

# In Remembrance

9/11/2001

September 11, 2001 was day we won't forget, a defining time in our nation's history, and the first of its kind for the generations who hadn't been exposed to such feelings of terror nor national vulnerability before that day. This blog post is a day late, but I spent some time yesterday reflecting on the sacrifices made and the lives forever changed on that September day in 2001. Alan Jackson wrote a poignant song about September 11, 2001 that asks, "Where were you when the world stopped turning that September day?", and I think that everyone remembers where they were and what they were doing when they learned that the United States was attacked nine years ago. I remember receiving emails from my friend who was serving in the Air Force at the time:

*To All My Friends and Family:*

*I just wanted everyone to know that I'm okay. We are not going anywhere. Our jets are on standby, but that's it. Also, Jerry made it home okay, for those of you that were worried. I love you all, and I miss you.*

*Love,*

*Kel*

*Hi Everyone,*

*Things are still going as well as can be expected. We are currently*

*working 12 hour shifts, 7 days a week. Please, I'm asking everyone,*

*do not call me during the day, because most of you know that's when*

*I sleep. I'm working 7:00pm to 7:00am. If you absolutely need to get in touch with me,*

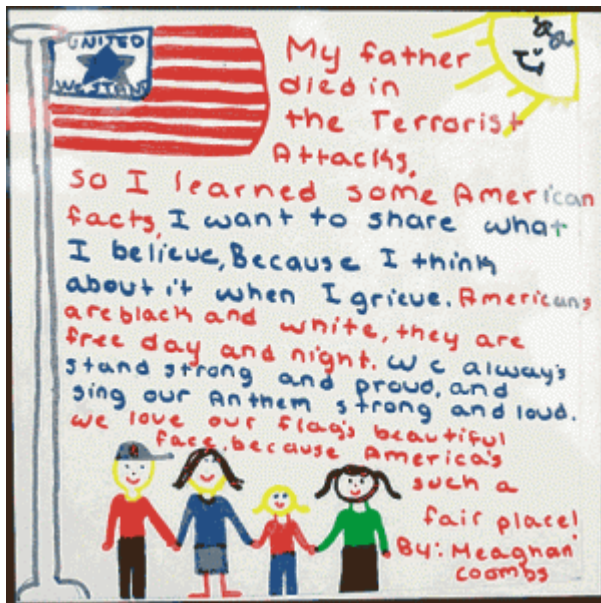
*you can call me at home between 5:30pm and 6:00pm, or in an emergency I can be reached at work. (Mom and Dad you*

can call me anytime, even at work if you want) Also I check my e-mail a few times a night, so I will respond to everyone as quickly as possible. If you have any questions, feel free to ask, but I only have limited info at this time. For everyone wondering, we currently have 1/3 of our jets standing by with a full load of fuel and equiped with armed missles. If anything else happens, the jets will take off and patrol from South Carolina to the Southern tip of Florida (the Keys) They will shoot down anything that comes within that area. They will give the planes one warning and if they don't turn back, our jets will shoot them down without hesitation. We are very tired and will be even more worn down by the time this is all over. Working 12 hours a day, 7 days a week will do that to you. Again, if anyone has any questions, please e-mail me. I love you and miss you all.  
Love, Kel

Her emails illustrate the widespread uncertainty coursing throughout the nation at that time as well as the need to keep close contact with friends and family.

One of the most moving experiences I've had was visiting the 9/11 museum in New York city a few years ago. It was a somber experience, and there was scarcely a dry eye left amongst those who came to learn, reflect, and pay tribute to the

victims of 9/11. The victims, their families, and those who were affected in other ways by the infamous September 11, 2001 were in my thoughts and prayers yesterday, as well as they are today, and I've included the following video if you'd like to reflect as well. God bless America.



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## The Scariest Night Of Our Lives...

... happened just the other night. It's really frightening and a huge reality check to know that you could be sitting somewhere (camping and enjoying the beautiful outdoors in my case), totally relaxed, and the very next minute, there is a life or death emergency – literally.

Before you fret, let me disclaim that everyone is fine but this was almost not the case. As you may have read in my previous blog post, we decided to take our 4 kids camping and have been in the great wilderness of northeast Indiana during the past week. A few nights ago, my husband and I had gotten the kids to bed, and we were enjoying a horror movie on the porch of our cabin when we heard a strange noise – kind of like a kid laughing or coughing. Then, through the window, we see our oldest daughter Taylor practically jumping down the ladder that leads to the loft area in our cabin where our two

oldest kids have been spending the nights. From her body language, it was obvious that someone was very hurt. My husband and I ran inside the cabin, just as Taylor said something about her sister choking on a gumball, and that's when we see our 5-year-old daughter Sammie in the loft, CHOKING. My husband grew wings, flew up to the loft and gave her the Heimlich until the gumball shot out of her throat and across the room. Sammie was catching her breath, but she was still drooling and not talking – the scariest moment of our lives! I was already on the cell phone with 911, and the dispatcher was asking me if I could bring her up to the front of the campground, so they didn't have to waste precious time by trying to find our cabin. Miraculously, Sammie started to talk and act like nothing even happened – that's kids for you! Poor Taylor was scared and shaking, so we told her what an AWESOME job she did *saving her sister's life*. We are going to write to our local newspaper about what a hero she is – without her quick thinking and correct response to the situation (she was actually dozing when it happened), I shudder to think that we could have lost Sammie... I just can't bear to think of it. Thank God everyone is ok! The very cool (thank you Steuben County emergency dispatch!), calm and collected dispatcher asked if I wanted to cancel the ambulance that was already in route, and I agreed and thanked her before I hung up – so that makes FOUR times I've had to dial 911 on my cell for this or that, not fun!

But we have outlawed gumballs in our family – just not worth that kind of agony! Maybe on their wedding days or on the days they move out of our house and gain their independence, maybe then we will be the family that celebrates with gumballs after outlawing them for decades!

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# New York Trip Diary Volume 6

## – The World Trade Center

### Chapter

NEW YORK TRIP – MARCH 20-23, 2009 – TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos

*(continued from previous posts)*

**Sunday, March 22** – I already blogged about this day, but I had skipped the part about us visiting the World Trade Center site (aka Ground Zero) because it just didn't seem to belong in a happy family's trip diary. So consider this your warning; the following post will be emotionally heavy!

On the way there, I was just in visitor mode – on a mission to just get there. I didn't really stop to think about how emotional and how gut-wrenching the experience would be. I'm very glad we went, but man, was it emotionally taxing, to say the least. The site itself is a pit in the earth – not even a hole, they're already begun building new buildings, so really it just looks like a construction site, though if you look carefully, you can see that one piece of equipment has a hook painted like an American flag (click on the pic to make it bigger – actually I don't know that you can see the flag-painted hook in this one, sorry!):



There are fences all around, and it's difficult to even see past them until you go into the World Financial Center and look out a window and down into the site (click on any of my pics to make them bigger):



On the way to the site, we passed (yet another) street vendor, and this time, they were selling commemorative books about the 9/11 terrorist attacks. We flipped through the books, and they actually seemed interesting, so we bit and we bought. Those ended up being a great purchase though, because they contain some pictures of the catastrophe that I haven't even seen on the internet. One of the pictures in the books is of a cemetery located only a block or two from Ground Zero. The picture was taken on September 11, 2001, and the cemetery is covered in an inches-thick layer of ash and debris. We passed that same cemetery on our way to Ground Zero, and it was eerie to see what it looked like on that day. Across the street from Ground Zero, there is a statue of a business man with a briefcase; I guess it's supposed to symbolize the "every man" quality of the victims, I don't know, but there it was and here it is:



Also across the street from the site is a fire station, Ladder 10, which was heavily damaged by the attacks and collapsing skyscrapers – it actually served as a rest station for many wounded firefighters that fateful day, I later found out. The station has a memorial on the side, but we (regretfully) didn't stop long enough to take a picture. But the garage was open, and there was a firefighter who was more than happy to let our kids climb up on the fire engine, and he graciously posed with a picture of them – what a great guy! I wonder if he was with Ladder 10 during 2001 and how many of his friends were lost?



And then there was the museum. I was worried the kids would be bored, but they said it would only take 30-45 minutes to get through, and I can't be happier we went. First of all, the kids were not bored in the slightest. They enjoyed looking at the memorabilia: the damaged items, the kids drawings of support, and even the wall of "Missing" posters



that victims' loved ones had posted after the attacks. I figured September 11, 2001 is a day my kids should learn about, so why not start now? We did spare a few details, though, like the one about how people were responsible for all of it. If they had asked, I wouldn't have lied, but we just told them that planes crashed into the buildings. After we were almost through the museum, our almost 5-year-old asked me a question I'll never forget. She said, "Mom, can God put people back together?" I hugged her and explained that sometimes people get to go live with God, and that was good enough for her at that moment.

At least one thing I found cool about the museum is that they had a section about what Muslim-Americans went through after 9/11: the discrimination, the victimization, and the violence.

One thing I somehow didn't get a picture of from the museum was some silverware from the restaurant at the top of one of the towers – the spoon had a hole burned directly through it.

Here are some pictures of other things they had in the museum:



*Above is a picture of an airplane window from one of the planes that hit the twin towers. Below is a picture of what was once an elevator plate labeling a floor in the Trade Center:*



And below is a picture of some items that they found in the debris pile, a stuffed lamb they used to sell in the Trade Center – searchers who found him said “If he could be spared, why couldn’t the people?” Also pictured are someone’s car keys, IDs, and most eerie, a brochure from a meeting being held in the “Windows on the World” restaurant in the top of the building – note the dates say September 9-11, 2001. The thing on the right is just a melted mass of metal, concrete, and whatever else:



If you’re going to New York, I highly recommend visiting the Ground Zero museum. I don’t know the exact name of it, but it’s on Liberty Street across from Ground Zero. Bring tissues, but if you forget, they have some on the walls, and I was grateful for that. It was a very emotional experience, but I was fine until I saw a letter in a child’s scrawl dated 4/2000, before the attacks. The letter began, “My hero is my

daddy because he is a fireman..." The letter was written by a kid who lost his dad on 9/11, and that's when I lost it.

I can't imagine what those people went through, especially after seeing what happened to some of the objects that were once a part of the World Trade Center. A very humbling experience; one I will never forget...

*God Bless the victims of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 and their families left behind...*

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## **The Lucky Rainbow (And God) Saved Us**

Ok, of course *all* the credit goes to God, but I was going for the catchy title. Yesterday I had one of the biggest scares of my life – a near-death experience. I'm going to start at the beginning of an otherwise wonderful day...

We were looking for a fun place to take the kids, and we decided upon the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo. The kids had their usual fun playing in the water hole, and the capuchin monkeys were quite active, enjoying a game of tag. It was really cool to see; one would chase the other and then when he caught him, they'd switch and the chaser became the chasee – is that a word? Doesn't matter, I think you get the point. Capuchin monkeys are smart.

There was a kangaroo separated from the rest of the roos, and we thought it was a baby, until we looked a little closer and noticed she actually had a little baby sticking out of her pouch – SOO cute! It must have been a different type of kangaroo or wallaby than the eastern grey kangaroos though because it was much smaller, and obviously an adult since she

had a baby. But anyway, they were definitely the highlight of our trip.

Earlier in the day, when we were deciding where to go, we had brought up the possibility of go-carts, and our 4-year-old had not forgotten. Since the kids were being (somewhat) good and it was still early (we were hoping for a triple kid pass-out on the hour-long drive home), we decided to stop for some quick laps around the go-cart track. I stayed in the car because we had 2 kids who fell asleep, and from there, I was able to watch the storm roll in. It was really neat; there was a lightning bolt that struck near the go-carting place, and everyone waiting in line said "whoa!". It was followed by a VERY LOUD crack of thunder, and that was the end of the go-carting. My husband had already ridden once with our 4-year-old, and they were waiting in line so our 8-year-old could go. But the poor kid has her father's bad luck because they shut the place down for the storm before she got to go. But she was a good sport about it; I actually think she was just so happy to be out of the storm and in the "safety" of the car... but you will soon see why I put the "safety" in quotes while referring to the car.

As we headed away from the go-cart place, it rained heavily. So heavily that the road flooded immediately and visibility was down to almost 0. I told my husband he should pull over, but you couldn't even see enough to do that. But then it cleared a little, and there was a huge rainbow. It was beautiful; I don't think I've ever seen one in a full arc like that. I tried to take a picture but we had now gotten on the interstate and were travelling fast, so we'll have to see how it comes out. I was distracted by the rainbow, and this is where everything happened so fast it's kind of a blur. But I'll recap best I can... The cars in front of us were braking, so my husband made a hard stop – not all that hard, so I didn't really feel like we were in danger. I see a car on the shoulder all smashed up and facing us. The driver is getting out and looking at his car, and that's when I realize that it

had *just* happened – no emergency vehicles were on the scene yet, and it's still happening because I hear horns honking. Then my husband says very calmly, "We're going to get hit." I looked in my sideview mirror and saw a semi coming at us, and he's not stopping. Instead he's coming right at my mirror and the next thing I know, the semi is next to us on the shoulder. Thank God there was a shoulder. Thank God my husband didn't pull onto the shoulder trying to save us, or he would have steered into the path of the semi. Thank God for a lot of things, but most of all, for the safety of my family. Turns out the horn that was honking was the *semi* warning us of our impending doom. All these news stories were flashing through my head on the rest of the way home about people whose vehicles got pancaked by semis. It was a split second away from happening to us, and there was nothing that could have stopped it, except Divine Intervention. I called 911 to report the accident, and that's when I learned that my cell phone makes a little noise when you do that – to make sure you really want to call, I guess. But the good news is, it didn't seem as if anyone was hurt because like I said, the driver of the car that caused it all was out and looking at his car. He was either brave or not very smart, because if that semi hadn't of stopped next to our car where it did, he would have been plowed over. Someone should tell that Subway guy from my last post that this is what 911 is really for! And this whole incident makes a case for my husband to try to get me to fly to Florida next time rather than drive. All I know is, in the car, we had a **very** close call. Rarely are there close calls on a plane – you either crash or you don't!

A reminder to all to be thankful every day for everything you have!