairs, and I didn't give them any thought.

I think I will end it here and save day 2 of the Zoo Snooze for another post – this turned out to be a rather long post, and even though it's difficult for me to understand, not everyone loves zoos as much as I do. I don't want to bore the heck out of anyone!

Going into the night

I was recently reminded of how alone I felt back just a few short years ago. I often wondered what my future would be like. In a few short months all of my future plans were crushed. For the next couple of years, I felt that there was no need to plan for any future.

Tonight, as I sat here trying to figure out if I wanted to read, watch a movie, or listen to a ballgame, I started to think about what the future may hold for me. And of course I started to think what sort of things I should be doing to get the future that would be best for me.

No definite answers this evening. That would just be too easy. No, I have some more thinking to do. I guess I will have plenty of time to do it. One day at a time for now. But at least I have given some thought about tomorrow.

New family members

Yesterday was a day for new family members, I guess. Tony and I had one planned and one was a surprise. My boss had asked if Tony and I were interested in taking Darth's friend and 'brother'. He was the last cat she had left in the garage, and she felt bad about leaving him by himself. He was losing weight and everything. So, Tony allowed me to bring him home and now Padme, Beru and Darth have a new brother. Wedge is a grey and white cat and is the biggest of our four cats. Padme is definitely not happy about it right now, but she will come around, she did with Beru and Darth and I am sure she will with Wedge. Wedge is a very friendly cat and he listens to Padme, so that will definitely help her except him, since he already knows who is in charge! Once Padme accepts Wedge, she will be nicer to the other cats also. She is a very spoiled and temperamental kitten, but I love her so much! ☐

Well, the other family member was brought home by Amie. She brought home a little two month old Jack Russel puppy. It isn't always going to be staying here since it is being potty trained. Where ever Amie is, the puppy will be going with her,

when it can. She named him Zeke and he is adorable. It is probably a good thing that Padme hasn't met him yet. She would be just thrilled to have a little hyper puppy around. ☐

Nothing Wrong With These Kids Today

I may not have kids of "my own" but I have about a dozen or so that I claim. Nieces, nephews, and children of special friends. I feel a great sense of joy whenever I am around them and I do not hesitate to know why: I am one of the biggest kids, myself. Spirited kids to the anti-social teenager I know all kinds and find something remarkable in them all: particularly, the anti-social teenager. Just last night, we shared an email conversation and I marveled at his wisdom (?) **NO WAY! WISDOM?!** This is one post that I hope he does not read. Or maybe I do in order to draw out another possible lurker. I keep telling him that he should really join us on tangents and share some of the wit and wisdom that a 14 year old young man has but... "Not yet." I know another teenage junior high girl who seems to have security issues. I can certainly relate... 6th-8th grade was NOT the best of times.

There are also the "tween"agers. WOW... so wise and mature. I was never like that!

Younger children just may have an even bigger influence on me... especially some of those more energetic, high-spirited ones. They really take you back. Playful, always the center of attention, carefree. Sounds like some bigger kids to me ☐ At times, you have to be on guard and know when to say when. Sometimes difficult to say and to put into motion but

creativity has its place. Remembering what it was like to be a kid may make me appear to be a push over, but, eh.

Finally, the BIG GUY who will have a HUGE place in my heart quite possibly indefinitely. Born the day after my birthday nearly 2 years ago and I got to visit at the hospital and help prepare for his homecoming. I am his biggest fan!

I am so blessed to know so many kids in all phases of development. And the best thing, at this point? You can take them home (not your own) when you are done with them!

I Miss Taylhis! I looooooove her!

My wife had an amazing opportunity to do something uber-fun with our two oldest daughters this evening... I'm not going to spoil her chance to share it with you, so you will have to wait on the details. But, the point is that she is not home tonight. It is just me and "the littles" (Beeber and Disney). And, boy, do I miss her!

I miss the kids too, but it is different. The late-nights are our exclusive time together where we get to wind down from the day and just enjoy being together. It is my favorite part of the day! Does that make me a bad daddy?

Anyhow, her not being here tonight just leaves me feeling so empty and lonely. I've tried a bunch of things to fill the void – playing football, doing chores, watching TV, working – and, finally... BLOGGING! And, you know if I am BLOGGING something must really be up!!

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone’ ”

Genesis 2:18

I have so much respect and admiration for my friend [John](#) (who must just find this post pathetic). His strength continues to be an inspiration for me throughout much of my life. I did get to share dinner with him which was just awesome! But still, I miss Lisa dearly!

I find myself doodling little hearts with “Lisa” in them and “I love Lisa” everywhere... You know, like a 8th grade girl with a crush would do – eech! Is this normal? What is wrong with me!?

Ok... I am going to try and get to bed before I further embarrass myself.

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Music in my head and other ramblings

I don't often listen to music using ear-buds or headphones. I usually enjoy a more encompassing sound from some good speakers. But, since I now have music loaded on my nook reader, and I hate the tinny little speakers on it, I am using some good ear-buds. Have you ever noticed that when wearing these, the singer and band are in the middle of your head? Interesting effect, at least for me. I could plug the nook into a set of speakers, but then it just isn't as portable.

The past couple of mornings have been a bit chilly. Funny how just a few short weeks ago, we would have considered the same temperatures warm.

I've always wondered why food tastes better when you are in good company. Eating alone can make for bland meals, even when made exactly the same. For me, eating outside always makes the food taste better too. So great big picnics with good company should have the very best food.

Sometimes I like to say things just to get people to think. It works well with my children, and people I know well, but not so much with the greeters at Wal-Mart.

If you have a glowing blue-tooth device in your ear, and say something to someone, do they assume you are talking on the phone?

I remember liking so many different candies as a child. Why is it that most of them don't satisfy in the same way? Of course I was eating all that stuff before I was introduced to 'Good' Chocolate. My taste in chocolate got expensive. But I still like Good and Plenty. ☐

Back in the summer of 1983, my future wife and I were trying to decide what music to have at our wedding. We picked a song that we both liked, and had some meaningful words. For years that song reminded us of our vows and our love for each other. Today when I hear that song, I can be brought to tears in one second and laughter from happy memories in the the next. I never know which will occur until they do.

There is another song from the same performer that reminds me of my relationship with my parents. Kind of puts life in perspective for me.

I'm not a fan of country music, and I'm not a fan of bars. So why is one of my favorite songs a country song about a bar?

Gaming for an Award

Cub scout award for... video games?? Where was this award when I was in Cub scouts? I would have aced this one easily. Okay, there is *some* work involved, but still- video games? Here's the text from [the official site](#):

Requirements

Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts, and Webelos Scouts may complete requirements in a family, den, pack, school, or community environment. Tiger Cubs must work with their parents or adult partners. Parents and partners do not earn loops or pins.

Belt Loop

Complete these three requirements:

- 1. Explain why it is important to have a rating system for video games. Check your video games to be sure they are right for your age.*
- 2. With an adult, create a schedule for you to do things that includes your chores, homework, and video gaming. Do your best to follow this schedule.*
- 3. Learn to play a new video game that is approved by your parent, guardian, or teacher.*

Academics Pin

Earn the Video Games belt loop and complete five of the following requirements:

- 1. With your parents, create a plan to buy a video game that is right for your age group.*
- 2. Compare two game systems (for example, Microsoft Xbox, Sony PlayStation, Nintendo Wii, and so on). Explain some of the differences between the two. List good reasons to purchase or use a game system.*
- 3. Play a video game with family members in a family tournament.*
- 4. Teach an adult or a friend how to play a video game.*
- 5. List at least five tips that would help someone who was learning how to play your favorite video game.*

6. *Play an appropriate video game with a friend for one hour.*
7. *Play a video game that will help you practice your math, spelling, or another skill that helps you in your schoolwork.*
8. *Choose a game you might like to purchase. Compare the price for this game at three different stores. Decide which store has the best deal. In your decision, be sure to consider things like the store return policy and manufacturer's warranty.*
9. *With an adult's supervision, install a gaming system.*

As most of you know, I was really into gaming back in the day. I spent hours at arcades and played my Atari and Colecovision systems to death. Ah, the days... Speaking of scouting, [JustJ](#) would be pleased to know that the boy scouts are embracing modern technology in Geocaching. One article mentioned a merit badge, but so far what I read on their site talks more of the activity than earning a badge. Click [here](#) and [here](#). Scratch what I just wrote- merit badge information can be had by clicking [here](#).

Oh, you probably want an update on that quiz. Of the three that garnered the most guesses, one of them is correct. The one with no guesses? You are correct in that it is not us. The other video was among the two with a single affirmative response. So without further delay, the two videos featuring our choir (at least in audio in the case of one) are:

1. They Didn't Know

[vimeo]<https://vimeo.com/10678741> [/vimeo]

6. Rise and Sing

[vimeo]<https://vimeo.com/10677420> [/vimeo]

Check out what the junior high kids do toward the end of the video-

I can name most of the boys from their time in 4th/5th grade, including

one who was in my cabin at camp two years ago.

So, how did you do? ☐

Hmm maybe this time

Two weeks ago, I received a letter to report for Jury Duty. That case did not make it to court, so I didn't have to report.

Last week I got my second letter. Well, this time I do have to report for Jury Duty, but there is a chance I won't get selected. I won't know until I get there.

Last time I served on a jury was in the play that wouldn't end. It seemed like most of my life, for a year, was taken up by the play "12 Angry Men". I just hope the jury duty doesn't seem like that.

Probably won't blog too much in the next few days.