

Kidstuf!!

Four times per year, our church puts on a family program called Kidstuf. This time around, my two oldest daughters were chosen to be Kidstuf dancers, and they did a GREAT job!

Kidstuf is energetic and fun for adults and kids alike, so my husband and I were pleased to be offered the opportunity to direct the skit portion of the show. We accepted the position, and we enjoyed preparing and rehearsing over the past month or so. I can't say the actual show went off without a hitch since the tech crew missed a few cues and sound effects. But then again, we had only one rehearsal with the tech crew before the actual production. I'm not really sure if anyone noticed the technical gaffes, and I made sure to keep a big smile on my face for the nervous cast to see as a sign of encouragement throughout the show. And I should mention that this edition of Kidstuf was unprecedented in that families sat together in the audience. Normally we have kids up front, and parents with wee little ones sit in the back. But this time, there was a family activity to be done – each family was given poster board, colored note cards, and glue sticks. Throughout the skit, families were directed to write different words on their note cards pertaining to either God or their loved ones. At the end, they were to paste their note cards to the poster boards in the shape of a flower. Being the first time we've attempted a family craft during Kidstuf, we didn't know what to expect... But the jubilant feeling I felt when I looked around and saw that the families had done the craft was indescribable. Not only did their flowers look great, but they had also together created something to take home that will remind them about how important familial and Godly relationships are in life. It was probably the most accomplished feeling a director can have, and that made the distraction of the tech problems disappear from my mind!

As I mentioned before, my kids were excellent Kidstuf dancers! They had rehearsed together every day before the production, had fun at their rehearsals, and then when performance time came, they were naturals on the stage! Here is a clip (my lovelies are the two on the left – my oldest is in green, and her little sis is in yellow behind her):

Kidstuf had something for everyone: a great Bible lesson (Philippians 4:8 complete with “not borin’” tips on how to memorize it), dancing, singing, a fun skit, comedy, and audience participation – Hubby was one of the adults that was called up to participate to be a “cow”. From the show: “you know that cows are known to bounce around on the range...” We had six adults on the stage bouncing around on (child size) hippity-hops, 3 of whom got roped by the ‘magic lasso’ – it was classic! Here’s a clip:

Actually never mind... while it was fun at the time, those adults might not appreciate being on the internet on their hippity hops, getting roped by the ‘magic lasso’, so I will just save that one for memory – hilarious, and the kids LOVED it!!

And I must add that our other audience participation scene went quite well also, but this one involved kids acting like a fire brigade. Things got crazy, and before the audience knew it, a real bucket of water was thrown upon a cast member. Before the production, much discussion was held on how not to mess up the stage (Kidstuf is performed in our Worship Center, so keeping things clean was of utmost importance), and thankfully we decided to remove one of the Worship Band’s monitors from the stage before “Scottie’s” dousing. Because we had never used actual water during rehearsal, the physics of the soaking was as much of a surprise to us directors and to the cast (especially poor “Scottie”) as it was to the audience – “Tyler” got “Scottie” right down the front of her bib overalls, and the look on the actress’ face was priceless!

All in all, we experienced an extremely fun and successful Kidstuf; we couldn’t have asked for a better show! Afterward, there was a carnival with games, activities, and carnival food, and it was all free, which was great for many community families – hope we got a lot of new people to come check out our great church! I know many families had a fun-packed day, and I was very excited to be part of such a wonderful event.

I'm really glad that my Illinois family (most of them anyway) were able to join us, and I know it meant the world to my kids to have some fans in the audience, so thank you!!

For those who were not fortunate enough to be able to see the show, Philippians 4:8 reads:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Fun At The Jubilee

For the life of me, I could not think of a creative title for this blog post, so I just went with a logical one. Our town has an annual Jubilee – a little carnival on the town square that comes once a year. For all but 1 of the 7 years that we've lived here (we were out of town during that missed year), we've enjoyed the Jubilee, especially now that we live within walking distance and don't have to worry about parking – we can come and go as we please, and it's especially nice to spend a night at the Jubilee and run home for potty breaks rather than using the disgusting Port-O-Potties. It's fun to walk around the square and soak up the bustling atmosphere while chatting with familiar faces among the crowd. Although carnival rides are quite costly these days, we are lucky that my husband's birthday always falls during the week of the Jubilee and that we have some generous relatives who send him much-appreciated birthday money (which my husband is always more than happy to spend on the kids at the Jubilee). The kids had a night of fun on the carnival rides, and there was an extra treat at the Jubilee this year – an animal show!!!

I, like many of my friends it turns out, was thinking that the animal show would not be anything spectacular – a few snakes, a parrot, and maybe a jumping dog or two. But this was more like a traveling zoo – *in my backyard!!!* First, a disclaimer – I love animals. But I'm not one of those PETA activists – I find most people like that over-the-top; you know, those people who spend their time protesting the “horrible” conditions of zoos, blah, blah... that's not me. I won't go into too much detail, but basically I believe in taking good care of animals. I believe that most zoos accomplish that, and overall, I believe that zoos are a great way to educate the public about animals and get people to care enough to want to take actions that will stop the destruction of wild animal habitats and the killing of species throughout the world. That's it in a nutshell, and I'll stop there since that isn't really what this post is about. My point in bringing this up is to say that when I first heard there was going to be an animal show at the Jubilee, I wasn't going to go, much like when I refuse to attend circuses (I'm not an extremist, but circuses ARE bad for animals!! But that's a whole 'nother post...). So we were at the Jubilee, and there was a huge crowd over by the animal stage, and my curiosity got the better of me – so we checked it out.

Like I kept saying all weekend, it was like a zoo in my backyard! They had a tortoise, a turtle, a huge python, an albino cobra, a monitor lizard (komodo dragon's cousin), an eagle owl (largest species of owl in the world with striking orange eyes), a blue and gold macaw parrot, a binturong (rare mammal who is always sleeping every time I see it at the zoo – this is the first time I've actually seen one awake and in action. They have an odd buttery popcorn smell. I put a picture of one below if you're curious.), a kangaroo, a monkey, a full-sized leopard, AND... a 4-week-old white tiger! The animals seemed well-cared for and their keepers were caring and knowledgeable, so I was quick to become a big fan – in fact, I attended 3 of the 8 shows they put on while they

were in town! I would have gone to more, but it was tough enough to get my little guy to sit through the two we brought him to (especially when there were very rude kids standing in front of him – I was so mad!).



Saturday was one of my favorite days ever with me getting to take my kids to TWO animal shows and another one of my favorite things – a PARADE!! I just love small town parades, and this one was especially great – the weather was perfect (in the 80's, but with big puffy clouds and a nice breeze, humidity not too high for once), and two of my kids were marching in it! PLUS, there was a vehicle handing out free stuffed dogs at the end, so we got one for each kid! Best. Jubilee. Ever. ☐ Even if I didn't make my annual trek to the Dippin' Dots stand this year – that should tell you how much I enjoyed the animal show!



Back To School!

Well, summer is officially over – school starts **tomorrow**! I could be like everyone else and say “where did the summer go?”, but for me, it actually didn’t go as fast as I would have thought. We were so busy; though it was good-busy; not like so-much-work-to-do-busy. But much fun was had and I enjoyed every minute! Last week was spent at school open houses and orientations, as well as a training event at our church to allow us to volunteer with our church’s student ministries. That was an interesting evening – it began with us volunteers breaking off into groups of about 15 and making lines. We were given a spoon tied to a string which was wound around a “spool” ie, an empty tube of toilet paper. The first person in the line (me) was to put the spoon down their shirt and pants and give it to the next person who was supposed to put it *up* their pants and shirt, then to the next person who was supposed to put it down the shirt and pants, effectively “threading” the line of people together. Kind of strange, I thought, but what’s going to happen once we’re all “wearing” the string??? It was a little scary, but luckily, the threading was the entire ice-breaking activity, and the rest of the evening was pleasantly spent listening to a guest speaker while munching on all kinds of orange snacks (orange was the theme for the evening – I never really thought about how many party snacks are orange before!).

Today we had so many activities and volunteering planned for church that we were on the go from 8:30 in the morning until about 3:30 in the afternoon. Busy, but it was time well-spent, especially since we finished up the day with Kidstuff (a cute show with a wonderful message for the kids) and then a carnival with LOTS of treats and fun for the kids; they had a

blast. Good thing too – we need to get settled down early tonight in order to get our oldest to school by **7:30 in the morning!!!** She is starting middle school, and yes, to those of you who have asked – she will be switching classes, kind of like the “block” style they had when I was in middle school. My daughter has a homeroom, but then she switches for language arts and math and perhaps other subjects as well. And they do gym class strangely – there are 4 classes: gym, music, technology (typing, etc.), and art, and they take one of these 4 classes every day for 9 weeks and then switch to another. That sounds pretty cool to me! I would have LOVED it if I only had to worry about gym for 9 weeks of the year! But, being in middle school also means that she has to change for gym class, poor thing – I remember that aspect of middle school making a lot of kids really nervous. And at orientation last week, the principal gave us parents a talk about making sure we wash the gym clothes – the kids are getting to “that age”, she said, which prompted me to whisper to my friend nearby, “I’m not ready!” But my daughter IS ready for middle school, and she seems to be making her way from tween to teen in no time – UGH! Poor thing got her first pimple just in time for the first day of middle school, but she doesn’t seem to mind too much, so we’re not making it a big deal. It’s not like we’re publishing it on the internet for the entire world to read or anything... But what are moms for? She can thank me when she’s older and finds this through some sort of google search or something.

Our second oldest is starting Kindergarten. This is our “difficult” child; our strong-willed one. Samantha has a mind of her own, and some of the things she says leave us in stitches – others leave us shaking our heads, but we’ll stick to the positives here. It seems that Samantha has the same Kindergarten teacher that her sister had a few years ago, and my husband and I are chuckling to ourselves about the unintentional “joke” we’re about to play on our local school system. We are wondering how many years it will take for word

to spread amongst the teachers in town about how much of a... well, *difference* there is between Samantha and her big sister... No need to go off about it here, like I said, we need to call it an early night, but it will suffice to say that any teacher of Taylor's who gets Samantha 4 years later will probably be surprised ☐

I was going to write about the younger two as well, but it's bedtime already and this post is long enough – that's what I get for not blogging regularly, I guess, an über-post!

Jubilee Time

It's time for our town's annual summer fest; they call it the Jubilee. Every year I'm compelled to attend, even though I become more disenchanted with the whole affair as years pass. I just really like summer fest atmospheres, and I can't resist going when we live within blocks of it. It's fun to take all the kids there without having to pack up everyone in the car, spend a few bucks for gas to get there, or haggle over parking. But as every cost in our economy rises, the Jubilee is no exception. And if the kids had lots of fun, it'd be worth it, but every year it seems the Jubilee finds ways to cut corners and disappoint my kids.

Take this year, for example. "Wrist band day" was on the first day of the carnival; a day when you buy a wristband for one "low" price (now \$16, up \$2 from the \$14 it cost last year) and it gets you on "unlimited" rides. I think they planned wrist band day on the first day of the carnival for a reason – before anyone could get to the carnival and look around to see that some of the usual rides are missing. Not only that, but for small children, because of height

requirements, there are only about 4 rides they were able to use their wristband on. My 4-year-old is a little daredevil and wanted to ride everything, including the "Kamikaze", a ride that goes upside down. She was too small to ride that one of course, and I completely understood the rhyme and reason for that rule, however, when she got excited about the Ferris Wheel only to be turned away, I began to lose my patience. Seems the rules require that she ride with an adult, no problem there, my husband would have rode with her even though he's not crazy about ferris wheels... except that the escorting adult had to have 3 tickets to ride! And at \$1.50/ticket, we're talking about spending an extra \$4.50 *for one ride*, on top of the \$32 we had already spent on wristbands for my 2 daughters – just for my daughter to follow their rule and be escorted on the ferris wheel – no thanks. So after 2 disappointments, we went over to the other side of the Jubilee and found the "scrambler" ride, so my daughters went on it and had a good time. They got in line to go again, and 4-year-old Sammie was turned away because she wasn't tall enough – apparently she shrank while waiting in line to go a second time? Again, I'm all for abiding by safety rules, etc., but they need to adopt a uniform policy that will be in place the entire run of the carnival. Try explaining to a 4-year-old that she isn't tall enough to ride a ride that she just got finished riding! We actually ran into the same problem at Disney World, but they were very sympathetic and understanding and offered us ride passes as compensation. And as if all this at the Jubilee weren't enough, my daughters have a favorite "ride" at the Jubilee every year – the funhouse. They actually usually have 2 funhouses, but for whatever reason, my girls have their favorite. So they're standing there on the steps of their favorite funhouse, waiting to get in, and the ride operator is trying to tell them something, and that's when I see the signs. "No wristbands or tickets. This ride is \$2" WHAT?!? Why would they do this? To make money obviously, but that funhouse had no one there all night, was it really worth it to disappoint all the kids who go there

year after year and look forward to that funhouse? And like I said, since wristband night was on the first day of the Jubilee, we didn't have an opportunity to tour the grounds to see what would be included in the purchase of the wristband – regrettably.

Despite all the disappointments, my daughters took them all in stride and still had fun. We ran into some friends, so we decided to take one of their daughters home with us for a sleepover. Even though we had bought the wristbands that were good until 11, we just wanted out of there after all the disappointment and money wasting. I did get my Dippin' Dots, but the vendor forgot my root beer float this year ☹ I was pretty happy with the cookie dough that my husband got for me, and it was actually better than I remember. Not worth going back to the Jubilee for more, but still good. I think we're done with the Jubilee already this year. We usually go back Friday night for the karaoke contest and Saturday after the parade, but I think we can find something better (and cheaper!) to do this year. Next year, maybe we'll plan a vacation for Jubilee week and skip it all together!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE BEST!

Today is my husband's birthday! Poor guy, he has to work. It stinks that when you become an adult, you can't take the day off on your birthday. When you think about it, each person would get only one day per year, it could be easily proven when your day is and if you've already taken it, but I guess in larger workplaces, it wouldn't be very economical when there are lots of employees. Plus, it's not like you can take a break from every responsibility in life for a day – though that would be nice! There's no 'off' switch on the kids, the

pets still need to be cared for, bills are due, errands to run... the list goes on... so why draw the line at having a day off work?

But anyway, my husband is going to take a half day off tomorrow so we can celebrate just the two of us; and we're both really looking forward to that – I just have to make it through today. I've had a terribly stressful day so far, but I shouldn't vent about it to my husband on his birthday... so instead I've recorded a time table of everything that's been going on in our house for the last hour. Normally, this wouldn't be that big of a deal, but since I'm now up going to the bathroom half the night and our kids spazzed about going to bed last night and kept everyone up late, today I was really looking forward to some downtime and maybe even a nap. I was hoping to just sit here and write a blog post or two, mostly about how wonderful my husband is on his birthday... but instead I find myself venting about the kids because they're being really needy. Not bad really, but I am so tired! I don't know how I'm ever going to find the energy to take them to the carnival tonight! So anyway, my hour that I've set aside to blog before lunch has gone something like this:

11:24 – getting youngest something to drink (*and there's been lots of stuff before this, this is just where I got frustrated enough to notate everything*)

11:27 – sat down again

11:29-11:34 – setting up youngest outside at the 'picnic'

11:34-11:38 – sat down to blog

11:38 – a request comes in for more Pringles

11:39 – After some discussion, it's decided that if they eat their sandwiches, they can have popsicles instead of Pringles

11:40 – whats this about giving their lunchmeat to the dog?!?

11:42 – About this time, I should be getting up to go take a peek out the window to see if I can determine the fate of the lunchmeat. But I have a big long day ahead of me, and it'd be nice if I could sit for a FEW mins! I will just have to trust

the kids to tell me the truth. I have a bad feeling about this.

11:45 – The back door opens. This time it's the oldest with an update – "Sammie stepped on dog poop and she doesn't have shoes on." UGH – I make a quick note of the time in my blog and head outside to clean it up.

11:46 – turned the hose on right on my sock-and-shoed-foot while washing dog poop off of Sammie's foot

11:51 – Friend shows up for help in carrying furniture – ringing the doorbell and making the dog go completely crazy. Shoot! I totally forgot he was coming today! Now my husband has EXTRA responsibilities on his birthday!

11:55 – UPS guy pulls up, dog still going crazy from friend stopping by

12:08 – Wow – have they really let me sit and type this for a whole 13 minutes?!? Uh, oh – back door opens again – "I have something in my hair." – Guess who? Surprise – it's the same kid who stepped in dog poop.

12:10 – bug detangled from hair

And the day is just beginning. So it will go on like this, and on, and on... So now maybe you have some insight as to why it takes me a good hour to write one blog post or get much of anything accomplished around here, really. But on to my birthday wishes for my hubby, since I only have 5 minutes left of my blogging hour.

So I have absolutely NO idea what to get him. I'd like him to have a gift to open, even though he says he doesn't care. Everything he wants (and that's not much, he's not really into material things) he says he buys for himself and he'd be happier knowing that no money was spent on buying him any birthday presents. But the way I am, I like to give gifts; I like people to have something to open and to see them get gifts on their birthdays, so I feel badly that he doesn't have anything. I was going to go out today and get something, but I really can't think of anything to get him... I've had some

good ideas in the past, but this year I'm at a loss... So I will just try to keep the kids good and out of his hair, which is actually much more difficult than it sounds for me right now. But my husband said earlier today that he wants to make my day extra special and good. He woke up early with the kids (as usual) and had the dishwasher emptied and the kids' breakfasts cleaned up by the time I got up. Only the most wonderful man like my husband would go out of his way to make *my* day extra special on *his* birthday! And that's why I say Happy Birthday to the BEST!!!