

Proof I'm getting older...

I think I'm in the final stages of some illness. I lost most of my voice for a day and 1/2. On top of that I had a headache that would not go away for long. It was there, and then it got better. But then it came back again. The headache is gone, the sore throat is better. I can talk without pain now, so that is good.

But today I had to go out and split some wood. It is supposed to get cold this weekend, so I wanted to make sure I had enough wood. I really didn't want to go out to get wood in single digit temps. It looks like I will have to go out in the cold. I couldn't spend more than 1/2 hour splitting wood. I know I'm just getting over something, but I didn't feel like my energy was that drained.

Now none of this is indication of getting older. No, it is just an indication that I was sick. The older part is the wood I brought up to the house. I've been cutting wood since I was 15 when I helped my Dad. I've spent a good 35 years knowing what wood was good to burn and what wasn't. All the wood I split today, and the stuff I brought up to the house before I was sick was from trees that don't give off good heat. Hmm. Now I forgot all about wood that was good to burn. I guess I shouldn't be too hard on myself, because of the large variety of wood I was cutting. The cut pieces were all mixed in together. Tomorrow I need to some good wood up to the house. I hope I can determine what is good to burn.

Harry Potter And The Sorcerer's Stone

I did it. I've finished reading the first book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. And I really enjoyed it; I think I can officially call myself a Harry Potter fan! The book was very fast-moving, and because it's kind of a kids' fantasy book (but don't get the wrong idea – MANY adults like it too!), I was able to finish the entire 300 pages on my limited reading schedule without even having to renew it at the library once!

Tonight, I'm going to start the second book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, and if I can convince my husband, we'll be watching the movie of the first book this weekend. And now I am REALLY excited to see the new [Wizarding World of Harry Potter](#) at Universal Studios in Orlando. They are being kinda secretive about the Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey attraction, but it promises to use "entirely new technology" to bring the Harry Potter series to life "in a way never before experienced"! Maybe something like The Mummy ride or The Amazing Adventures of Spiderman 3D? How cool would that be for Harry Potter!! And the shops and restaurants are all going to keep in the tradition of the boy wizard's world. Chocolate frogs, anyone? The world doesn't open until spring, and it doesn't look like we're going to get to Florida before the fall or next winter anyway, so if that becomes a reality, we will have to make sure we get to Universal – I really liked Islands of Adventure anyway, and now it's going to be even better! I just have to make sure I read all the Potter books by then. And I almost don't want to read too much about the new world on the internet for fear that it would be spoilers about things I haven't discovered yet.

As much as I'm enjoying the Harry Potter series, I'm not

usually one to stick to one type of book. If I need a break from Hogwart's before I get through all 7 stories, I might try [*The Zookeeper's Wife*](#), a story about a zoo in Poland in the 1930's and how it's destroyed during the holocaust – as long as it's not too depressing of a read.

A New Adventure Awaits

I got an email tonight that has lifted my spirits quite a bit!. There is a new theatre group just starting to get on its feet in the area. I was invited to be a member of the cast for its second show coming Valentine's weekend. What little I know about it (don't even have a title) is that it is another Murder Mystery with a twist... full of improv. Kind of a scary word that, but when was the last time I turned down a challenge? This will also stretch my acting chops even further by seeing how well I act under pressure. Could be fun and yet another venue to conquer. Three rehearsals only... whoo whee! Sounds fun.

A Big Sarcastic THANKS

THANKS – to the one who got us the 300 piece puzzle for Christmas. Granted, 300 pieces are not too many for a puzzle. But normal puzzles usually have the person putting together a broken portrait, like a picture of a landscape or a scene. But the puzzle given to my 10-year-old back in December was a depiction of a collection of small toys clustered together on some shelves – what seemed like 300 toys broken

into 300 pieces which we were supposed to piece together...

I wanted to do this puzzle together as a family days after it was given to us, but since that was one of the worst weekends of my life, we didn't get around to it. Tonight, my 10-year-old was having trouble sleeping after her little sisters had gone to bed, so we hauled it out and went to work. Thank goodness the little ones were asleep. There was no way that they would have felt anything but frustration when trying to do this puzzle – it was too daunting for even my husband to try, but then again, he is not a puzzle person in the slightest. As a matter of fact, when he saw our completed triumph, he asked, "How do we preserve this?" I answered, "Why bother, we'd probably like to do it again; it was fun." He gave me the strangest look and said, "I guess our definitions of fun in this case are completely different."

I'm proud to say that together, my daughter and I finished the "impossible" puzzle about 15 minutes under our two-hour goal. Here are some pics:





Despite my clever blog post title and in all seriousness, I am thankful for the time that we spent together doing the puzzle, and we will look forward to doing it again. The thanks I would like to extend to the puzzle-giver is not at all sarcastic; we actually had a lot of fun. But that same puzzle-giver should keep a watchful eye... there are now two of us looking to challenge you to an equal payback ☐

Let It Snow... Well, Just For Tonight

I am glad to be home. I've got a nice warm cup of coffee next to me as I sit at my computer... but don't let my facade of relaxation fool you. I've already changed 3 dirty diapers and broken up 4 squabbles in the past hour since I've been home, with more of both sure to come. But my errands today went even worse – one of those days where most things, even the littlest things, are going wrong – too many things to list, and I'm exhausted.

And it's snowing, which made everything I did today more difficult. It depends upon the news outlet of choice; the radio says we are to get 2-4" of snow today with another

possible inch tomorrow. I am also a fan of weather.com, who says my area is due for a possible 3-5" today, and another 1-3" at night. Basically the same forecast, but I know they weren't exaggerating this time – there are already at least 3" of snow on the ground. I know because I had to trudge through it, both on foot and in the car. The roads are terrible, but walking is a breeze thanks to the boots I got a few months ago. Well, it would be a breeze if it weren't for all the little ones I have to bundle and re-bundle and lift out of the car at every stop. I had so many stops to make and was so sick of the snow today that I decided to not go to the library and pick up the second Harry Potter book. I know, it sounds great to be snowed in with a good book, especially because hubby is working all night, but it's difficult to imagine that I will achieve any kid-less time. I just couldn't bring myself to make that extra stop, especially when the day's other errands had already gone so awry. Some of it was just plain bad luck and some had to do with the fact that all 4 kids – well, ok, 3 of them, but I'm not mentioning any names – have been terribly behaved lately.

In what has turned into a ranting blog post of complaints, where was I?

My husband had a major issue with his work in December, so he needs to work basically whenever he's awake to get our family back on track. I lost my other best friend in this house in December, and it feels kind of lonely when the people you hang out with all day do nothing but poop, cry, or argue, sometimes all doing all 3 things at once. And I started today on such a good note; where on earth would I be right now if I hadn't? I stayed positive this morning while I cleaned the poop out of the bathtub, and I even smiled when my son pooped again on the floor and slid on it like it was a banana peel – disgusting, that's obvious, but you have to admit that it makes for a humorous mental picture (no one was hurt, unless you count my bathroom floor).

The trip to Walmart today went surprisingly well, even though I didn't leave myself enough time for lunch. But then the kids lost it as I was loading the groceries into the car, and between the yelling and the snow, I realized I was not really IN the drive-thru at McDonald's – I was kind of taking up the drive-thru lane AND the drive-past lane simultaneously. It was too late for me to move over, at least not until the car in front of me moved, and sure enough, there came someone *squeezing* past me... I turned my head, ready for the dirty look I knew I was about to receive, and the driver did not disappoint. He glared at me, and that's when I saw it was a county sheriff, and I sank low in my seat – how embarrassing. And great – I feel sorry for the other red vans that get pulled over if this guy is looking to get revenge on me; he looked awfully perturbed at my ignorance.

So then I get home, and my little boy has fallen asleep (only took 15 minutes of crying in the car), so I put him in his crib and venture back out into the snowstorm because I forgot milk – a morning requirement in this house o' kids. But because it was today, and because anything that could go wrong **was** going wrong (remember that I've left out still most of the gory details), the first store I check is completely *out of milk*. So I go to another place, and they do have milk, but there I run into an acquaintance with whom I am forced to make chit-chat. Normally, I'd be ok because I like most people I meet, but there are a select few (usually those afflicted with [P.A.S.](#)) who really get on my nerves. Enter this guy, today, one of "those days". But I'm nice, I'm still in a positive mood, I've got my milk, and I'm on my way home. When I slide into my driveway (reminding me it has to be shoveled later), I want to sit at my computer with my cup of coffee and relax, but I decide instead to play a game of Dora Candyland with my 3-year-old because it's something we can't do when her brother is around and wreaking havoc. No sooner do we get out the Candyland than her brother wakes up – great, so all I accomplished during his nap today was getting milk! No "me"

time and worse yet, no quality one-on-one time with my daughter – just errands, UGH!

Well enough ranting for now, let's just say that I did end up with my cup of coffee and my quiet time. But if you think the kids relented and gave me this on their own, you should read more of my blog posts because that is SO not the case. My husband had to take a break from work and spend it with the kids. So now it's my turn, and my quiet time is over. But let it snow – we don't have anywhere to be because Girl Scouts was canceled this evening due to snow. Maybe we can counteract some of today's unpleasantness by spending some quality family time together tonight while we're snowed in... but please, not another day off school for the kids – after today, I don't think I could handle a snow day!

Nothing To Say...

Another fog day, so the kids are off school. They're playing with each other right now, so I have a few minutes... why bother to start cleaning when I know that they'll be "momming" me any second? The house is a disaster, and it needs a good few hours of attention at least. Why bother starting laundry? The bird will only scream at me and rile up the kids who are otherwise being good.

A fellow tangents blogger recently wrote about the grey days of winter, and I guess I'm feeling that now. It's too cold to bundle up the kids and take them anywhere, and we're really trying to watch our pennies anyway – taking them out costs money, even if just the gas in the car, it's still more expensive than staying home. Can't walk anywhere because it's too cold. So, we're staying home, trying to keep all 5 of us

out of the way of my husband, who works at home and is, of course, working all day.

No need to bring you up to speed on the current happenings in my life – just every day stuff, laced with a little bad luck. Nothing to spread any “cheer” about.

We’ve watched a few movies recently; saw Star Wars for the first time as an adult. Growing up in the 80’s, I saw clips of the most famous parts as a kid. My husband and I both had the stomach flu last week, and we couldn’t sleep, so we stayed up and watched Star Wars. It was entertaining; not my kind of movie, but perhaps eventually I will watch the other movies in the series. Here’s a question for Star Wars fans: I know that they re-released the movie with digital enhancements, including the scene with Jabba the Hut. So did they film that as new footage for the re-release? Harrison Ford did look like he could be decades older...

And speaking of series, I have begun to read the Harry Potter series. I’m about 50 pages away from finishing the first book, and I’m really enjoying it. I was really excited to watch the movie when I was finished with the book, but then I started thinking that I might want to keep my own vision of Hogwarts. Might the movie ruin the picture I have in my head? Using imagination is fun; I don’t want to take that away from myself or lose motivation to finish reading the series. Then again, I’ve never heard any Potter fans complain that the movies didn’t do the books justice; I hear they are very good. I’m just wondering if I should wait until I’m done with or at least a little further in the series to watch the movies.

Then again, it’s not like we have a lot of time to watch movies, anyway. With my husband back on full time and us still fulfilling our youth group and other obligations, as well as caring for our 4 kids (who don’t sleep a lot!), by the time we put in a movie for “us” time, we are both dozing and

can't get through an entire one anyway. Sigh. Well, not to be negative, but the grey days of winter are here. Can't wait until spring!!! GO CUBS! Maybe THIS year...

A winter prediction

I'll give you a winter prediction: It's gonna be cold, it's gonna be grey, and it's gonna last you for the rest of your life.

A quote from a movie I watch over and over again, kind of matches the forecast for this weekend. It's going to be cold and most likely grey, but I'm fairly certain it won't last for the rest of your life. But is this quote an indication of the weather, or the ramblings of a depressed man? At the point it is said, I would say the latter.

For me it is an indication that I need to get more firewood up to the house. With weather getting down to the single digits, I want some wood that will burn long and hot. I don't want to have to go outside often to get more wood, and I want to make sure the fire puts out enough heat to keep my heating bills a bit lower.

I have some good wood, but I need to be careful with the wood I bring to the house. There were multiple trees knocked over when the big oak fell. The oak burns very well if dry, but there are other types of trees in the fallen lumber that are not oak. Some burn well, some do not. So while moving the wood, I need to pick and choose the good burning wood.

So there is another metaphor on life. You need to pick the good stuff, the stuff you need to make life warm and comfortable.

May you find some warmth on cold winter nights.

Pictures of that big tree. My daughter stands about 5 feet tall, she is about 15 feet from what was ground level of this tree.



Close Up same tree, same daughter.



And Remember The Truth That Once Was Spoken

To Love Another Person

Is to See the Face of God

This morning, the family lost another member to the most hateful word in the English lexicon: cancer. Aunt Carol has been valiantly battling the disease for a number of years until the last few months when she was house-ridden and given home health care. This morning between 11 and 12, the phone rang once and then quit. However it was enough time for the ID to display the caller. It was enough for me to realize

that it could not be good news and they forgot that Mom was on her Kindergarten bus route. Shortly after noon, Alicia and Stacy came to the house and the tears began. She passed around 9.30 with both of the girls by her side.

It finally hit home for me at work tonight. I was in the back by myself and I just realized how soon following Emily's passing that Aunt Carol succumbed. One week exactly from 16 months. Two extraordinary women who passed away much too soon. Carol was 53. Emily was exactly one month from her 60th birthday.

Thoughts and prayers to Carol's family.

Clue – The Office!

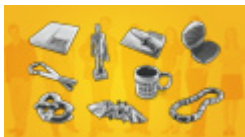
My first Christmas present of 2009 – Clue The Office Collector's Edition!



Ok, I have to be honest – could you tell I started the draft of this post weeks ago? But I had to finish it, cuz this is a super-cool game given by a very thoughtful friend. In addition, I received some other awesome gifts: Walmart gift cards and a gift certificate to the local pet store so I can get my parakeet – more on that later. My gifts also included something incredibly touching and sentimental from my husband

and kids, but that's all I need to say about that to keep from traveling the dark road of sadness.

Back to Clue – The Office version – it was so fun! In true keeping with Office traditions, the victim in the game is Toby Flenderson! Obvious, especially when the game's instructions were penned by Michael. Each player chooses an available character, and they get a little Office ID card for their person (Office fans at our church exchanged this game for Christmas, and they replaced the little Office ID's with pictures of church staff – hilarious!). Players then move about the Office, entering rooms like Michael's Office or Accounting, and play continues just like the other versions of the game Clue – you make accusations about who killed Toby with which weapon in which room. My favorite part of this game (aside from the fact that I won the first round we played!) are the weapons – pewter figures representing various hilarious Office plot lines; for example, a bike chain, a Dundie award, and my personal favorite: a George Foreman grill!!



It's a must-have for any fan of The Office, to be especially appreciated by game collectors like myself!

Down Time

Ok, Ok... It has been three weeks since the curtain fell on the last show. It will be sometime before the next one (at least a few months as I committed to being my godson's sponsor for Confirmation in March). Can we say cabin fever? Ah, well...

something will come up. I do have a Star Trek Scene It game night coming Thursday night that I am REALLY looking forward to. I have about 5 versions of the game and really like the game although finding victims to play a few of them with can be difficult at times (Anyone for a little Bond... James Bond?)

I know that there is an 80s Pop Culture version to go along with the Trivial Pursuit version. I would also like the Harry Potter edition but I think I will wait until after the 2 part finale is finished just in case there will be more than one Harry Potter version. BTW, taylhis... how's that first book? I just started rereading *The Sorcerer's Stone* last night. Not sure when the first part of the cinematic *Deathly Hollows* is being released, but we'll see if I can make it through the seven books before that.

Back to another topic. One of Star Trek's finest was recently knighted. Sir Patrick Stewart now joins such icons as Sir Paul McCartney, TWO James Bond's (Sir Sean Connery and Sir Roger Moore), and *Lord of the Rings* director Sir Peter Jackson.

Of course Mr. Stewart is not limited in his credentials by being the captain of the USS *Enterprise* (NCC 1701-D and 'E).

He began his career in the Royal Shakespeare Company and was in a production of the most haunted play in history, *Macbeth*.

I remember watching a video of him playing Claudius in *Hamlet* during a class. He also starred as Professor Charles Xavier in the three blockbuster *X-Men* films. Stewart has now returned to the London stage in a play which I have yet to learn the title of. Anyone?

Hopefully, my down time will not lead to heaviness but with great friends and a crazy family to keep me busy... a few days to relax may be all I get ☐