

July 2011 (part 1)

The July 2011 page on my calendar has been filled since spring, so I knew we had a busy month ahead. Organizing everything I had jammed into those little squares on the calendar was going to be challenging enough, but then we were even able to add a few family mini-vacations to the mix! It's been a great summer so far despite the challenges of sometimes trying to be in 2 places at once, and I wanted to chronicle everything to enhance the wonderful memories we made as a family this summer – but be prepared; this will be quite the manifest when I'm finished!

June 30 and July 1 – We began the month with a last-minute trip to an indoor water park that's an hour away. After a sudden burst of cabin fever, my husband found a super internet deal that afforded us some much-loved family time. The kids loved the indoor water park, and Christopher was old enough this time to go on some water slides which he found to be a blast!

Best of all, the constant lower back pain that had been making me short of patience, irritable and tired all the time seemed to be remedied by my getting to sit in water for 2 days. I should note for future reference also how interesting it was to pack different people for 3 different trips at the same time. Simultaneously, I was packing 6 people for an overnight stay (with a separate bag for changing into street clothes from bathing suits, I might add), 1 little girl for a 4 day stay at camp, and also for a 3 day trip for 6 people. It felt hectic at the time, but not unmanageable – due to the fact that my wonderful family did much of the work for and with me. And you know what? I don't think we forgot anything!!

July 2, 3 – After the water park, we got a day of rest (and unpacking, re-packing, laundry) before we set out Sunday for the 4-hour drive to Nashville Indiana – with one small glitch: Hubby had food poisoning. He had to miss church to rejuvenate, and then we were off – well, after packing up the car and some other in-town odds n ends.

July 3-6 – We spent the 4th of July in Nashville – a yearly trip Hubby and I take with our 4 kids, my parents, my uncle, and my sister, her husband and their 2 kids – there were 13 of us staying in a large house in the middle of the Brown County woods. It was a beautiful place, and we're torn on where to choose to have next year's gathering. Last year, we had a beautiful house where each family had their own bedroom and bathroom. The few downsides to this house (called The Oaks) was the large steep hill that led down to the pond and fire pit – it proved to be dangerous last year when someone took a nasty spill (but was uninjured), so we didn't want to gamble with it this year when we have an adult who is practically incapacitated (me being 5.5 mos. pregnant). Also, the kids have to be watched constantly down by that pond, so it was a nice break for the adults this year to not have to worry about who was going to take them down there. Also, there wasn't really any yard for the kids to play in at The Oaks. There

was a swingset, but really only the two 3-year-old boys were of the age to enjoy a swing set this year, and that leaves 4 other kids with no yard to run around in. Both houses had pool tables inside and hot tubs outside (which became little swimming pools for the kids since we didn't want to turn on the heat in 90° weather), and The Oaks had tons of dvds, board games, and a foosball table, but then again, this year we brought our own dvds and games and the kids had TONS to do and were never bored. Another plus to this year's cabin vs. The Oaks: the large dining room table that fit almost everyone at the same time so we could enjoy meals together. The Oaks had only a small breakfast nook that seated 4 people or about 6 kids, so the adults had to eat elsewhere. Given these pros and cons of each cabin, it's going to be a tough decision next year on where to stay!!

The kids' favorite thing to do this year was to go down to the creek that ran around the property (this cabin was called "Ginley's Gulch" for future reference). There they would walk the creek, hunting for crawdads, geodes, and minnows, and they found quite a few of all of the above. As I said, this property had a larger yard, and also 85 acres of forest, and in the future I would like to explore the gorgeous property more since I wasn't quite feeling up to that this year. I did enjoy walking down the cleared path into the forest though – there were many beautiful butterflies, cool looking insects, and birds to see and hear. And oh yeah! I forgot to mention another huge plus of Ginley's Gulch – the screened-in porch! It had a ceiling fan, so it was a wonderful, mosquito-free place to spend our Brown County evenings together. A great trip!!

July 6 – We arose at the crack of dawn to pack up the car and get the kids roused for the 4+ hour drive to Michigan to drop daughter #2 at camp. We were all exhausted, and the kids slept much of the way. We did stop in Fort Wayne for something to eat, and we finally tried a little cafe where we had always wanted to try their eggs benedict since reading an

ad for them years ago. The eggs benedict was a bust – sauce from a packet, don't you know, but they did have one of my seasonal favorites that's very hard to find in the northern part of the country where I live: fried green tomatoes. And they were yummy! We dropped Sammie off at camp just a little late, and we were excited for her after seeing what a great place [Camp Selah](#) is (Camp Selah is a Christian camp in Reading Michigan, and both of our kids who went had a SUPER time!)

July 7-9 – These next few days were a bit quiet without the whole brood together, and we fit in another family min-vacation: since Sammie had to be picked up in the morning in Michigan, we took the other 3 kids to the drive-in in Coldwater Michigan and spent the night there – lots of fun! Saturday the 9th we picked up Sammie, and she said she had a good week during her first ever time at camp.

July 11 was the 3rd birthday of a very special little guy, and we took him out to dinner at the local Mexican restaurant where they sang to him, put a sombrero on him, and dabbed his nose with dessert. I of course forgot my camera ☹ but he liked it all the same. It reminded me of last year when the staff at Bob Evans sang to him, and he dove into my shirt to hide – the year of experience helped him to enjoy the attention more this year. And in the morning of little dude's birthday, I had to drive Taylor to camp in one of the nastiest storms of the year. We made it there without a problem, but the ride home was dicey with driving rain and wind. I was glad I didn't have any kids with me which would have made me nervous, and as you can tell I made it just fine – even if I did arrive sopping wet and very late to Bible study. In the newspaper the next day, I saw a picture of a power line that fell into the road which turned out to be the same road I had been driving down during that storm. Just goes to show you what kinds of things to look out for when driving during inclement weather in the middle of desolate farm country, and I feel blessed to have made it safely.

July 11-14 – So with our eldest away at camp, the week flew by... even though we missed her (I especially missed having someone old enough to have a normal conversation with me during the day). We had 3 days of doctor appointments (me and our youngest-for-now had his 3-year-checkup) and meetings, and then... freedom!

July 15 – Hubby and I met my mom in South Bend, and she took “the littles” (our family name for the younger kids in our family; in this case it meant our 3-year-old, 4-year-old, and 7-year-olds) to Grandma’s for a vacation – which left Hubby and I kidless for a whole day! So Hubby took me to the Potawatomi Zoo in South Bend, and the amount of walking and the weather was perfect for me even while pregnant since it was just the two of us. What a great idea as I was just starting to get zoo withdrawl! After the zoo, we decided to take the scenic route home from South Bend and fell upon a perfect date purely by accident: in Middlebury Indiana, there is an excellent Amish-style restaurant called [Das Dutchman Essenhaus](#). We were driving by on a day when they had a buffet, so we could sample many varieties of their very delicious food. Even better, there were some Amish men offering carriage rides in the parking lot, so we took one! It was so romantic, the grounds of the mini-resort were beautiful, the weather was perfect, and hearing the history of the grounds as told by our Amish guide was wonderful – best date day ever!!

(below is a picture of a horse and buggy like the one we drove in (ours was more of a carriage than a buggy). I had to take the picture on the way home since I had forgotten my camera and couldn’t take any pictures while on the buggy ride!)



July 16 – This was the day we picked up our oldest from camp, and we got to hear every detail about her awesome week while driving from Michigan to Fort Wayne to see... the new Harry Potter movie ON IMAX IN 3D!! Yes, it was as cool as it sounds, and it was fun to take Taylor out for a fun day with only parents and no younger siblings – dinner was at Golden Corral, one of her favorite places since she loves steak. I'm thankful that the awful nausea I felt earlier in the day did not persist through the movie, and the cause of it that day still perplexes me... such is a mystery of pregnancy, I guess.

July 17-18 – The 3 of us tackled the huge project of cleaning out our spare room – what a mess! I wish we had taken some “before” pictures, but the most important thing is that it got done, even if I felt like I was going to fall over in exhaustion by the end of it. I'm so proud of Hubby for all the hard work he did for this project, and especially that it was his idea to tackle it earlier than we had scheduled – we began Saturday night after Fort Wayne rather than Sunday after church as we had planned. But it looks GREAT, and as I'm writing this at the end of July, our family has gotten so much use out of it already. We made it into a craft / hobby / school room, and it has a computer, Taylor's new sewing machine (a present from Grandma), all kinds of paper, crayons, glue, etc, and all the many, many arts and crafts kits and supplies we had been saving (and losing) for the past 5 years.

(July manifest to be continued – need to give your eyes a

break! But first, here is a pic of a creative, cute fire hydrant in downtown South Bend Indiana I snapped while sitting at a stoplight – look for it near the silver van's rear bumper)



The Abyss

It took two nights, but we finally made it through the sci-fi 80's thriller, [The Abyss](#). What is with me and all the science fiction lately? Not usually my cup of tea; I guess I've just been enjoying a change of scenery. One reason for wanting to watch the Abyss is that I was very impressed by director / writer James Cameron's latest movie, Avatar. I enjoyed the movie in a little theater with old fashioned sound equipment, and I also got to catch it at a larger theater with awesome sound and in 3D – I REALLY enjoyed it! That doesn't mean I'm a James Cameron fan, however, and you couldn't pay me to sit through Titanic, whose concept I always thought sold out the disaster itself. I mean, for characters in the movie, there were over 2200 real Titanic passengers from which to choose – why spend millions of dollars to bring to life fictionalized accounts of such a horrible tragedy?

But back to The Abyss, another James Cameron water movie... Overall, this winner of the 1990 Oscar for visual effects was enjoyable, but I don't even know if I can say this is a watch-again-er for me. Reading the trivia on imdb.com about how the movie was filmed was almost more interesting than the movie itself, which tells the story of a group of oil workers who are hired to go on a dive search for a missing nuclear sub. Enter some Navy SEALs and a mysterious alien species, and you have enough action for a 138 minute movie. All of the diving and talk of the oceanic pressure kinda got to me after awhile; I don't think scuba diving is something I'm ever interested in doing. But I enjoyed the story and especially the visual effects, and without risking spoiling anything, let's just say that in typical 80's fashion, the plot was predictable. If you do happen to check this one out, or if it happens to be one of your old favorites, I highly recommend reading the trivia section on imdb.com to further your enjoyment.

A Not-So-Cynical Look At The 2009 Holiday Season

I was thinking about our family's 2009 holiday season, now come and almost gone already, and I was envisioning words to describe this wonderful season, despite the fact that this year ours was peppered with unpleasant familial dramatics. But about a week ago, I made what was a conscious decision to pull myself up from the depths of despair I had fallen into after losing a beloved family member just one week before Christmas. So, in my good humor, I chose 24 of the best words to describe my holiday season, each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet. Here goes...

Avatar – Saw it and actually liked it, despite my typical sci-fi reluctance. But I liked Avatar so much that I'm really hoping the timing and budget work out so that I can see it again in 3D at a more technologically savvy theater.

Big Family Christmas – We traveled to Illinois on Christmas Day and got to take part in a huge gathering of my husband's large extended family. His 92-year-old grandmother, who speaks with a thick east-coast Connecticut accent (and who smoked 3 packs of cigarettes a day from age 16 until age 70!) told many of her infamous stories that had everyone in stitches! After hearing one of Monie's stories, I could have used the words Blue Boob for B, but I will spare you those details... ☐

Christ Was Born – We went to a beautiful church service on Christmas Eve to celebrate and reflect upon the entire purpose of the Christmas holiday.

De... There are two words that come to mind for this letter based upon certain recent events in my life, but I'm not going to go there; this is to be "A Not-So-Cynical Look..." blog post. So here, D will stand for Dumbledore, since I'm almost halfway through my first Harry Potter book and lovin' it!

Elf – My favorite holiday movie, and we actually had time to watch it this year! It, unlike a few other favorite Christmas experiences, did not lose any magic this year. I still felt that warm and fuzzy "Christmas Magic" feeling after I watched this movie – I'd pull it out more often, but it's not the same unless it's Christmas!

"I love smiling; smiling's my favorite!!" – Buddy The Elf

Friends – We are so blessed to have such wonderful friends, and I can't thank them enough for the things they did and just for being there during this bittersweet time.

Grandparents – We were able to visit 3 of our grandparents this holiday season! Even being in our 30's, we have 3

surviving grandparents among my husband and I – we were blessed to be able to spend time with all of them this year!

Homemade spaghetti – Best. Christmas. Gift. EVER!! My mother-in-law sent us home 4 huge frozen batches of her out-of-this-world spaghetti sauce! AND a large bag of grated Asiago cheese. AND... something I'll save for another letter...

Ice – Drove through plenty of it to reach IL and get back to Ohio on Christmas day. Luckily, traffic was light and travel for us was smooth and safe. The kids were good as gold and slept for the majority of both drives.

Jill – Screwed us over again! This little story begins with Walmart. Since this is “A Not-So-Cynical Look...”, I won't go off about Walmart, but I will simply state the facts: the pump in our windshield wiper cleaner fluid dispenser stopped working after the last time we got an oil change at Walmart. We didn't really need it until Christmas night, when we were driving past the city of Chicago, and apparently smog + snow = some sort of disgusting pollution paste. So visibility is limited, and we still don't know exactly what happened since we've driven this route dozens of times, but basically the express lanes on I-90 seemed to suddenly dissolve into city streets. So now it's 10:30 on Christmas night, and we're wandering around in the city. We can't see out the back of the car since there's tons of Christmas presents, and we can't see out of the front of the car because of the pollution paste. This is where Jill comes in – and she directs us straight back to I-90. Only problem is, our van can't just jump guardrails; we needed an entrance ramp, and Jill was only directing us to streets that crossed over the expressway and didn't actually intersect with it. So we crossed bridge after bridge, and we criss-crossed I-90 until one of those streets had an entrance ramp. Then Jill freaked out and tried to get us off of the expressway again, but she got her power button pressed – we knew our way from there.

Kalachkies – I have a fun memory of a Christmas years ago when my forgetful Polish grandmother was sitting in her wheelchair, instructing my equally Polish uncle and myself how to make kalachkies, a usually delicious Polish cookie. The end results were inedible and referred to as “hockey pucks”. This year at Christmas, my husband’s cousin made homemade kalachkies – real ones, no hockey pucks, and they were delicious! Thanks Lilly!

Late night drive – One night, we took the kids out in the car in their pajamas with some snacks, and we drove through the snowy countryside to a town about 30 minutes away for a drive-thru lighted display that’s just wonderful. Late night drive could also refer to my husband’s and my peaceful drive home (after the unscheduled tour of the city) while the kids were asleep all the way from Illinois to Ohio – nice.

Mashed Potatoes – My mother-in-law is a great cook! I guess it’s been awhile since the last time I had her mashed potatoes, because I didn’t remember how they tasted. But I told her the truth after Christmas dinner – they were the best mashed potatoes I’ve ever had!

Noodles – My mother-in-law’s spaghetti sauce also came with EIGHT pounds of whole wheat gourmet organic pasta! I love whole wheat pasta – it actually tastes better, and you don’t get the pasta-stomachache / horrible stuffed feeling that can accompany pasta over-indulgence.

Onions – One of my favorite holiday dishes is creamed onions, and it was a nice surprise to see this dish on the Christmas buffet. Fortunately for me, my husband can replicate the taste of his mother’s creamed onions – yum!

P.A.S. – Pompous Ass Syndrome – my poor brother-in-law is a victim. Enough Said.

Quiet – With 4 kids and Christmas celebrations spread out over 2 weeks, there really wasn’t much of this.

Revenge – My brother and sister-in-law gifted our kids 3 little gumball machines. Cute, but not when you realize how many gumballs needed to be pried out of our candy-obsessed toddler's little hands, for one thing. Who would give little kids gumball machine gifts? Wait, isn't that what we got her 3 kids last year?!? I'm all for re-gifting; I really think it's a smart thing to do. But maybe next year I'll choose our Christmas gifts more carefully...

Snow – It's been snowing on and off for a week and a half here in Ohio. The Chicago area was unexpectedly blanketed with about a foot of snow on Saturday – thank goodness we left for Ohio on Friday night!

Turkey – We ate it and it was good.

U-Turn – see “J” – Jill the GPS. Besides the time we were lost in Chicago, Jill caused us to make at least one other U-turn on this trip.

Vile – Odor in Gary Indiana – I don't care what the Music Man had to say – Gary Indiana STINKS! Literally!!!

Weather – I was worried about it all week, but thankfully, it didn't impede our journey in the slightest.

X-changing gifts – Ok, that's too generic? What else could X stand for, the rating of Monie's Blue Boob story? We x-changed gifts many gifts, and that's all I'm going to say.

Yellow Puppy – When our friends heard about our family's heartbreak, they gifted us a gigantic (stuffed) dog. This cute puppy's headband wouldn't even fit on my head, and she wears a sweater that could probably fit me – or at least all 4 of my kids in it together... so cute and so thoughtful, and the kids LOVE her!

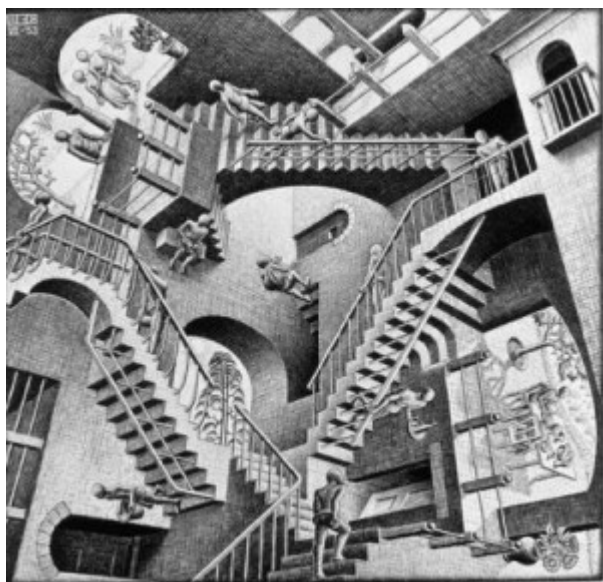
Zoo lights – With everything that was going on during this December, I'm so thankful that we were able to make it to one

of our favorite Christmas destinations this year – the Toledo Zoo for their Lights Before Christmas displays. Beautiful lights in a peaceful atmosphere, and if you get there early enough, you can see some zoo animals, which is probably my favorite thing to do in the whole world!

Hope you had a Merry Christmas, and best wishes for a great New Year!!!

3D Escher

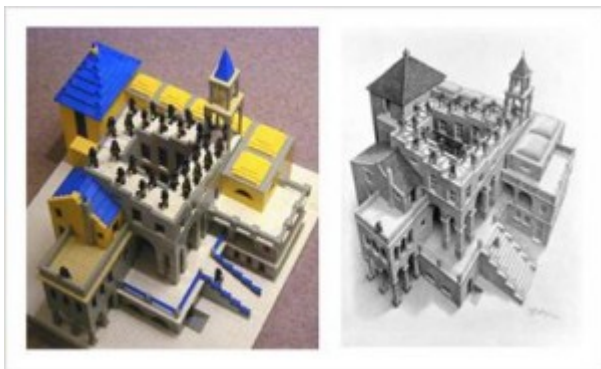
Have you ever heard of the Dutch artist M.C. Escher? His famous works depicted impossible realities, often based upon mathematical and spatial challenges. Case in point, one of Escher's most famous works, titled *Relativity*:



Let me guess, even if you've never heard of M.C. Escher, you've seen the above picture, right? But have you ever seen it in 3D? Seems people have been recreating Escher's art in Lego form, which I think is pretty cool!



How about more of Escher's most famous works, done in 3D Lego style?



FOOTBALL! Time To Blog, Except...

... I've gotten engrossed in another video game. And because I'm a mom of 4 and don't have a lot of extra time, my blogging frequency is going to suffer while I divide my spare time with mindless gaming, oh well. With the start of the NFL season and back-to-school-time, I will have more time at home for my favorite quiet activities like reading the newspaper, blogging, and playing video games while my husband watches football (Go Bears!). I thought I'd be rolling out blog posts, but then my husband put an N64 emulator on my computer, distracting me with what is quite possibly the best video game ever made – in my opinion, anyway: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. It's an adventure game, which is my favorite genre of video game, but I'm very picky – there has to be large 3D worlds to explore, as well as a variety of puzzles peppered with the perfect combination of inventory, fighting, and weaponry. This version of Zelda has everything, and this is actually my second time playing it through. Currently I'm in the second dungeon (Dodongo's Cavern) which is probably my least favorite in the entire game. Once I get past it though, I have lots of fun ahead – there are plenty of areas left to explore; including an underwater colony and the inside of a volcano. This game also skips ahead 7 years, and you get to see what Hyrule (the country you are defending) looks like in the future when your character has grown into a young man from a little boy. Here is a screen shot:



...which makes me want to get back to it so I can kick some Dodongo a**!

GO BEARS!!!

Death In Arena Seats

Ok... ok... if you have seen any two of the now four *Final Destination* flicks you know what you are going to get. Tonight, Megan and I went to a very nice cineplex which has very comfortable stadium seats very spacious to catch the latest installment aptly titled *THE Final Destination* (is this a sign that this will be the last final destination?) Judging by the box office from last weekend, I wouldn't be at all surprised to see The FINAL Final Destination hitting big screens in a year or two. It even beat up the latest installment in the Rob Zombie reboot of the Halloween franchise. I have yet to see the previous film... I really enjoyed the original John Carpenter creation with Michael Myers wreaking havoc in a Captain Kirk trick or treat mask.

This time, a young man has visions of death while sitting at a stock car race. After the premonition, Nick quickly begins to warn his three friends and others seated around him of the

approaching doom. I assume the travesty was due to either the age of the venue or faulty construction. A few days later, the body count begins to climb as the survivors of the tragedy at the track die horrible, mysterious deaths. Nick “sees” visions of these deaths and eventually comes up with the pattern Death is playing out. But can Nick and his twentysomething aged friends stop the pattern before Death visits them all one by one?

I wouldn't say that I liked or disliked the movie... I'm on the fence on this one. As I previously noted, this has been done before only with four different locations for the starting off point (a commercial airline flight, a highway pileup, and a theme park roller coaster were the previous three). Plus as with most films of this genre, there was an ample amount of blood and gore. But Megan and I both agreed that while it has been done before, it was fun... maybe it was the company. Selected theatres also have the added attraction of 3D something that seems to be making a comeback as of late in both horror and animated features.

Super (fun) Bowl

I am much more of a baseball fan than a football fan (see my countdown timer to the first game of Cubs spring training to the right). But I will admit that I love watching football; mainly because my husband loves it, and I love to see him enjoy things that make him happy. Oh, that and the fact that whenever he watches football, it's become sort of a tradition with us that he gives me excellent backrubs! So while I couldn't care less who won yesterday's Superbowl,(although I chose the Cardinals to root for because it's always fun to pick a team and scream and shout and get into the game) I did

have a great time watching it.

We had decided to have a get-together; a fun evening filled with friends and food (too much food! We had to have pizza for dinner again Monday and will have it twice more this week just to get rid of all the extras!). Because I have 4 kids, I didn't get to see all of my favorite part of the Superbowl – the commercials. But that's ok, I'm sure I can catch them online somewhere if I'm so inclined. The ones I did see were pretty good – I especially liked the Potato Head one (think it was for tires). It just cracks me up when Mrs. Potato Head changes into her 'angry' eyes, hehehe! I also really liked the careerbuilder.com commercial with the moose head on the wall – I won't spoil the rest of it because I recommend you go out and find it yourself if you haven't seen it. I missed the newest E-Trade.com commercials with the talking baby, so those I will have to find because I always enjoy those. Oh, and I'll have to see the latest chapter in the saga of the Budweiser Clydesdales...

As for halftime, I'm not a fan of "The Boss", so I wasn't paying attention to Bruce Springsteen's performance. I am glad to note, however, that he didn't incur a wardrobe malfunction ala Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson circa Superbowl XXXVII in 2004. Also during halftime, there was a special 3D event. We had picked up enough pairs of 3D glasses for the party at a store ahead of time (we actually got enough to last us until Superbowl L!), but in my opinion, they should have given a few minutes warning for people to get their glasses ready. We had ours ready because they did mention it in the 2nd quarter, but I didn't get a chance to get my regular eyeglasses to wear underneath, which guaranteed an absence of 3D for me. But other people seemed pretty impressed... I have seen the preview for Monsters Vs. Aliens in the movie theater and it looks really funny – I'm looking forward to that movie coming out.

Well, anyway, much fun was had by all. We had originally

intended to make this a game night / Superbowl party, but by the time the big game ended, there wasn't any time for board games. Next time! And oh yeah, I should report that the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Superbowl, in case you're using my site for a news report ☐

Coollest Coaster

I got an email today called "What do you remember?" – it's a list of tv shows that aren't on anymore. You add your name and a show you used to watch to the list and send it on. It made me think of a kids' show I used to love called, "The Roller Coaster Gang". I wasn't totally positive that was the name of the show, however, so I did a google search – and that's how I found what sounds like the coolest roller coaster ever!

It's called The Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster, but unfortunately for me, it's on the other side of the world at the Warner Bros. Movie World theme park in Australia. It's a haunted house / roller coaster combined, and here is the press release about it that so intrigued me:

November 30, 2002

Guests will be treated to a hair-raising journey complete with laser lighting and sound effects, animatronics and a kaleidoscope of colour, depth, height and trickery of dimension this holiday season thanks to the Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride.

A \$13 million indoor rollercoaster ride inspired by the first feature film shot at Warner Roadshow Movie World Studios on the Gold Coast starring Sarah Michelle Gellar, Freddie Prinze Jr., Matthew Lillard, Linda Cardellini and Rowan Atkinson, the

Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride is not a ride for the faint hearted.

Featuring carefully replicated coaster cars from Scooby-Doo the film, guests enter the creepy dimly lit courtyard and move into the heart of Spooky Castle, where ghouls, gargoyles and the odd talking suit of armour may appear!

Housed in a 25 metre high building, the Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride features two distinctive experience zones, thrilling guests with different aspects of laser lighting.

While the laser lighting embraces and creates the entire illusion, maintaining it throughout the experience and simultaneously performing for multiple audiences moving through three dimensional space at high speed, the ride continuously alters direction, velocity, elevation and trajectories.

Warner Village Theme Park Chief Executive John Menzies explains that Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster is a world first and is a unique combination of two different types of entertainment experiences.

"Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster is completely innovative, no other ride in the world can be compared to this combination of experiences – the classic haunted house utilising the latest technological advances and lighting and sound effects and the adrenalin pumping thrills of an indoor rollercoaster," said Chief Executive John Menzies.

The first experience zone further develops the Spooky Castle theme into a ghost train ride featuring the best in traditional movie inspired theming and amusing animatronics.

Just as guests begin to think their journey is nearing conclusion, they find themselves drawn up over 17 metres into the castle's creepy tower. This unsettling experience heralds their reversed entry into the rides second zone as guests are

then pushed into a darkened void.

Disoriented in the dark, riders are now subject to the will and influence of the ghouls and gargoyles that Scooby-Doo warned of earlier.

Then, it's time to be afraid....be kind of afraid!

Perched precariously on an elevated turntable the car is turned 180 degrees to face the fate awaiting its anxious passengers.

Transfixed by an apparently infinite tunnel of emerald green laser light the riders are lurched forward into the shimmering abyss as the Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride propels riders through infinite voids, passing ghost-like through shimmering walls, floors and ceilings of light and speeding into tunnels of green swirling mist.

Finally, plunging over seven meters on the adrenalin-pumping journey, guests are hurtled towards a grotesque creature and the 'ring of life'.

The Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride with its ever-changing web of penetrating green laser beams, bumps, breathtaking drops and special effects thrills and excites every rider.

The multi-million dollar blockbuster, Scooby-Doo, was filmed at Warner Roadshow Movie World Studios on the Gold Coast in 2000/2001 and is the highest budget production ever filmed in Queensland to date.

Join Scooby-Doo and the Mystery Gang for the scariest, spookiest, spine-tingling rollercoaster ever created – Scooby-Doo Spooky Coaster Ride.

Visit Warner Bros. Movie World on Australia's Gold Coast – where movie magic happens everyday!

I've never heard of Warner Bros. Movie World, but it sounds

pretty neat. Too bad I didn't make it over there a few years ago – I also found out they used to have a Marvin the Martian 3-D movie, but they replaced it with Shrek 4D. That stinks; I would have liked to see that; I'm a big fan of Marvin the Martian. Oh well, hopefully by the time I get to Australia they'll still have the Scooby-Doo coaster. If only we could increase the budget we have for the haunted attraction we're building by a few million so we could add a coaster...

And I didn't end up using "The Roller Coaster Gang" as my show to put on the list. By the time I was done being distracted with looking up Australian thrill rides, I thought of another show I put instead – one whose title I was sure about. Belle and Sebastian was a Nickodeon cartoon that was about an orphaned boy named Sebastian and his big white dog, Belle. Each episode would follow the pair (along with a small dog named Poochie who would fit into Sebastian's pocket) as they ventured through the mountains looking for Sebastian's mother. People would always mistake Belle for a ferocious dog or sometimes even some kind of snow monster. I loved that show – wonder if Sebastian ever found his mother?