

A Christmas Blessing

Speaking of family outings, we found a fun place weekends ago in Fort Wayne Indiana – it's an indoor ice skating place, and they have THREE ice rinks! But we didn't have time to try ice skating; our family was more interested in the bouncy castles. At \$5 / head from 1-4pm, it wasn't a bad deal. The only problem was that they had the bouncy castles in the ice arena area, and it was freezing in there! The kids were ok, but we weren't able to stay as long as we wanted, plus they were all frozen by the time we left. If they had just noted their arrangement on their website, we could have dressed for the occasion, but that's ok, it was still fun. After that, we had a delicious dinner at Golden Corral – YUM!

But something strange happened there – I was waiting for a man to finish at the buffet, and he apologized for taking so long (he wasn't) and then handed me a "Christmas blessing" on a folded up piece of paper. He was vague in the details; just mentioning 'Christmas Blessing', so I opened up the paper, and it was a copy of a newspaper article about the man's family – mainly his elderly mother. Looking at the picture in the article told me that the man who gave it to me was Raymond, whom you'll read about below. Although the article was from 1996, he mentioned that he was with his mother that day at the restaurant – she is doing well here in 2010, 14 years later! I find the family's story inspirational, and I thought I'd help the man spread his family's touching story – the story featuring his mother's boundless faith and he and his father finding Christ. Below is a copy of the article he gave me; I hope you find it inspirational reading on this very special holiday. Merry Christmas!

'She taught us by what she did'

*Thanksgiving this year had a special glow for Arlene Berger,
74, and her family.*

They gathered for the holiday meal in the new house the Flushing Township resident, severely brain-damaged in a 1994 traffic accident, shares with one of her sons, his wife, and two children.

Her house was built with funds from her accident settlement and her family is determined life will be as meaningful as possible for the woman left with physical as well as mental impairment.

Her progress has been awesome, as has been the help she's received from others, according to two of her five children.

Raymond, 47, the eldest of her four sons, and David, 32, the youngest, this week recounted details of their mother's accident and her life of righteousness.

With 15 years separating them, they hold different views of how their mother's faith affected them.

"I used to mock her; my other brothers did," Raymond said of his youth in Flint.

David said, "She was the most giving person, many of us thought to a fault. I remember a couple of times she didn't know how she was going to pay her bills, and when I asked her about how she had spent her money, she had given some to this person, some to that one."

Raymond concurred, "We thought she was being used. We told her there ain't no God and to quit giving everything away. But we weren't thinking like she was."

Their Bible-reading Baptist mother was living up to the passage: "Give, and it shall be given to you." (Luke 6:38)

"Now she's on the receiving end," said David. "Because of the way she was before the accident, people want to do for her."

Church members are showing up to care for her to a degree the family never could have imagined.

"She gave everything away her whole life, and now her kids all want her to have an enjoyable life," David said.

It was not just her older sons who derided her faith.

Raymond, a Flint truck plant employee, recalls his late father chasing ministers away from the door.

"He had been anti-religious. He worked and he drank. I didn't really know him until I was old enough to drink, old enough to go to the bars," Raymond said.

In 1981, their father had a massive heart attack. His wife's church prayed for him, and he survived to embrace salvation.

He lived the last two years of his life a Christian.

Raymond said he also has been saved, and has seen the difference faith has made in his life."That was a miracle," he said. "I never thought I'd see my dad in a church. I never thought I'd see myself in a church."

David, on the other hand, attended John R. Rice Baptist Academy in Davison and went on to graduate from a bible college. He teaches at Bridgeport Baptist Academy during the day and works at Delphi Saginaw Steering Systems at night.

He was the assistant pastor at Landmark Baptist Church, where his mother was headed Feb.24, 1994, when her car was hit in the driver's side by a Jeep Cherokee whose driver had run a red light, he said. He was notified that his mother had been taken to Hurley Medical Center, where she was in critical condition.

She underwent two emergency surgeries in short order.

A CAT scan showed 11 brain hemorrhages and blood on her brain stem, he said.

"She was in a coma the whole time," David said. "After three

months, the doctors told us she might not ever come out of it because of her age and the length of time since the accident."

Her children were told of the probability that she would never be able to walk, talk, or feed herself.

"Well, you ain't God," Raymond told them.

After three-and-a-half months at Hurley, she was moved to Riverbend Nursing Center in Grand Blanc, where she stunned David by allowing nurses to walk her in "baby steps" the first day.

She progressed out of the coma. Raymond remembered first noticing her fingers tapping to the inspirational music tapes her family supplied.

Raymond and David recall the times she responded with an "I love you, too" to each of them.

Arlene Berger received three months of therapy at Riverbend before transferring to McLaren Regional Medical Center to build skills she would need for living at home.

His brothers and sister back David up in caring for their mother, who lost her left eye and use of her left hand in the accident and now has an erratically functioning mind with an IQ of 90.

"A lot of people live for themselves, don't do for their kids. And then the kids don't do for them," David said. "She taught us by what she did."

Birthday Miracle

A few months ago, I learned I had a second cousin in Florida who was killed in a horrific car crash. She was on her way to a fun outing with her daughter when out of nowhere, a drunk driver (mid-afternoon on a weekday – not that there's ever **any** appropriate time to drink and drive, but still) who was going the wrong way on the expressway hit her car head-on, killing her and gravely injuring her young daughter. The little girl persevered, came out of her coma and re-learned to walk and talk. She was recently in the news again because she just turned 5 years old and sadly, she still thinks her mother is coming back. Her courage and strength is inspiring, so I'd like to share this clip of her on the Florida news. Please keep Summer in your thoughts and prayers. [Click here to see the news story about Summer's 5th birthday](#). And please, **please**, if you're going to drink, **always** have another mode of transportation set up ahead of time!

Sleepwalkers

With the exception of [Thinner](#), I've liked most of the [Stephen King](#) movies I've seen. My favorite is [Storm of the Century](#), a Prime-Time Emmy Award winning made-for-tv mini-series that aired in 1999. Every winter when a big blizzard is predicted in our corner of Ohio, we plan on being snowed in watching our Storm of the Century dvd. It never happens though; I think it has to do with trying to watch a 240 minute movie that's not for kids when we have 4 of them. But anyway, if we ever get time to watch Storm of the Century in the near future, I'll definitely blog more about it – it's awesome!

One of Stephen King's lesser known films, [Sleepwalkers](#), is a movie I saw as a teenager. I liked it back then, so when I happened to see the dvd on the library's shelf the other day, that's what I quickly picked up since I was in a hurry. My husband and I watched it the other night, and we both had the same opinion. A fun little horror film, nothing great but still entertaining. It is Stephen King-creepy, as only he can do, and much of the movie's creepiness has to do with the mother-son relationship; I won't go into detail except to say that it's extremely disturbing. [Brian Krause](#) and [Alice Krige](#) play the mother and son monsters who need to feed on a human virgin in order to survive. They morph into strange cat-like creatures, which is even more strange because cats are drawn to their house, yet deadly to the monsters at the same time. The special effects are extremely cheesy by today's standards and even laughable, but sometimes I'm a sucker for that kind of thing and really enjoy bad special effects – my favorite example of this is [Jaws 3-D](#).

While we're on the subject of Stephen King, as I mentioned, I like most of his movies that I've seen. I tried to read the book *Carrie* a really long time ago, but I found it hard to follow, either because I was a teen or because of the religious ramblings inserted throughout the book which were done in such a way that it's hard to follow because it's depicting Carrie's mother's craziness. But anyway, Stephen King is very talented, of course. He has a gift of making movies extremely creepy without stooping as low as many of today's horror movies do with the constant blood and gore.

An interesting event took place in his life that almost reads like one of his novels, well, actually it does since he wrote about it. On June 19, 1999, his life was changed forever when he was hit by a car while walking down a Maine road. There are two creepy coincidences about this incident. First, earlier that year, King had finished most of *From a Buick 8*, a novel in which a character dies after getting struck by a

car. Second, the driver of the car, Bryan Smith, who was only 43, was found dead in his trailer just over a year later of an accidental overdose. He was found dead on Stephen King's birthday, September 21. The accident was inspiration for the *Dark Tower* series of books, and King is in talks with *Lost* co-creator J.J. Abrams to do an adaption of the series. Since I'm a fan of *Lost* and Stephen King, that might be something I'll have to check out. Until then, I'll probably be planning another snowy viewing of *Storm of the Century* this winter that won't come to fruition.

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!

MOTORcycles

Typing in CAPS is considered yelling, as far as computers and text messages go. And I'm yelling MOTORCYCLES because that's what you have to do in order to be able to hear yourself talk or even think while one is nearby. With the horrible reality of gas prices these days (holding "steady" at \$3.99 in my area currently), it seems that people are turning in their minivans and SUVs for more fuel efficient vehicles, especially motorcycles.

This is unfortunate for me because I can't stand the things. Normally I'm all for people doing their own thing; if someone wants to ride a motorcycle, why should it bother me? Because simply put, it DOES affect me. I can't stand when I'm walking down the street, talking to my husband or my girls, only to have one of us drowned out by the awful noise of a motorcycle. Some moron on a motorcycle revving his engine even startled one of my kids so badly that she cried! It affects us even when we're in our own car, and the noise of a motorcycle drowns out our conversations, the kids' movie, or even wakes the kids up. Sure, you can roll up the window, but oftentimes it's too late, unless you want to drive around with the window closed. And why should I have to do that? It's MY car; I shouldn't have to be so negatively affected by other people's actions in my own car! And the fact is, these effects come from just one motorcycle. The situation can be especially compounded when there are a whole pack of motorcycles, and they do often travel in packs, which means even louder interference. I don't understand why it is that cars can be ticketed for having loud mufflers, yet motorcycles can drive down the road, revving their noisy engines and being as deafening as they please.

The main reason why I hate motorcycles doesn't even have anything to do with the fact that their racket makes their owner seem very discourteous and not aware of others at all...

I also have a major beef with the safety issue motorcycles present. It would be one thing for a rider to drive down the road on a motorcycle, not wearing a helmet – as they often do – if it only affected him... But unfortunately, that is not the case. If any type of car accident were to happen involving a motorcycle, no matter who was at fault, any driver involved would have to live with the guilt for the rest of their lives that someone got hurt. And if a motorcycle is involved in an accident, it is relatively easy for the cyclist to get injured – it's a proven fact, plus I've witnessed 2 such crashes – neither were pretty, and one ended with the motorcycle's *helmeted* occupant being airlifted by helicopter to the trauma center. His helmet was smashed almost flat, and If he hadn't been wearing it, my kids and I and whoever else happened upon that scene would have witnessed a fatality, no doubt.

So now that I've sounded off, I feel better. It's not like I think motorcycles should be banned or anything like that... though if my kids or I get interrupted by the clamor of a motorcycle and I'm having a bad day I might feel differently. And in this age of \$4/gallon gas with no end in sight to the price increase, I can't say I blame people for wanting to lower their transportation bill. I just wish it didn't affect other people so extremely! So if you're a motorcyclist, please be considerate, don't rev your engine unnessarily, it makes kids cry! Please always have safety as your #1 priority, and ALWAYS wear a helmet – not just for you, but for the rest of us! Helmets and other safety gear a motorcyclist might wear look much cooler to me than the idiots who wear do-rags or shorts while riding... What's a do-rag gonna to do for you anyway in case of an accident, soak up the blood from your head wound?

OOPSIE – UPDATE

Here is an update on a story I posted last week about a man who was pulled over and subsequently backed his car up onto the police car. Seems the officers did manage to find something to charge him with besides the original speeding ticket:



Police Charge Niles Man They Say Backed Onto Squad Car

A Niles man who reversed his car so that it ran on top of a Buffalo Grove police car Friday has been charged with reckless driving.

Henry Raskin, 70, had been pulled over by a police officer around 11:30 a.m. Friday for speeding. He had been driving 58 mph in a 35 mph zone on Dundee Road, police said.

After the officer wrote Raskin a ticket, he hit the gas while he was in reverse and ended up with his vehicle on top of the squad car, police said.

Sgt. Scott Kristiansen said Tuesday that police determined the incident wasn't purely an accident after watching the squad car video and talking to Raskin.

"It appears to be a little bit more than a mistake," he said. "We think it meets the criteria for reckless driving."

Kristiansen said that most drivers if they found they had accidentally reversed in this situation, would have hit the brakes before driving over a police car.

Raskin posted 10 percent of his \$2,000 bond Friday and was released. He has a June court date in Rolling Meadows.

OOPSIE!

What NOT to do after getting pulled over:



Cops: Niles Man Backs Over Squad Car After Getting Ticketed

Illinois: Police puzzled over driver who drove up and over a squad car.

A man who had been pulled over and ticketed by police ran backward up and onto a Buffalo Grove squad car Friday morning, apparently in his haste to drive off.

Henry Raskin, 70, of Niles had been pulled over by a Buffalo Grove officer on the 400 block of Dundee Road around 11:30 a.m. Friday for driving 58 mph in a 35 mph zone, Sgt. Scott Kristiansen said.

The officer wrote the ticket and returned to the car, and Raskin got ready to drive away. Except he went flying backward.

“(He) apparently was going to pull away at a high rate of speed, but the only problem was that he was in reverse,” Kristiansen said.

He said Raskin was not happy about getting a ticket. He said police are reviewing the squad car videotape to see what Raskin might also be charged with.

Raskin was taken to Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights as a precaution.

Kristiansen said police don’t believe Raskin has any medical conditions that could have led to the crash. Raskin’s age also didn’t seem to play a factor, he said.

The officer, a 20-year veteran of the Buffalo Grove department, was not injured, but his car will be out of service for a while.

“He ended up with the left rear wheel of the car coming through his windshield, about 6 inches from his face,” Kristiansen said. “Luckily, he was not injured.”

The squad car suffered significant damage to the front end, including the windshield and the hood.

Kristiansen said the police investigation so far shows the officer initiated the traffic stop properly. He said officers are trained to treat every stop as if it isn’t a routine procedure so that they are aware when unexpected circumstances like this one take place.

"The officer stopped the car properly and positioned himself properly," he said.

From the dailyherald.com