

How Hubby Saved Halloween

October is normally one of the busiest months for our family, and that was true before October 2011 – the month that saw us being blessed with a new baby, starting homeschooling, and Hubby starting a new job/career all at the same time. There are so many fun fall and Halloween events and activities that we like to do this time of year; we didn't even realize exactly how many until this year when we had to scale it back a bit. We skipped the corn mazes, the pumpkin farms, and all the haunted attractions this year. We did take the kids to the mall for the trick-or-treating there, and it was lots of fun even if there were 50 times more people than last year – there was a line circling the perimeter of the entire mall! Not a problem, seeing as how we live near the smallest mall I've ever seen and the line was continuously moving – as I said, lots of fun!

I heard about a congressman on the news who wants to pass legislation to move Halloween to the 4th Saturday in October because it's safer for kids and easier to work around school if trick-or-treating is always on a Saturday and earlier in the day. Some lady they interviewed for her opinion on the street was against it; she said that would be like moving Christmas to make it more convenient. Umm, not even close in my opinion, but I won't go there. My point is that the area in which I live always schedules the Halloween stuff on Saturdays anyway – I guess we're ahead of our time here in rural Ohio, haha. This year we had 2 Halloween parties and our trick-or-treat on Saturday October 29. Except we found out during the mall trick or treat (which was on Tuesday night) that baby Luke is a homebody – he gets really fussy when we try to take him places, especially if it's outdoor places, and yes, we do bundle him up. Saturday was a very big day for all of us because Hubby's and my lack of sleep finally caught up to us. We began the day on a very grumpy note, and

everything was very hectic as we tried to get our work done at the church and ready the kids for the Halloween festivities. We made it to the first party – the community Halloween party they have at the ice rink (no ice of course). We had tons of fun as usual, and we even got on the hayride before the rain came and before the line got too long. But Luke decided he was finished with the Halloween party before we were. No sticking this baby in a stroller and feeding him on the go like we did with the other 4 kids; he just won't have it and voices his complaints loudly. Luke is our fussiest baby; the others were all very adaptable babies – in retrospect, I guess we were spoiled. We are a very busy family, so either us scaling things back for Luke or trying to get him to adapt to our busyness will be interesting. He can go from what I call 'zero to screaming' in a matter of seconds, but don't get me wrong – he's oh-so-incredibly cute and lovable. It's just that his idea of a good time is being held and cuddled – constantly. Which also explains my lack of blogging lately – while I am feeling better after being sick most of the pregnancy and am recovering well after the surgery, I am not a very successful one-handed typist. There really isn't a choice between cuddling a cute baby or blogging, now is there? So anyway, I took Luke to the car while Hubby finished up at the party with the other kids, and we decided to put off trick-or-treating until another day and do it in a nearby community that had scheduled it on Sunday. We also decided that Hubby would stay home with Luke that evening while I took the other kids to our other planned Halloween party. We went home and tossed a couple of frozen pizzas in the oven for a quick dinner, but wouldn't you know by the way that Saturday was going – we burnt a pizza and only the kids got fed. At least our evening plan worked out – I went to the party with the 4 older kids, and we all had a blast. Luke actually let Hubby catch a nap while we were gone too!

Sunday we drove the 10 miles to the town where we were going to trick-or-treat, but we quickly became confused – no one was

out; it was like a ghost town. Hubby stopped at a gas station and found out that the trick-or-treating was from 3:30-5. We had readied ourselves and arrived there ready to trick-or-treat from 5:30-7. Apparently my lack of sleep had impaired my ability to read the time correctly in the newspaper. I can't beleive I did that – I had checked the paper probably about FIVE times throughout the week to make sure I had the right time, day, and place. And I had misread the information each of those FIVE times. So my genius Hubby made us a plan. He stopped at Walmart and picked up 2 huge bags of candy – at full price I might add, which was hard for him. He loves store clearances and sales, and it's a testament to how much he loves his family that he bought all that candy at full price knowing that it would be half off in just a day or two. But anyway, we got the candy and stopped at the dollar store and bought each kid a flashlight. We drove over to the park, and Hubby hid the candy all around the park and then we let the kids loose with their flashlights and trick-or-treat bags to find it. They loved it! They said they liked it even more than trick-or-treating, and we even got an unprompted handmade thank you card later that evening from 7-year-old Sammie – and I quote, "I love wat we did today". I should add how great the kids were in the car as we tried to figure out what was going on with the trick-or-treating. They were all in their costumes and ready to go, and then mom and dad starting driving around aimlessly. When they found out they wouldn't be trick-or-treating after all, there was not a tear, not even a protest. Just a few questions and much patience as they waited to see what we would do instead – they are AMAZING!

I think I have some video of the kids at the mall, but other than that, things were way too hectic during our Halloween celebrations to take many pictures or video. We have our wonderful memories though, and those of course are priceless.

Here's a picture of my kids dressed in their Halloween costumes on the day they arrived in the mail from Grammie.

11-year-old Taylor was a pirate, 7-year-old Sammie and 5-year-old Disney were princesses, and 3-year-old Christopher was Superman:



This Town's Got Talent AND Faith

I already wrote about our 3D movie-going experience in my previous post, so I will skip that part of the weekend here, but I neglected to mention the cool restaurant we found because I didn't want to enlarge an already lengthy post...

Friday night after seeing My Bloody Valentine 3D in Maumee Ohio, a suburb of Toledo, we noticed a restaurant across the street called Nick's Cafe who advertises breakfast all day. My husband and I are both Eggs Benedict connoisseurs – we really appreciate a great-tasting serving of Eggs Benedict, which is a breakfast dish consisting of English Muffin halves topped with Canadian bacon, poached eggs, and a layer of Hollandaise sauce. In our pre-parenthood days, we explored the country and sampled various versions of the dish along the way to our traveler's goals; whether they were destinations of business or pleasure. A requirement of great Eggs Benedict is

homemade Hollandaise sauce, and by 'homemade', we (unlike many of the restaurants we tried) don't mean mixed up in the kitchen from a package. You need a double boiler to make it, and good Hollandaise sauce has nothing to do with a powder or a package. In all of our travels, we never found anything that even compares to the Hollandaise sauce at Uptown Cafe in downtown Arlington Heights, Illinois. We've visited numerous restaurants in our quest, and we've called some of them ahead of time, but even if you ask if their Hollandaise sauce is homemade, many will say yes, even if we don't agree on the definition of homemade. Such was the case Friday night at Nick's Cafe in Maumee, Ohio. They said their hollandaise sauce was homemade on the phone, but oddly, when we arrived, they wouldn't let us taste a sample. That was a first! Of the dozens of restaurants we've visited in search of the perfect Eggs Benedict, no restaurant had ever denied us a sample! On Friday night, my husband bravely ordered the Eggs Benedict at Nick's Cafe without trying the Hollandaise sauce ahead of time, and disappointingly, it was of the non-homemade, out-of-the-package variety. He did say that the Canadian bacon on the Eggs Benedict was great, but it unfortunately cannot rescue the dish if it uses packaged Hollandaise. So negative Eggs Benedict experience aside, the reason I would highly recommend this place is for their Mediterranean cuisine. And regular readers of my blog (and of those email forward all-about-you quizzes) know that this is my favorite type of food, therefore I am a huge critic. But Nick's Place in Maumee has excellent gyros, Tzatziki sauce, and Greek salads. Gyros are only good when they're off the spit and even then, it's easy for them to taste too salty. Not the case at Nick's Place; if you like Mediterranean food, I **highly** recommend their gyros and Greek salads – incredible.

But I must move on to Saturday afternoon, when we took our kids to see the movie, [Hotel for Dogs](#). I've been waiting for this movie for months, which is probably why we didn't want to cancel our planned outing there on Saturday even though Kid #1

went off her rocker. Seriously, the kid went berserk and I was really tempted to give her "the talk", especially after I noticed a pimple on her cheek... (well, one of 'the talks' anyway – the one about womanly bodily changes – she's 9 years old and I would rather we talk about puberty stuff *before* it happens to her). But anyway, she'd probably be *mortified* if she knew I was posting this on the internet (what are mothers for?), so I better get off this tangent... After the episode Saturday morning, our oldest really didn't deserve to go to the movie, but it's difficult in a large family to not 'let the bad apple spoil the bunch'. Our younger girls had been very good all morning, so why keep them (or me!) from going to the movie? Our oldest was punished for the tantrum by having to go without a Kid's Pack (popcorn, pop, and candy) at the movies, and to her credit, she was mature about the consequences of her actions. However, soon after our arrival at the movie theater, the tide changed and our 2-year-old became the problem. I don't know why we keep trying to take a 2-year-old to the movie theater, but every time, it's regrettable. Actually, it's been this way since even *months* before she turned two... I guess we keep hoping that one of these times, she'll actually settle down enough to enjoy an entire movie without driving anyone crazy. So anyway, I'm trying to keep our 6-month-old busy and quiet while attempting to watch Hotel For Dogs and not disturb our neighbors, and my husband is busy with our handful of a 4-year-old, so next thing we know, our two-year-old is drinking my Mountain Dew. Of course she loves it, but even *before* the Mountain Dew she's had a sugar-infused Kid's Pack, and now she's practically bouncing off the walls. She smiles and announces in a loud voice, "**I take clothes off!**", so now I'm trying to put my son back in his car seat so I can stop his sister from stripping off her clothes right there in the movie theater... Too late. She is down to her diaper by the time I get both hands free, so my husband covers her with a coat. For some reason, she's willing to wear nothing but a coat and a diaper in the movie theater, and somehow we make it through the rest of the movie

without having to leave. So as for Hotel For Dogs, I liked it (I think – I actually didn't see much of it)... it's a cute, predictable fun movie, and if you're a dog lover, there's plenty of canine eye candy.

Following the movie, I went to a local talent show based upon the popular "American Idol" TV show. Some great friends graciously stayed with the kids, and my husband also stayed home to catch up on the work he missed last week during the 2-hour-school delay and the school closing we have on Friday and Monday. He works from home, and it's all I can do to keep the two little ones out of his hair every day – add the older two to the mix and all Hell breaks loose – any chance of getting anything productive done flies out the window. So, a strange occurrence at the talent show – me, myself, and I for a change. I did attend with friends, but it's not like I would bother Carol next to me with my philosophies on music or the tone of one's voice; that would be something to make my husband endure. And it was bizarre to simply sit back and listen and watch the show... For those hours, I had absolutely **not one thing** else to do besides enjoy the show... such a change of pace for me and much appreciated. Not that I would want to experience that all the time, but it was very nice for one night...

Adding to the relaxation for me was the spiritual tone of the evening. I had known the event would be sponsored by a local church, but I didn't realize that we, the audience, would be praying to both open and to close the show; as well as the fact that the majority of the acts were religion-themed. As I said, for me, it was refreshing and relaxing, but I think they should properly advertise such a theme if they do this again next year. Less open-minded people may have been displeased. My dear friend and the entire reason I was a part of this concert experience in the first place, performed wonderfully and I was pleasantly surprised to be able to pick out her voice from the rest of the delightful group with whom she

performed. Despite my best efforts to vote for them, however, they didn't win the competition, and the top prizes went to a drama group from the church who sponsored the event (!), a very talented violinist, and a well-known local talent who is only a Junior in high school but who has already been a vocalist with the Toledo Opera going on her 3rd year. Besides seeing and hearing my friend perform, my favorite part of the evening was when a boy who was part of the drama group that won burst into tears. Their skit was acted out to music, and it portrayed a young girl being bullied by 'temptations' but ultimately triumphing over sins and choosing Jesus. The group got a standing ovation after they performed and because they were from the church that sponsored the event, it was no surprise when they won first prize in the competition, but the kid asked the crowd, "I just want to know that everyone was moved – was everyone moved?" There was applause and verbal affirmations, and the next thing I knew, the kid had burst into tears and it slightly reminded me of the movie [Leap of Faith](#)... But it was sweet and real, and I was glad to be a part of it. Even though the talent show did a poor job of advertising the theme of the show; thereby the religion kind of snuck up on its patrons, it was a welcome and calming change of pace – at least for this member of the audience. And even though I wasn't aware that I needed it, the evening restored my faith while proving to me yet again what a great place it is in Northwest Ohio to raise kids – we have so much talent and so many opportunities here for our youth!

Pinata Pilgrimage

I didn't blog all weekend because we made a few-hundred-miles trek to the Chicago suburbs for my nephew's 5th birthday party. We stuffed ourselves silly over there because as much

as we love where we live, the restaurant choice can grow kind of boring. So, being in a different area had us stopping for food every chance we got, but by the end of the weekend, we were a wee bit regretful... I think that midnight case of White Castles are what did us in. Since there aren't any White Castles near us, we had to stock up and buy a whole case since they reheat pretty well. We stopped there on the way out of the area, and then we had to smell them all the way home – yuck. They taste good but don't smell so great, especially when it's time for bed... So, as you can see, we did fit in a bit of culture on our trip. For those who aren't familiar with White Castle, it's a fast food chain found in the midwest that specializes in mini-hamburgers, also known as "sliders". They aren't just mini-hamburgers, though, they're steam-grilled, and they have a very unique taste... not to mention an, ahem, interesting side effect when you feed them to pets and small children. I will not elaborate; let's just say that my kids really like them, but the next day our noses were paying for it.

We also found time to stop at an ethnic grocery store for something my husband has been looking for called *Halva*, which is a Middle Eastern dessert. I had never tried it before, and I really like to try ethnic foods, so we picked some up. It is pretty good! The halva we got was actually from Macedonia, and though it tastes nothing like it, I would best describe its texture as that of the 'astronaut' ice cream. You know, the freeze dried ice cream that they sell at space museums?

And to round out our cultural experience, my nephew had a pinata at his birthday party. Pardon my spelling it wrong, I can't find the special n with the tilde over it they use in the spanish alphabet. So in my blog, it will be known as a pinata. Just in case you are not familiar with what a pinata entails, check out Wikipedia's explanation:

A succession of blindfolded, stick-wielding children try to break the piñata in order to collect the sweets (traditionally

fruit, such as sugarcane) and/or toys inside of it. It has been used for hundreds of years to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas and Easter.

Seems that Wikipedia figured out how to do the tilday... but anyway, yes you read that right – **blindfolded, stick-wielding children!** Actually, it's customary to use a baseball bat instead of a stick, yet oddly enough, I don't think I've ever been part of a pinata party where a parent didn't have to step in and break it open themselves – this one being no exception. It went pretty well, though we did almost have a casualty – my nephew took his first whack at the pinata, and his dad had not cleared the area, so CRACK went the bat against the cell phone he was wearing... but I guess all was well, especially since someone had talked them out of their original plan: giving a bunch of 5-year-olds an *aluminum* bat with which to whack at the pinata. Thank goodness for the insight! If you get a chance, you should check out the pinata scene in the movie [Parenthood](#), it's hilarious... the kids at the party lose interest after not being able to get it open, so the scene cuts to [Steve Martin](#) beating the heck out of the thing as it lays on the floor. Nothing like that at my nephew's party, in fact, his pinata opened rather easily. And when it did break open, there wasn't the usual melee either... the kids were actually quite orderly in picking up the pinata "guts". I was a little worried because the last time I was at a birthday party with a pinata, the kids all piled in a heap on top of each other, and the kid at the bottom ended up with a bloody lip.

So, overall, great weekend, even if it lacked sleep – lots of driving and we didn't get home until 3:30 in the morning! And I have a few weeks to decide whether or not we will be brave enough to attempt a pinata at my daughter's 4th birthday party... maybe that will be enough time for her to forget that her cousin had one...

One thing is for sure, if we have a pinata, we will *not* have

an aluminum bat on the premises!

A Family Easter

With 3 wonderful kids, how could we not have a good Easter? We started by coloring eggs on Saturday afternoon, and it went so well that I even bought a spare coloring kit at the easter clearance sales today, figuring we can do it again in a few weeks. If colored eggs will entice the kids to eat them, then coloring eggs doesn't only have to be for Easter, I say! Actually, we started our Easter celebration with a visit to the Easter Bunny at the mall on Friday. There was no line, but at those prices, I can see why! But I begged Hubby to buy me a picture of the girls with the Easter Bunny and said it could be my Mother's Day present this year because when we went to do our community egg hunt (candy clean-up), the batteries on the camera died before we could get a picture with the Easter Bunny. It's just something I like to do every year along with taking pictures with Santa because it's a good way to get them all to sit down together and track how they grow from year to year.

So anyway, back to hiding eggs... I got so tired on Saturday night that I forgot to play Easter Bunny and hide the eggs (can hard-boiled eggs even stay out of the fridge overnight?), but I woke up a little on the way up to bed and did remember to set the alarm. Except that when it went off Sunday morning, we heard the kids were already up, so Hubby and I scrambled downstairs and hid everything in a hurry so we wouldn't get caught. And we had to leave our dogs outside during the hunt, otherwise they would do some easter egg hunting of their own! And of course – every year this happens somehow – there was the one egg that slipped away somehow only

to be lost until weeks later when its rotten smell gives away its hiding place. But, learning from the past, we counted how many eggs we had hidden and didn't give up until the lost egg was found! Overall, it was a GREAT Easter. The kids did have some candy comedown, but that is to be expected. Disney – she is 17 mos. – woke up today by asking for candy for breakfast. I think they'll get back to normal soon... just in time to get candy at the summer parades coming up! Hope everyone had a wonderful Easter and were able to share in the love of family and friends!

Horton Hears a ZZZzzzz...

Took the kids to see [Horton Hears a Who](#) today. Ok, so the title of the blog is a bit misleading... it wasn't really boring. I am just so tired that I'm 2 for 2 in the falling asleep in the movie theater tally this week. I actually liked what I saw of the movie. With the exception of my 3-year-old running up and down the aisle, I enjoyed the experience. It wasn't totally her fault though; we went to an Easter egg hunt this morning, so she had LOTS of sugar coursing through her veins, which is why she was extra-hyper and running around the movie theater. Once we flushed the sugar with plenty of non-sugary fluids, I was able to relax and enjoy the show – after a trip to the bathroom, of course. It should actually be called a candy clean-up since they pick candy up off the floor; it has nothing to do with Easter eggs or hunting. Still fun though, I'm just saying.

Before the movie started, I found myself wishing I had read the book, just to see how close the movie is to the book because now I have no idea. But as far as Dr. Suess movies go, this is the best one I've seen. Then again, I HATED [The](#)

[Cat in the Hat](#), and never saw the live-action version of [How the Grinch Stole Christmas](#), so there's not much to compare it to in that respect.

The movie is about an elephant named Horton who lives in a jungle in what must be a fictional place because to my knowledge, there aren't any jungles that have both kangaroos and elephants as indigenous species. I know, it's just a Dr. Seuss movie and I'm probably reading too far into it, but I can't help but think of that sort of thing. And judging by Horton's ears, he is an African elephant, not an Asian elephant... ok, I'll stop. So anyway, Horton hears a Who. A Who is actually a type of teeny-tiny person that lives in Whoville, all of which is located on a speck on a clover. The rest of the story is about how Horton tries to save Whoville from a conniving kangaroo (played by the brilliant [Carol Burnett](#)) intent on destroying it. I don't usually like when I know the big-name actors voicing roles in an animated movie – it kind of distracts me, which is what happened when I heard [Jim Carrey](#) as the voice of Horton. His voice also made the Horton character seem less cute to me, but I did like Carol Burnett as that scheming kangaroo. And, hearing [Steve Carell](#) as the mayor of Whoville was not distracting at all – he is even good at voice-over acting – is there ever a role he'll butcher? Watching the opening credits, I noticed a plethora of recognizable actors lending voicework for this movie; among them: Jim Carrey, Steve Carell, Carol Burnett, [Will Arnett](#) (from Arrested Development), [Seth Rogan](#), [Isla Fisher](#) (from Wedding Crashers – she was surprisingly good as a cartoon voice), [Jonah Hill](#), and [Amy Poehler](#).

It's a cute movie that's perfect for the whole family, even though my 3-year-old asked about where the princesses were until the last 10 minutes of the movie. When it was over, she did say she liked it, sans princesses and all. There are some jokes for the parents that will go over the kids' heads, and that's always enjoyable in a kids' movie – although I could

have done without the kangaroo saying, “This is the jungle; we can’t behave like wild animals.” – just WAY too cheesy, think I’ve even heard that joke before somewhere else! I loved how the Mayor of Whoville has 96 daughters and 1 son – someday I might know what that is like! Is that in the book I wonder? It seems almost too clever to be an add-in for the movie... Either way, I will have to go borrow the book from the library to see how close the movie followed it, but I have heard that the book is pretty closely followed. I’ve always liked Dr. Suess, and it’s a shame he’s not still around to gift us with any more of his work or to see his creations come to life on the big screen.

Drop the candy and put your hands up!

Okay, it wasn’t an arrest but apparently an 8th grade student got in trouble for buying a bag of *Skittles* of all things. Not pot, not meth, but Skittles. This boy was suspended, stripped of his title as class vice-president, and uninvited from an honors dinner as a result of this episode. What next, expulsion for running in the hall? I realize this school has a rule banning candy sales (according to the article), but this is just going overboard. Read for yourselves:

[Connecticut 8th-grader suspended for buying Skittles in school](#)

This town SMELLS

You think you know where I'm going with this, but it's actually not a complaint. A lot of places have their own smell. I've driven through towns in Georgia that smell like peaches. Gary, Indiana smells like what I can only describe as "burning rubber french fries" – a term I invented as a kid, and I haven't been able to think of a suitable replacement description that doesn't involve a 4-letter word. A place in Idaho I visited one time smelled like mint – there was a mint field nearby...

In the town where I live, we have a number of factories. You might think because of this, our noses would meet the same fate every morning as the poor residents of Gary Indiana, but fortunately for us, one of our largest factories manufactures **CANDY!** So, our town literally smells like candy almost every day. Chocolate some days, unidentified sweetness on the others... it is wonderful and really puts a spring in your step! Ahh, now there's a post that's short and sweet! ☐