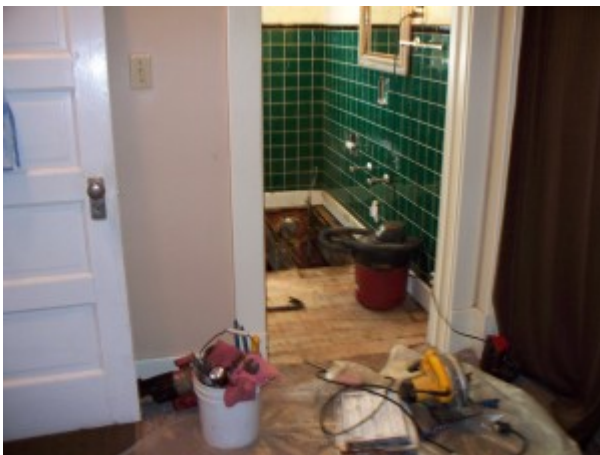


One Of Those Days...

I knew it was going to be a busy day today before I even woke up, and I was dreading having to get up early. I am very lucky (thanks to my wonderful husband) that I don't have to get up early every day; I'm not a morning person. But today there was an early morning dentist appointment and someone also had to be here for the plumbers (more on that later). So I had begrudgingly set my alarm, but someone nearby decided to mow their lawn early this morning, there were dogs barking (turned out to be ours, of course, doh!), and a weird smell in the house (like someone had just gotten a perm, yuck). So I got out of bed a half hour before my alarm even got a chance to make a peep. And when I went downstairs, I found this where our downstairs (and most popular) bathroom used to be:



Well, ok, so it wasn't a complete shock. We had scheduled the plumbers to come today to fix [our bathroom floor bulge](#), but I wasn't expecting the bathroom to be **missing**! And obviously the plumbers' estimate of the work is going to be way low (and the estimate was frightening enough in the first place!) since much more of the floor was affected than they originally thought even before they tore it to pieces. Tomorrow we find out if the plumbing itself is "worse than they thought" as well, which would add yet another day to this project and who knows how much money, yikes! Plus we still have to get a new bathroom floor; to be installed by a different contractor all

together – how much is **that** going to cost? Did I mention I've had a headache all day? The plumbers' drill isn't helping; it seems like they're drilling my head open... All this after we put a bunch of money into house stuff earlier this year when my husband sold his software which we considered a blessing at the time (more on that later). We got rid of our humongous, room-sized furnace and put central air in the house, and then ironically it was the coolest summer on record and we barely needed the new air conditioning system. We have the strangest luck sometimes. I wouldn't go so far as to call it bad luck; after all, the irony is born from good things we're receiving, so how can that be bad? I do get a new bathroom floor out of this, at some point anyway – we might have to try the ~~primitive~~ classic wooden look for awhile... And while I'm venting about the frustrations of today, let me just go off for a bit about how darn inconvenient it is to get things done while sharing a house with a few (extremely talkative) plumbers who are tearing apart the bathroom! Not only do I have to keep the kids away from there, but I have to bring the whole gang (of kids – not the plumbers of course!) with me upstairs every time I need something from the bathroom!

And back to the stress of my husband's work right now... Back in the spring when his business deal went through, we were ecstatic that we would be able to pay some bills, fix some things on the house, and most importantly, spend the summer as a family without having to worry about work as much. It was a great summer, but now we have come to find out that a major company wants the software that was sold and is willing to pay much much more than for what it was sold just months ago. In short, if we had waited to sell the business for just a few months, we would be... let's just say 'in a very good financial place' right now. I'm learning a bit about the lessons of patience and greed (ain't human nature grand? Just months ago we were perfectly happy with the business deal the way it was, and now I think about regretting selling because it's worth so

much more money), but it's frustrating; especially on a day in front of little sleep and after the destruction of my beautiful bathroom. Does this make sense? I feel like I'm rambling a little bit... I stopped in the coffee house drive-thru on the way back from the dentist appointment, and it's been a while since I've had a White Lightning, so I kind of feel like I'm all over the place...

But anyway, I should get the kids out of here and away from the busy plumbers (imagine that, a gaping hole in the bathroom floor attracts kids like flies to... well, I won't go there. At least the drive this morning to the dentist through the NW Ohio countryside at the beginning of the beautiful fall season relaxed me a little. If only there was time for a nap before I go and try to lead a group of 13-year-old spastic seventh-graders...

What happened to my coffee???

I have written many times about my love of coffee. I will admit that I am a bit of a coffee snob. But I never needed to have gourmet coffee at every turn. But for the past couple of days the coffee I've had just didn't taste right. Hmm...

At work last Friday I had one cup of coffee. It was flavored coffee (beans from a local coffee shop) and it had an off flavor. Ok, maybe I don't like that flavor, I've had some experience with that.

Saturday no coffee. Sunday no coffee. Tea tastes fine both days...

Monday coffee at lunch. It was bad even for store brands... Arrrg.

Monday dinner. I was at a well know chain restaurant that usually has decent coffee. The first cup was ok, the second cup not so good. More Arrggg.

Today I had one cup at work. My Kona blend. Can I just say it was nasty..

I think I found the problem at work, the water in our new office just isn't right for coffee or tea. My green tea in the afternoon had a weird/off flavor too. I really hope they get the water coolers. Or at least put a filter on the water. Maybe I should get a pitcher with a filter on it..

Told you I was a bit of a coffee nerd/snob. If I can be upset with the coffee based on the water it was made from. Funny the water doesn't taste bad from the faucet, just when mixed with coffee or green tea. The black tea was fine..

And I missed it.

Many people know that I really enjoy my coffee. My dear wife and I used to frequent a local coffee establishment until her death. During the many years of enjoying the coffee and company, I found that I know a thing or two about a good cup of joe. I was sad on the day that little coffee shop closed its doors for the last time.

I will still visit our other local coffee shops, but I no longer make it a weekly habit. I tend to buy good coffee and share it with the people I work with.

We also used to visit many small coffee shops while on vacation. I really liked getting the feel of a location in the local place. I did stay away from the big chain coffee shops,

since their goal is to move people in and out. Most local shops have a customers that will stick around and talk over their cups of coffee, not stare into computer screens or newspapers.

But I am sad to say I missed visiting one coffee shop with a bit of a twist. I haven't been to Maine yet, so I didn't get to visit the 'Topless' coffee shop. It [burned down this week](#). The owner had no insurance on the building, so it may be up in the air as to any reopening of the business. I am curious as to what my lovely wife would have thought of this establishment. I am sure that we would be glad our daughter worked at our local coffee shop and not the topless one... ☐

Stop and smell the coffee

Today I had a stop in town and I was right next to a fairly new coffee/ice cream shop. I've been there once or twice and decided to treat my self to a cup of coffee. It was a fairly trying day, so I thought a cup of coffee would be welcome.

I had a sip or two of my triple espresso and left to drive on home. Just as I was getting into my car, a gust of wind threatened to blow my hat halfway down main street. Instinctively, I reached for my hat, but I had in that hand a cup of coffee. The coffee flew all over, most over me. Being espresso it had a very strong aroma. I was able to smell that the entire ride home. Even after changing clothes, I was able to smell it. Seems it got in my hair too.

Well, so much for a relaxing cup of coffee. I ended up wearing most of it. I guess I didn't need the caffeine.

No, there were no burns, and I'm not going to be suing any

coffee shops. My own stupidity was responsible for the coffee on me. Reach for a hat with the hand coffee is in. None too smart that.

Of course, if you can't laugh at your own stupid antics whose can you laugh at. Really a decent day after I got my jacket cleaned.

The day is gray

I'm not sure how it started out, it was still dark when I arrived at work. I'm not sure how the day look all day, I have no windows where I work. But the day was gray anyway.

For this reason or that. Human error and computer malfunction played havoc on the day today. All morning seemed to be a rush to get nothing accomplished. Everytime something was tried it, for some reason, failed. The day was gray.

This type of day is very draining.

But even with all of that, there was humor in the day. That little bit of silver lining, perhaps?

Coffee just wasn't doing it this morning. Even though I enjoy my cup of joe in the morning, it just didn't hit the spot like normal. When this occurs, as it does from time to time, I go to a cup of tea or two. After heating my water, I went back to my desk for a nice cup. A few minutes later, I was drinking my brew thinking it was very weak. Then I noticed, the dry teabag was still sitting next to the cup. I was drinking a cup of hot water. Now at that point, I knew the day was going all wrong. I'm lucky it got better in the afternoon.

So, how was your day?

Hot winter drinks

I've been thinking of some hot winter beverages, be they spiked, spiced or just hot. Things I like, but generally limit to the winter months (I drink hot tea and coffee all year round). So here is my list, if you want recipes, I can dig one or two up.

Hot Chocolate: I don't really care how you make this. You can use an instant mix, or chocolate and warm milk, all is good. Especially with whipped cream or marshmallows. For something a bit different, I usually add some mint extract. Or maybe some mint schnapps.

Hot Spiced Cider. I will drink this in the fall when cider becomes more available. But I like it all winter long.

Hot Spiced, Spiked Cider... same as above but with a jigger of Captain Morgans.

Hot Mulled Wine Good stuff when done properly.

Hot Lemonade. I'm not sure what started this, but it sometimes hits the spot when coming in from the cold. Also hot sweet orange juice. The orange juice is good with some Amaretto added.

And Kahlua, coffee and cream.

I just noticed, I may be a bit of a lush when it comes to winter drinks. But I usually only get the Cocoa and hot lemonade. ☐

Welcome to Starbucks, may I take your order?



Massage the teacher = bad. Just remember that, m'kay? In reference to a previous post we learned that while paper passer, messenger, and librarian are good jobs for teachers to give their students, massaging the teacher doesn't quite fly. However, apparently not all service jobs are a problem. From the title I think you can guess what unusual job I ran across today. Coffee. That is, making and serving coffee to several teachers in the school. That's right, this teacher is training her students up for the type of job they can only hope to achieve should the economy not pick back up. Another 733 points today- sigh. There's more to this story though. Apparently today was something like clothes mismatch day. Some students traded a shoe to have mismatched shoes. One boy had a sandal on one foot, a gym shoe on the other. Other students turned shirts inside out or wore them backwards. It was quite funny to see hoodies with the hood in front, like they were made for people who get carsick... ☐

So one student was wearing an apron. A forest green apron. I walked up to him in the morning and joked with him, "could I have a grande latte, please?" I had noticed the coffee job by this time by the way, so it wasn't coincidence much like I would like to say it was. There were two girls assigned to this. As a non-coffee drinker I don't have much experience making coffee and I guess they didn't either as we tried to set the older-type coffee maker up. Guess who *did* know what he was doing and came over to help? Mr. forest green apron of course. That was the coincidence and what I found funny. I

left it to him and the girls and started with the lesson.

Let me tell you that this had to have been the noisiest group I ever worked with. Sixth grade and social. This sort of group should have been in a middle school still trying to learn the new system back at the bottom of the food-chain. Some people disagree and say that sixth graders in elementary school is better for them. I was in a sixth grade middle school class myself, so I guess it's just what I'm used to. When I first got there today I found out they had a sub yesterday. I read some of the notes she left about their behavior. Great.. It could have been worse though. There is bad behavior and annoying behavior, and chatty behavior falls into the latter category. The ELL class I mentioned several posts ago would be the bad behavior, as would some of the BD classes I have subbed for. Talking I didn't mind so much, except when I or someone I have called on is trying to talk of course. They turned out to be good kids, just chatty.

And I will be with this class again tomorrow (a two-day assignment, yay!), so more on this in another post.

A single cup of coffee..

Yep, more on coffee. Well sort of. This is really a birthday post. Yesterday, it ended around two hours ago, would have been my wife's 45th birthday, if she had lived that long. It was the 5th I've celebrated without her. The first, I put a personal ad in the paper, I invited friends and family to show up at 'our' little coffee shop. Very few did. The second year, I don't remember what I did, our little shop closed its doors before I could celebrate that day. The 3rd year, I went to a coffee shop and sat with some friends who were their, they

knew nothing of the day. The fourth year, I went to a winery with some friends. This year, I went to another coffee shop. I ordered one cup of coffee and a blueberry scone. I even had something different as my refill. They had Chocolate-Raspberry for the Decaf flavor. I'm not a big decaf fan, but I had that anyway. It was her favorite coffee flavor. It was a good morning.

A simple cuppa

As a society we are surrounded by coffee. In larger cities there have been Starbucks on every corner. Stretching the point a little, but they did just close a number of "extra" shops. There are also a number of other coffee places that are national/international brands. Even the likes of McDonalds are starting to sell their own premium coffees. Where does it end?

Now I admit being a bit of a coffee nerd/snob. I have tasted good coffee and desire it above all others. I like the pure 100% coffees from specific regions (Kona and Kenya AA are at the top of my list). I like various blended coffees (Mocha Java and Kona Blends). I like good dark roasts, medium roasts and light roasts. I even go for a good shot of espresso every now and then. When it comes to flavored coffees, there are those I like and those I don't. Adding flavor to coffee is outside the realm of a simple cuppa... So are most of the fancy blends and even the espresso.

I'm talking about a simple no nonsense cup of joe. That fresh jolt of black goodness in the morning. And the thoughts of that cup bring back memories of days long past.

I've told the story many times, of my wife and I finding a

coffee shop of all places to spend a little time alone. At that time, I was the only one to even drink coffee. It grew on her. But I felt myself being drawn further back in time. To a small apartment, our first, in Toledo, OH. This little two bedroom unit was about 3 or 4 blocks from a Dunkin' Donuts shop. I remember walking down on some Saturdays to get some donuts and for me a coffee. That coffee was some of the best I've ever tasted. To this day it is still one of my favorites. In those early days, we didn't even have a coffee maker in the house (I would consumed the whole pot), so this was a treat. I even had a Dunkin' Donuts thermos so I could get cheaper re-fills.

If I have my count of Toledo area donut shops correct, that one Dunkin' Donuts is the last in the Toledo area. When we lived there, there were a least 4 in the area. Who knows why they left this part of the country for a while. But I've heard that they are opening up new shops in the Ft. Wayne IN area. I now live halfway between Toledo and Ft. Wayne, so maybe I'll be able to get coffee and a donut from Dunkin' Donuts when I'm on the road. I'd love to see them expand in the area again. But maybe 65 miles isn't too far to go to relive a memory...

Coffee nerdiness

Yes, I'm a coffee nerd. I like good strong full bodied coffee. I of course have my favorite roasts, beans, blends, and coffee shops. But I really want to talk about the coffee shop experience. Today, a lot of people consider Starbucks to be the coffee shop of all coffee shops. They are almost everywhere. I will admit that their marketing is wonderful. They've taken the country by storm. Their coffee is good, but

by no means is it the peak of coffee perfection. Their shops are nice and clean, but they are missing a little bit of charm.

Now to go back a few years, about 11 or so, to when I knew nothing about coffee. If you called it coffee and it was hot, I would drink it. At that time, my youngest daughter was in Kindergarten, the oldest was 15. My wife and I needed someplace to go to start re-connecting with each other. The children were all growing up, and didn't need quite as much attention. We also had a built in babysitter. So we started to look around for something we could do together, but wouldn't break the bank. We found a little coffee shop. It was a charming little place where we could get a light lunch, or a desert, or just a cup of coffee or tea. We started going week after week, sometimes more than once a week. From that time on, we would even look for coffee shops on our vacations.

The local coffee shop (before Starbucks was a nationwide brand) was a place to find good coffee and good friends. It was a gathering place. In some places you would find little reading corners. Some shops would have music, some poetry readings. Some places to play chess or backgammon. But in everyone there was a place to meet people and talk. They was always a quiet corner you could go to even when the place was busy at the early morning rush. They were places designed to slow down, smell the baked goods, and of course the coffee.

Then we get the fast food of coffee shops, the national brands. A hurry-up kind of place where people seem to be full of caffeine before they have their first cup of coffee. The coffee may be good, but the atmosphere suffers.

One of my daughter worked in 'our' little coffee shop, and it closed shortly after she graduated from college. Just two short years after my wife died. I still miss that atmosphere. There are other places to get coffee in the area. For a time there was even a shop that had a bit of atmosphere. But in

today's world those places seem to be few and far between. You can find them if you look, but you do have to look. It may not be a coffee shop, it may be a little restaurant, or donut shop, maybe even a candy shop, or an old soda fountain. There are places to find, where you can slow down to smell the coffee, or the roses, but always smell and experience the sweet breath of life itself.