

GO CUBS GO!!!

As you've probably heard by now, the Chicago Cubs have clinched their division. They WILL be going to the playoffs in 2008!!!! YAY! It's been a great year; even though with my busy schedule I only got to see less than 10 games. But that's ok – I always said I won't plan my life around baseball. Tempting, but I won't do it, at least not until my kids are grown and I have nothing better to do. A prime example of this is the fact that we've planned a trip to Florida during the playoffs and world series. If the Cubs make it to the world series, I won't get to see that either. Luckily, we'll be home in time for game 4 of the world series, so I'll at least be able to see one game, possibly more if they need to play them. But I'm getting ahead of myself. First the Cubs have to make it to the world series. Given the way the team has played all year, I think there's a pretty good chance, but all we can do is wait and see. For now, it's comforting to know that they've already clinched their playoff spot and I got to watch that happen! GO CUBBIES!!!!

Getting To Know Me – Some More

Got another 'getting to know you' quiz via email the other day. Since I still fill these out for some reason (don't really know why I do this – haven't my friends already learned all these things about me?), I figured I might as well post it on the blog. And this one prompted me to add a new category to my blogging also – fun forwards. Of course now I have a bunch of posts that should go into this category, but I'm not

about to go back and re-classify all my posts.

44 ODD Things about you! If you opened this, FILL IT OUT!
Learn

44 things about your friends, and let them learn 44 things about you!

Send back to me and to several more friends!

1. Do you like blue cheese? yes
2. Have you ever smoked? yes
3. Do you own a gun? no
4. What flavor Kool Aid was your favorite? mountain berry
5. Do you get nervous before a doctor appointment? depends what it's for
6. What do you think of hot dogs? like em – especially Nathan's
7. Favorite Christmas movie? Elf, Christmas Vacation
8. What do you prefer to drink in the morning? water or iced tea if I'm tired
9. Can you do push ups? dunno
10. What's your favorite piece of jewelry? wedding ring
11. Favorite hobby? reading
12. Do you have A.D.D.? I just might
13. What's one trait you hate about yourself? impatience
14. Middle name? Marie
15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment? OUCH (my almost 2-year-old is doing my hair), is it too hot to cook pizzas at the party?, what will we do with 3 pizzas if we don't cook them?
16. Name 3 drinks you regularly drink? iced tea, water, beer
17. Current worry? husband's health
18. Current hate right now? my kids' inability to appreciate things
19. Favorite place to be? anywhere alone with Chris
20. How did you bring in the New Year? pregnant
21. Where would you like to go? Madagascar
22. Name three people who will complete this? Jamy (already

did), Vickie, Megan

23. Do you own slippers? no

24. What color shirt are you wearing right now? red

25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? yes

26. Can you whistle? yes

28. Would you be a pirate? what does that mean? I've got a parrot...

29. What songs do you sing in the shower? whatever is on the radio

30. Favorite Girl's Names? Taylor, Samantha, Disney

31. Favorite boy's names? Christopher, Jonathan, Michael

32. What's in your pocket right now? don't have pockets

33. Last thing that made you laugh? The Nerd

34. Best bed sheets as a child? Snoopy

35. Worst injury you've ever had? getting cut open at the last minute to have a baby

36. Do you love where you live? YES

37. How many TVs do you have in your house? 5 + a few that don't work

38. Who is your loudest friend? Lisa H.

39. How many dogs do you have? 2

40. Does someone have a crush on you? yes

41. What is your favorite book? Monkeys on the Interstate by Jack Hanna

42. What is your favorite candy? chocolate

43. Favorite Sports Team? Chicago Cubs, Chicago Bears

44. What song or songs do you want played at your funeral?
Canon in D – more appropriate for a wedding, I guess, but it's my favorite classical piece... it's not like I've thought about this!

TAKE LIFE ONE DAY AT A TIME. HAVE A GREAT ONE

Moving The Choo-Choo

If you've grown up in Chicagoland as I have, then you'll know what I'm talking about when I describe a few staples of a typical suburban 1980's Chicago childhood. #1 – You've attended a taping of the Bozo show. As I've stated before, the girl I went to the show with was put on the waiting list for tickets when she was a fetus. We went to the show taping when we were 9 – that's how long it took for her name to come up, thus illustrating how popular the experience was. #2 – If you had perfect attendance in school, you won tickets to a White Sox baseball game. Even I, a true-blue Chicago Cubs fan, ventured over to the south side as a youth to cheer on the men in black as a reward for not missing any days in a school year. Don't tell anyone though; it's not something I'm proud of. #3 – You got your grilled cheese served to you by a miniature train at the Choo-Choo restaurant in Des Plaines.

Now that it's 2008, I doubt they give away major league baseball tickets for perfect attendance in school anymore. I know for a fact that the Bozo show is no longer around, but I also know that the Choo-Choo restaurant is alive and well – for now anyway. The Choo-Choo is a small diner that serves typical american fare – hot dogs, grilled cheese, burgers, and the like. If you sit at the counter, your food is delivered by a miniature train that circles the dining room and disappears into the kitchen. It seems they are thinking of moving the Choo-Choo to build a new police department. Not putting it out of business, thank goodness, but they are considering moving it. I hope this does not happen because I'm not one to favor change, and I can't help but feel that if the restaurant is moved, it will suffer loss of business which will eventually lead to its demise. I don't understand why the proposal involves moving the entire building; from what I remember it is a very small crowded space, and the magic is in the train serving your food, not in the building

itself. Since 1951, this little diner has been there, and many generations have enjoyed it. I think it would be a shame to move it as it would lose at least a little bit of its nostalgia for some people if it were in a different location. Leave it there in its tiny building. Let people stand in lines that often run out the door in order to get a counter seat where the train runs as they've done for decades. People are more likely to return with their children and later on, their grandchildren if it's left exactly the way they remember it.

My husband and I had very different upbringings; his was a life of "privilege", getting every material item he could ever want, although his parents were never home. Mine was the opposite, a loving family always together although we had to stretch the already tight budget just to be able to afford such luxuries as an occasional happy meal from McDonalds. But we are both products of Chicagoland, therefore we share the memories of the Sox tickets perfect attendance prize (not that my husband ever won any; this is no surprise if you know anything about his school years), being at the Bozo show tapings, and our visits to the Choo-Choo restaurant. My kids have been to the restaurant also, and I hope it's still there for them to visit with my grandchildren someday.

Let There Be Lights

Recently there was an article on cubs.com about how it's been 20 years since Wrigley Field started night games for the Chicago Cubs, i.e. got lights in their stadium. That made me feel kind of old because I remember that event, and it was 20 years ago: 8-8-88. Sigh. Since when can I remember 20 years ago? But anyway, I remember an elderly gentleman (turns out

he was 91 in 1988 and actually remembered the Cubs winning the World Series in 1908 – a stark reminder that there is NO ONE left today who can say the same...) flipped the switch to turn on Wrigley Field's lights for the first time ever. Funnily enough, it was a bit too early in the evening, and many fans and spectators said they couldn't see a difference in the lighting on the field. But it was symbolic, and Wrigley Field finally had its lights, even if it was the last major league ball park to get them. And the event was proven even more symbolic than functional that night when the game was postponed because of rain. So the first FULL baseball game at Wrigley under the new lights was actually 8/9/88.

Apparently the lights were snuck into the field in the middle of the night, under cover, literally. They were hoisted into place quickly by helicopters, for fear that protestors would shoot them in order to try to preserve the neighborhood's charm and innocence. But the plan was not foiled, and 20 years later, we still get to enjoy night games at Wrigley. **GO CUBBIES!!!**

RIP Caray

Recently Skip Caray passed away, a son of famed Chicago Cubs announcer Harry Caray. Skip was actually famous for his work announcing the Atlanta Braves rather than the Cubs, but his death in the news made me think of his father and everything he brought to Cubs games.

Since I didn't watch many Braves games, I wasn't really familiar with Skip's work, so I looked him up on wikipedia.com and found the following:

Skip Caray's broadcasts were characterized by his witty and

sarcastic sense of humor, a personality trait that endeared him to most fans, but alienated him from others. For example, during a particularly long losing streak in the 1980s, Skip declared at the start of a game against the Pittsburgh Pirates "And, like lambs to the slaughter, the Braves take the field". More recently, in a game against the Florida Marlins, the Braves had loaded the bases, to which Caray quipped, "The bases are loaded, just like (Marlins manager) Jack McKeon probably wishes he was." During the 2004 season, Caray frequently made fun of Braves relief pitcher, Jung Bong, declaring every time the opposing team got a hit against him, "that's another hit off of Bong". In 2008, a player popped a fly ball so high that Skip said "That would've been a home run in a phone booth."

Sounds like a funny guy, and I'm sure he'll be missed by legions of fans, much like his late father, Harry Caray, the voice of the Chicago Cubs.

Windy City Classic

Back in the days when it didn't count, there was only one yearly face-off between the Chicago cross-town rivals, the Cubs and the White Sox. It was called a number of things, but when I was younger, I remember it being referred to as the Windy City Classic. No matter which side you cheer for, these games are important to every sports fan in Chicago. I even remember cutting school one year to attend...

But now that there is something known as inter-league play, there are 6 of these games a year, and they do count. Today was the opening game of one such series, and I am suffering through it. One of the rare Cubs games I've actually gotten

to watch on tv this year, it has to be broadcast by Sox announcers, even though the game is being played at Wrigley Field and the Cubs are the home team. I cannot stand the Sox announcers. Not only do they stink as announcers (I would be rich if I got paid for every time they've said "south-paw" – some diversity in your subject matter, guys, please?), but they are on *their* side. So every time the White Sox make a play, even though the crowd is booing, the announcers get excited. And I won't even waste much time complaining about the shouts of "Put it on the Board!" I'm subjected to every time the Sox score runs.

There's a lot at stake for this series – both teams are in first place in their respective divisions, even though it must be noted that the Cubs have a much better record – but I'm not really minding the errands I have to run that will take me away from today's game. Watching the Cubs lose to the Sox is one thing if that happens, but hearing these horrible announcers rub in every homerun or lucky play the Sox make is a new brand of torture of which I'm glad to be relieved!

Vacation!

In case you've been wondering where I've been lately (or even if you haven't) – Grandma has helped us get one last little vacation before baby arrives. We were going to head to New York, but decided not to do that, thank goodness. Admittedly, the gas prices were the original deterrent, so then we explored taking a Greyhound bus there, but in my huge condition, I didn't see any opportunity for good rest on a long bus trip. I am really glad we declined the big trip, though, because my feet have been killing me, just from everyday tasks, like cleaning or shopping. I would have had

to cut short all of our sight-seeing in New York or rent a wheelchair for the week. And staying home had afforded us time to do much needed catch-up work around the house. We've been making landscaping plans, and I will be very excited to see how that turns out in a few weeks when it's finished. We cleaned out the famous closet o' games, and we didn't even need to knock down the wall to expand the closet as I was talking about in another post. We found enough room for all of our games by sending all the kids' games upstairs to their room. Our house has lots of built-in shelving and drawers, and the kids had a huge cabinet in their closet that wasn't even being used. So, up went all the kids' games. I am a little concerned that they will tear apart their game collection and scatter pieces and whatnot, but they will have to be taught somehow that this is not going to be tolerated. Most importantly on our vacation without the kids, we achieved the cleaning of their room. It is a huge bedroom, and we have all 3 of our girls sharing it, but until we cleaned it, they could barely fit in there because they had so many toys. Whenever we'd make them clean it, we noticed that they would play in there for such a long time afterward because they actually liked having all the open space. So we donated about 90% of their toys to charity while they were visiting with Grandma. It might sound mean, but we kept the important stuff, and like I said, they actually enjoy their room and the things in it much more when everything is picked up and they have fewer things to appreciate. I will keep you posted on how well (or not) this is received when they get home. They will probably forget exactly what toys they once had, and by donating everything, more kids can enjoy them.

Even though it took an entire day of cleaning to reach the bottom of the toy pile in their room, we have managed to fit in lots of fun for just hubby and me. We've gone shopping several times, and yesterday we were in Toledo all day getting good food, seeing a movie, and taking in a [Toledo MudHens](#) game. If you're not familiar, the MudHens are minor league

baseball. I've been wanting to get to a [Chicago Cubs](#) game last year or this year, but with the baby coming, I've ruled it out until at least next year. So, minor league baseball it was, and we had a blast – I got my live baseball game fix for awhile... there's just something about hearing the crack of the bat, the slap of the ball in the glove and the other sounds of a baseball game in the beautiful summer night air. And it was a great game. Seems a player from the [Detroit Tigers](#) was rehabbing with the MudHens, so we got to see a major-leaguer pitch for a few innings. The Hens were up 3-0 early in the game, then they let Indianapolis tie it up, only to hit a walk-off homer in the 9th with 2 outs to win the game – awesome! And if you're not from the area and want to experience food that is uniquely Toledo, I recommend a restaurant called [Tony Packo's](#) to you. Their menu is somewhat limited; there aren't very many choices, so pass on it if you're a picky eater. But if you're like me and you like to try all different kinds of ethnic food, give it a whirl. They serve Hungarian food, namely sausage, cabbage rolls, and chili mac over dumplings. It's really good and a unique dining experience. It's also really interesting how we heard of the restaurant in the first place. We were in a thrift store and I saw this stuffed baby in a diaper with a tomato head. I thought it was really cute, even though it creeped my husband out, but it was only 5¢ so I bought it. Turns out, it's a character from Tony Packo's as labeled on the rear end of the baby tomato. I googled Tony Packo's, found out it was a restaurant an hour away from us in Toledo, looked at the menu, and we decided to give it a try. The guy who works their marketing in the gift shop really liked that story. What's weird though, is that while gutting my kids' room this week, the baby tomato never surfaced. Hmmm, I wonder what happened to it?

Sometimes you get more of what you want from a vacation by staying home. In this age of the horribly high gas prices, the media has even coined a new word for the 'vacation taken

at home', but I can't recall what it is. If you know, post it in my comments – it's bugging me that I can't think of it. Anyway, by staying home, we saved a ton of money on gas alone, and we got some things done around the house that we will appreciate for months or even years to come, all while having a great time with just each other, no kids! Thank you, Grandma!

I'm Not Rubbing It In, Honest, But...

With ***NINE STRAIGHT WINS***, the Chicago Cubs are the HOTTEST team in baseball right now! I am ecstatic about this and just had to make a remark or two. So I'm sorry to my friends who follow MLB, choosing instead to support franchises other than the Cubs – I don't know how your teams are doing, and I don't mean to rub it in about how incredibly awesome the Cubs are this year, but these days, "How about those Cubs?" is not just a conversation starter, it's a question being asked by baseball fanatics, Cubs fans, Chicagoans, and probably anyone who has ever heard of the Cubs, their 'loveable losers' nickname, and their awesome 2008 baseball skills. Gone are the days it seems when the Cubs were the laughing stock of baseball; the "maybe next year" mantra and when an 8-0 deficit in a game meant certain disaster for my favorite team. The other day, they were able to turn an 8-0 losing game into a 10-9 **WIN** over the Rockies! Honestly, the Cubs have never been known for great comebacks in a game, and this was no fluke – that game was followed by 2 more games where the Cubs came from behind to save the game and declare wins for themselves. Then again, rallies are nothing new to Cubs' manager, Lou Piniella – no manager in history has managed more

eight-run comebacks.

So could 2008 be the year for the Cubs? Could 100, a whole century, be the magic number of years us Cubs fans have had to wait for another World Series win? That remains to be seen, of course, it is only June, but keep this in mind: according to the Elias Sports Bureau, the last time the Cubs had the best record in baseball entering June was 1908, the year they last won the World Series. Coincidence or fate? We will find out come October – I know I will be glued to the Cubs website until then!

How about those Cubs?!?

Watching Paint Dry

There are two sports that I really cannot stand to watch. I realize that this may put me in the minority especially in this area where it seems that both sports seem to have legion of fans (particularly in my own family).

The first is NASCAR racing. How anyone can sit for 3-4 or sometimes 5 hours at a time watching cars go around and around a track is beyond me. My mother regales us with stories of her youth and spending weekends at the area race track watching local drivers compete. I can sit through maybe an hour of televised auto racing before I excuse myself and do something more constructive. I do enjoy cheering for my favorite drivers. These are not the more popular stars including Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Jeff Gordon, etc. I chose to chose the most colorful name I can think of, usually one who is nowhere near competing. Names like Dick Trickle (Tricky Dicky or Trick Dickle as I used to call him), Hideo Fukuyama (I wonder if he is related to Chicago Cubs acquisition Kosuke Fukudome sorry

if I insulted the new Cubs outfielder), or my new favorite... AJ Allmendinger.

My second favorite sport to fall asleep to is professional golf. Honestly, whenever I hear that someone hit a birdie I say... what kind? At a recent extended family gathering where everyone was gathered around the television quietly waiting for Tiger Woods or some other player to take a shot, I shouted **"THREE AND A HALF!!!!"** They were not amused. When I want to watch golf on television I stick with the classics: *Caddyshack* and *Happy Gilmore*. And if I want to play a good round, I much prefer going eighteen holes at the area miniature golf course.

Sometimes I really think I would prefer watching paint dry or worse yet.... The multi-colored bar code test pattern on the television screen HAHAHA.

It's Not the Years, Honey... It's The Mileage

It seems that everyone is getting in the Indiana Jones spirit. While chatting with a friend I was directed to the [Chicago Cubs'](#) website and the [schedule](#) thereof. On the May 22nd space, there appears a picture of Harrison Ford as the reknowned archaeologist ready to embark on his latest adventure. We speculated that all of baseball may have decided to take the day off to celebrate Dr. Jones' return to the big screen. Somehow, I had my doubts. Sure enough on the [New York Yankees'](#) [site](#), there appeared the same picture but a game was listed. So, I thought all of baseball was celebrating but just not taking the entire day off. I checked out the [Detroit Tigers'](#) [schedule](#): there it was again, but yet

again the team has a scheduled game. Only makes me more anxious for the next 21 days to go quickly.

Check your favorite team's website to see if they are celebrating the release of *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. At least a Yankee fan had something to divert his attention to tonight ☐