

Getting Old... Er, Growing Up

Wednesday November 9 is the 2011 Country Music Awards – an event once so important to me that I would put my schedule on hold so I could enjoy watching this annual awards show on tv. For a few years now, I have committed my Wednesday nights to leading a small group for church's student ministries. The past 2 years, one of my kids happened to be sick on the same Wednesday nights as the awards show, so I volunteered to be the parent to stay home with the sick kid and I didn't have to miss the show nor play hooky from youth group – I had a legitimate reason for calling in sick. This year, there is again a virus circulating through our family, and I think I have a mild case... but things have changed. Even if one of my kids was ill tonight, I would be the one to go to youth group and let Hubby stay home with the sick kid(s). Luckily, I think we'll both be able to make it to youth group tonight, and I am so excited! The new series we started last week is about demons, and it gave me a great connecting point with my girls – we had a great group time last week! Now that I'm back from maternity leave and free from the distractions of pregnancy, I am stoked to build relationships with my youth group girls and help them build their spiritual relationships with Jesus Christ. I am so excited about youth group tonight that the country awards show hardly matters to me – I might try to set up a recording device so I can watch it later, but watching it live doesn't matter to me at all when once it was dire for my entertainment.

Maybe I'm getting old... no, I think I'm growing up! It's so cool to me that God is teaching me about prioritizing and also about using my free time and leading me toward hobbies that glorify Him. How amazing is it that I can be entertained, relaxed, refreshed, and feel fulfilled, not by doing something that only **I** enjoy but by doing something that affects others in a positive way as well?

ACM Awards – 2011 Edition

Was it really 11 years ago already that we got to attend the 2000 Academy of Country Music Awards in Los Angeles? Newcomer Brad Paisley won that year for Best New Male Vocalist, and he's now a country music veteran who took the Top Male Vocalist prize in 2011. Someday, I'd like to attend the recording of another live awards show. Nothing beats the excitement in the air and participating in a live tv show taping where anything goes. And never in one place will you see so many super performances by a variety of outstanding performers – both from country music and also outside the genre. But my 4.5 kids keep me grounded, and I don't travel as much as I would or as much as I used to. So until the day when I can get back to a live country music awards show taping (and I will be in no hurry to go to the ACMs until they move it out of Vegas!), I will enjoy watching and voting along at home.

This year was a super show; I had a nice time watching it last night. And a surprise awaited me at the end..

Some highlights:

– Brad Paisley opens with a performance, and then he's joined by none other than – ALABAMA!! They were so awesome; this number really got my country blood pumping!

– Some unlikely duos performing this year:

Unlikely duet #1 – Jennifer Nettles from Sugarland and pop star Rihanna. Their duet made for an interesting performance. Not my favorite kind of music, but they sounded good.

Unlikely duet #2 – Country music sweetheart Carrie Underwood

screaming alongside Aerosmith frontman turned American Idol judge Steven Tyler. The first song wasn't great; it was more for Tyler than Underwood, in fact, I thought it a waste of her lovely voice. But their "Walk This Way" duet was toe-tappin' fun!

Unlikely duet #3 – Zac Brown Band and James Taylor. I'm really starting to enjoy the harmonies of the Zac Brown Band, and their performance with James Taylor tonight was thoroughly enjoyable!

– Probably the first time I've cried while watching the ACM awards – Darius Rucker's song backed by a chorus from the Lifting Lives music camp was incredibly uplifting and awe-inspiring! I loved every minute of it!

Overall, a wonderful show! Except one thing – where the heck was Rascal Flatts?!

And oh yeah, that surprise at the end – Taylor Swift won Entertainer of the Year. No surprise there; if I had paid attention when I filled out my fan ballot and realized that the Entertainer award was fan-chosen, I would have picked Swift in a heartbeat. But I spaced and chose Miranda Lambert (still beat Hubby on the ballot 7-3, just sayin') for some reason. The real surprise came when they announced the nominees for Entertainer of the Year, and I actually found myself rooting for Taylor Swift – what was going on? I've never been a fan of Swift's music, and I hadn't voted for her, so what gives? My 6-year-old daughter was enjoying the show with me, and every time Taylor Swift came on or her name was mentioned, Sammie got SO excited. So I told her I would let her know when "the big award" was coming on, and you should have seen her face when Taylor Swift won – she cheered! It was adorable, and I cried. I cried at the ACM awards twice last night, what is wrong with me? Oh yeah – pregnancy will do that to you. Probably a good thing that I was watching from the safety of my own home.

2010 Academy Of Country Music Awards

Today is one of those days that come only twice a year – one of the two annual country music awards shows. I've been super excited all week, well, for months actually; even if a few of the nominees are anonymous to me. Country music is changing, and I just don't have the time to keep up with who the new artists are and what their sound is like. Consider that my disclaimer for doing badly on my picks, haha. Here is the list for the major nominees with my picks in green. I will change them to red as the show airs if I get them wrong, but I'm being optimistic by putting them in green – as winners are announced, I will change the category color to red for wrong and green for correct. Good luck to everyone, guessers and nominees alike! Whatever happens, I know I will have a great time watching as always!!

Entertainer of the Year:

• Kenny Chesney • Toby Keith • Brad Paisley • George Strait • Taylor Swift • Carrie Underwood • Keith Urban • Zac Brown Band
*(Now that hurt. I'm not a big fan of Taylor Swift, but she won Entertainer of the Year at last fall's CMA awards, plus she is favored to win by industry experts Reba McEntire and Blake Shelton. Unfortunately, this is not about who I **want** to win, but who I **think** will win.)*

Top Male Vocalist:

• Kenny Chesney • Brad Paisley • Darius Rucker • George Strait • Keith Urban

Top Female Vocalist:

• Miranda Lambert • Reba McEntire • Taylor Swift • Carrie

Underwood • Lee Ann Womack

Top Vocal Group:

• Lady Antebellum • Little Big Town • Randy Rogers Band • Rascal Flatts • Zac Brown Band

(Another tough factor pick – I love Rascal Flatts and want to see them win – they deserve to win; they're awesome! But Lady Antebellum has so much buzz, so again, logic prevails for this pick. I actually hope I'm wrong here, but only if Rascal Flatts takes the prize.)

Top Vocal Duo:

• Brooks & Dunn • Joey + Rory • Montgomery Gentry • Steel Magnolia • Sugarland

Top New Solo Vocalist:

• Luke Bryan • Jamey Johnson • Chris Young

Top New Vocal Duo:

• Bomshel • Joey + Rory • Steel Magnolia

Top new Vocal Group:

• Eli Young Band • Gloriana • The Lost Trailers

Album of the Year:

• "American Saturday Night" – Brad Paisley • "Lady Antebellum" – Lady Antebellum • "Play On" – Carrie Underwood • "Revolution" – Miranda Lambert • "The Foundation" – Zac Brown Band

Single Record:

• "Need You Now" – Lady Antebellum • "People Are Crazy" – Billy Currington • "Red Light" – David Nail • "Toes" – Zac Brown Band • "White Liar" – Miranda Lambert

Song:

• "Cowboy Casanova" – Carrie Underwood • "Need You Now" – Lady Antebellum • "People Are Crazy" – Billy Currington • "White Liar" – Miranda Lambert • "You Belong With Me" – Taylor Swift

Video:

- “Boots On” – Randy Houser • “Need You Now” – Lady Antebellum
- “Welcome To The Future” – Brad Paisley • “White Liar” – Miranda Lambert • “You Belong With Me” – Taylor Swift

Vocal Event:

- “Hillbilly Bone” – Blake Shelton featuring Trace Adkins •
- “Honky Tonk Stomp” – Brooks & Dunn featuring Billy Gibbons •
- “I Told You So” – Carrie Underwood featuring Randy Travis •
- “I’m Alive” – Kenny Chesney with Dave Matthews • “Seeing Stars” – Jack Ingram featuring Patty Griffin

TOTAL SCORE: 5/13 – Not my best, but slightly better than I thought I would do, I guess... FUN SHOW, and that’s all that matters! Don’t think I’ll be winning the \$1,000 from CBS.com though!

THAT Time Of Year!!

The list of Academy Country Music Award nominees was announced today! And while I’m not entirely in agreement with some of them, that still does not dampen my excitement for the actual awards show – now held in April, which is even earlier than its past May ceremonies. I’m going to wait to give my picks for winners until we get closer to the show – I need some more time to listen to the artists, their songs, and the buzz surrounding them on country radio. But I can say that I’m not a big fan of Lady Antebellum, a group who leads the pack in number of nominations. Uh, oh... perhaps country music is leaving me behind since I strongly prefer classic country and those modern artists who are seemingly fading into the background such as Alan Jackson, Garth Brooks, Martina McBride, Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, George Strait, Reba McEntire,

Brooks and Dunn, and Rascal Flatts... I do like Carrie Underwood, but I'm not so crazy for Taylor Swift (cute name though!). All that being said, I still enjoy the annual extravaganza immensely; especially the live performances. I am especially excited that unlike the ACM awards autumn counterpart, the CMA awards which are held on Wednesday nights, the spring ACM awards show is held on Sunday evenings – which means that I don't have to ditch my youth group students, haha! Here's the list of nominees; we will find out who wins on April 18, 2010!

Entertainer of the Year:

• Kenny Chesney • Toby Keith • Brad Paisley • George Strait • Taylor Swift • Carrie Underwood • Keith Urban • Zac Brown Band

Top Male Vocalist:

• Kenny Chesney • Brad Paisley • Darius Rucker • George Strait • Keith Urban

Top Female Vocalist:

• Miranda Lambert • Reba McEntire • Taylor Swift • Carrie Underwood • Lee Ann Womack

Top Vocal Group:

• Lady Antebellum • Little Big Town • Randy Rogers Band • Rascal Flatts • Zac Brown Band

Top Vocal Duo:

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• “Need You Now” – Lady Antebellum • “People Are Crazy” – Billy Currington • “Red Light” – David Nail • “Toes” – Zac Brown Band • “White Liar” – Miranda Lambert

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Random Night Of The King

On a random note, I decided at the last minute to kind of theme-up game night a little bit last week. I went to the library to find some background music to put in the kitchen CD player during game night, and the first thing I found was a

Garth Brooks Greatest Hits collection – and not one of the two that I owned back when I was a huge fan – one of the reasons why Garth Brooks became intolerable, what a sell-out. But he has some really good songs, and I thought it'd be great to hear some of them again. Realizing I've tortured enough unwitting souls with my love of country music, I looked through the regular music. But it was the adult section of the library, and I had two of the kids with me, so I was in a big hurry and all I could find was an Elvis greatest hits collection. Thinking about it on the way home, I remembered a recipe I had come across months ago and put aside – Elvis' favorite sandwich in a cookie. What was Elvis' favorite sandwich? Peanut butter, banana, and *bacon*. So I made the peanut butter, banana, and *bacon* cookies, we rocked to Elvis, even though he ruined more than a few people's careers in the [Mafia](#), I think. I didn't come across anyone all night who was ecstatic about my Elvis cookies, but they were more for the experience of emulating Elvis (this would have made a fun dress-up version of game night, haha) than they were for people to find delectable. I, for one, found them tasty, but not great. I'm not a big cookie person anyway, and I found the combination of bacon and banana quite interesting, though in a good way. Coincidentally, I found out that 3 days before our game night was the 32nd anniversary of Elvis' death, so it ended up being a tribute of sorts, I guess. I like the idea of themed game nights once in a while, especially if it doesn't require much extra dough (pun intended) or work. How about we light up the comment board with suggestions for possible future game night themes?

*** – Here is some bonus footage – the Elvis cookie recipe. Enjoy and let me know any alterations and feedback you have! From the article where I read about it:
“Go with your gut – not your head – on this one; the combination of peanut butter, bacon, and bananas really is delicious.

ELVIS COOKIES

Makes 30 cookies

1 cup smooth peanut butter

1/2 cup packed light brown sugar

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 large egg, lightly beaten

1/4 cup all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 cup crumbled cooked (very crisp) bacon (about 6 strips)

1/2 cup diced firm banana

Heat the oven to 350F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. (I did some research because I didn't want to buy many extras like parchment paper, so I just greased a cookie sheet with margarine and it worked fine. So in place of the parchment paper, lightly grease a cookie sheet.) In a large bowl, combine the peanut butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar. Use an electric mixer on medium to beat until well combined. Beat in the egg until just combined and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour and the baking soda. With the mixer running on low, add the dry ingredients, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Gently mix in the bacon and the bananas, trying not to mash the bananas. Using slightly wet hands, roll rounded teaspoons of dough into balls and place on the prepared baking sheets, leaving about 1 inch between them. Dip the tines of a fork into water, then use it to flatten the cookies until they are about 1.5 inches around. Bake on the middle rack for 11 minutes. Cool the cookies on the baking sheet for 2 minutes, then remove with a metal spatula to racks to cool completely.

NOTE – a guest commented that he wished there was more bacon!

Bored With The Afghans

My cousin and her small family moved to Alaska last November. Alaska?! Who goes to Alaska! (HEHE... small inside joke). Char's husband was stationed there after his training in the U.S. Army. In March, Rich was deployed to Afghanistan but he is allowed to communicate via phone or computer from time to time. He will be able to return for a week or so for the arrival of their second child (reportedly another little girl). I chatted with him a few weeks ago to discover that he is stationed in a relatively safe zone... in fact, he was bored. I think I would rather be bored in Afghanistan than being in the heat of battle somewhere else..

My sister got a phone call this afternoon from Alaska. It seems that Rich helped set up for a concert that will be taking place featuring a famous country star. Both Char and Christi were upset that they could not be there, too because Rich got to meet him and got his autograph. I told them... if you wanted to meet him so badly, you could both enlist and join him. Don't suppose that is very likely in their familial circumstances. But I believe that they were both promised autographs. Hopefully, some pictures as well.

I wonder what Christi would have done if instead of Toby Keith there were stars of the WWF or WWE or whatever the so called "professional wrestling" group calls themselves. I believe it has been downgraded to "sports entertainment." Honestly, it reminds me of a soap opera with all the convoluted story lines and obviously staged matches. .. good for a laugh. However, somehow there is a number of members in my family who enjoy it. I still remember running outside on Saturday mornings when dad turned it on. To each his own, I guess. I would much rather see Toby Keith in person. Of course, there are other celebrities I would like to meet.

Busiest Weekend EVER! Part Two

(continued from a previous blog post)

So here's a recap of Sunday – church, brunch, Hannah Montana movie – and that is where I left off.

So we get to the Hannah Montana movie, and of course our 9-month-old son wakes up from his nap just in time for the movie (couldn't be awake to play at church, couldn't be awake to indulge in brunch, alas – that's always the way when you have kids – they sleep thru everything good, and I swear it's a rule – they always wake when the irony is thick!) But, because the Hannah Montana movie is a musical, our 3 youngest were kept too busy to perform their usual awful antics at the movie theater. It was a girly movie, especially with a double love story plot, but our little boy is only 9-months-old, so he didn't notice the girlishness. Instead he loved the musical interludes, and he clapped to each one enthusiastically. For some reason, and I've written about this before, the movie theater turns our normally sweet 2-year-old into a little stripper. Luckily, by the time the idea to take her clothes off occurred to her today, it was near the end of the movie, so she only got as far as taking off her socks and shoes – although she did make sure to note (yell) while doing so, “Don't look at me – I take clothes off!” Ok, Disney, if you don't want people looking, why are you taking your clothes off? Such is the logic of a 2-year-old, I guess.

We had no major spills this time (I'm referring to our last experience when we saw Monsters Vs. Aliens and we somehow dumped an entire soft drink into the lady's purse who was

sitting behind us – major oops!), and today our baby was on his best behavior as well because of all the music in the movie – something that I think saved us as far as our 3 youngest kids' behavior at the movies today. As for the movie itself, I enjoyed it more than I did Monsters Vs. Aliens, probably because I actually got to watch this one. But an extra nice surprise for me was the country music add-ins – surprise performances from Taylor Swift and my favorite group, Rascal Flatts. They sang one of their best songs acoustically as if they were relatives just sitting around jamming at a family get-together (can this be MY family get-together?), and it was thoroughly enjoyable. Miley Cyrus even showed her country roots in a song which attempts to revive line-dancing; I guess kids these days (now I sound like I'm 80 – GREAT, when did THAT happen?!?) have a dance they do to this song, but whatever, I kind of liked the song. Overall, I truly enjoyed the country theme that was abundant in this movie – groovin' country music, gorgeous farm fields, cowboys ropin' horses... what's not to like? There was also a surprise (for me) appearance by Jan Levinson Gould from the tv show, The Office. Of course in this movie, she wasn't Jan – she was some southern belle who played Miley's dad's love interest – almost as far away from Jan as one could be, but I still enjoyed the Office reference. Also, keep in mind that this is a Disney film, so there are LOTS of prat-fallish types of humor, as well as recurring movie themes. For example, 'lobster trouble' (ala Splash, circa 1984), 'switching identities for different dinner dates' (ala Mrs. Doubtfire, circa 1993), 'major celebrity comes in to save a town' (ala Wayne's World 2, circa 1993 or ala Mystery, Alaska circa 1999), it's always best to be yourself' (ala... wow, WAY TOO MANY TO MENTION – take your pick...)

So anyway, I have to (reluctantly) admit that I was pleasantly surprised with the Hannah Montana movie – plenty of stuff in this one for the parents as well as the tweens and even the stripping two-year-olds. But the movie wasn't as plot-less as

I had hoped – in other words, we didn't get home until 2:55 – just 20 short minutes before we had to leave for a class we had signed up for through church. So for the next 20 minutes we scrambled around – letting dogs out, repacking diaper bags, changing diapers, etc. We arrived at our class pretty much on time, though a bit exhausted, thank you very much!

The class was great! We learned a lot about our church – their beliefs, their history, as well as their foundations for building a relationship with Christ – a very well-spent 3 hours. And we got to meet other couples at our table too – which is memorable for me because they were surprised to learn we had 4 kids – and I quote, "You don't look old enough to have 4 kids!" NICE!

Following the class was a great dinner of homemade pasta provided by a local chef. Following the delicious dinner was a tour of the north campus of our church – we worship in the south campus, so it was nice to learn the ins and outs of the north campus – so awesome! Our oldest daughter was so excited to show us where her Sunday school was held, and their rooms for youth were VERY impressive! There was a room with a stage for youth productions, and it even had backstage areas, which is almost more than I can say for one of our community theater's stages, haha! Also, there was a game room with multiple foosball tables and 'carpet ball' – something new to me, but a game I'd definitely like to try! One of the youth rooms had state-of-the-art stage lights and restaurant-style booths for kids to 'hang out' in... Overall, it was a fun evening, and I learned a lot. But, as became common for today, we had to rush from the church class in order to be home in time for the community theater's play reading committee meeting and my much anticipated Cubs game. I was looking forward to this game for days. It was a long series (most are 3 game, some are 2 game, this one was 4 game) against the Cubs rival – the St. Louis Cardinals, with whom the Cubs are vying for first place. The game was at night,

which is rare for a Sunday, so I was VERY excited about rounding out my weekend with such a game. But alas, the darn rain had its way, and the game was postponed. So only play reading meeting to look forward to for me – at least I didn't have to rush the meeting and kick people too hard to leave my house since there was no Cub's game! And for once, I think we actually achieved a lot at the play reading committee meeting. Probably because of the fact that there were only 4 of us in attendance – but hey, maybe that 's what needs to be done in order to achieve something... too many people get in each others way, I guess. It will be interesting to see what the absent members think of the decisions the four of us made while they were absent – I hope the decisions stick!

In summary, a great, if extremely exhausting weekend. Come on now, would I have it any other way?

Country's Biggest Night!

After my extremely busy weekend (more about that in my next post!), I'm just not up to the task of doing a live blog about the Academy of Country Music Awards like I did last year. I had a lot of fun doing it at that time, but this year we were lucky enough to share our awards experience with friends at our house, and I want to be a good host (well, as good as I can be with both eyes and ears on the awards show!). It's bad enough that I had to practically kick out people who were here for our voluntary monthly organizational meetings so I could watch the awards show when it started at 8 – hehe. I was accused of “chomping at the bit”, to get to the awards show – but then again, I did sacrifice and miss the entire red carpet coverage... so I guess a point was made – I WAS chomping at the bit, so to speak!

Watch the show we did, and it was great – although I didn't win the tally for the most awards guessed ahead of time. My picks for winners of the most popular categories are following in **blue** with the winners in **bold** (the ones I got right are in **bold blue** and my commentary is in *italics*. I'll let you know how our guests and I did at the end:

Entertainer of the Year

- **Kenny Chesney**
- Brad Paisley
- George Strait
- **Carrie Underwood**
- Keith Urban

Big shocker here, for real. Kenny has won this one for the past 4 years straight, so you can't blame me for voting the way I did – SHOCKER he didn't win tonight!

Top Male Vocalist

- Kenny Chesney
- Toby Keith
- **Brad Paisley**
- George Strait
- Keith Urban

Top Female Vocalist

- Miranda Lambert
- Heidi Newfield
- Taylor Swift
- **Carrie Underwood**
- Lee Ann Womack

Top Vocal Group

- Lady Antebellum
- Little Big Town
- **Rascal Flatts**
- Randy Rogers Band
- The Lost Trailers

A given – Rascal Flatts has a ton of talent and are one of my favorite bands!

Top Vocal Duo

- Big & Rich
- Brooks & Dunn
- Joey + Rory
- Montgomery Gentry
- **Sugarland**

Album of the Year

- Carnival Ride – Carrie Underwood
- Back When I Knew It All – Montgomery Gentry
- **Fearless – Taylor Swift**
- That Lonesome Song – Jamey Johnson
- Troubadour – George Strait

So there you have it. I didn't do so well, compared to past my past performances guessing on country music awards shows – I got 4/10 correct. But we had a great time watching... some highlights include Trace Adkins' performance with the West Point Glee Club, very moving, especially because the performance was introduced by a young veteran in a wheelchair. Another highlight, Carrie Underwood's humongous dress during her resurrection of Randy Travis' "I Told You So". (notice they didn't show her getting on or off stage in that dress – think she was "snapped" into it? That thing was HUGE!!!)... But I guess I'm a country fan-child of the 80's and 90's, sigh. The awards shows during that time period were so much more exciting to me because of the awesome music that was performed, unlike tonight. Just another sign that I'm getting old, I guess, since I much preferred our friends' conversation tonight to the live performances... just nothing special on the modern country artists' part, I guess...

But congrats to those who won, and it was a great show to watch and predict, even if I didn't do so well. Until the

CMA's in the fall – maybe I will do a LIVE blogcast for that one – we'll see!

I Know Who To Blame For This Economy

WAL-MART! I can find many ways to blame Wal-Mart for the way the economy is tanking. Time for my latest beef about the place. We went over there Friday morning because my husband didn't have to work until after lunch, and we need an oil change. So we thought we'd get the oil change done together this time, which made me really happy because normally it's just me and my two children (ages 2 and 7 mos.) who have to kill around 2 hours there every 3 months (or sometimes even more frequently). If you're thinking that spending 2 hours at Wal-Mart with 2 little kids while trying not to spend a lot of money is both exhausting and frustrating, you aren't very far off the mark. So anyway, Friday I thought I had company for the oil change, but even so, who wants to spend hours at Wal-Mart? When we pulled up, I was pleasantly surprised to see that there weren't any cars waiting, so I thought we might actually be out of there in under an hour – WRONG! The wait time they quoted us was an hour and a half! But we needed the oil change and were kind of trying to kill time until the area restaurants would start serving lunch, so we decided to go for it, especially since they've opened an H & R Block in the Wal-Mart for tax season. Taxes and an oil change – kill two birds with one stone, or so we thought... We get to the other side of the store where the makeshift H & R Block is, and we find out it's not open until 1pm. So we went back to the Automotive Department to sign in our car anyway, and that's when we discover that an oil change at Wal-Mart is now \$30! That is a

\$7.50 increase in price over the last 3 months! So no taxes to get done + expensive oil change + long wait = forget it! And I will add the fact that Wal-Mart sucks at oil changes. Almost every time I'd come home with the car, it would act funny or something else would be wrong with it. Once they forgot to put the air filter back in, several times they didn't replace the wiper fluid when it was checked off on the to-do list, and a few times I had to go back and have them re-vacuum the interior of the car because they said they did it but clearly had not. Those were the days when oil changes were still so reasonable in price that we got the full monty of services, including the vacuuming and the refilling of fluids – not anymore!

We called other places around town, and we found that Wal-Mart is now the most expensive AND takes the longest. But at the other places you needed an appointment, so we'll have to wait until next week – no problem if I don't have to go back to Wal-Mart! Plus I'd rather support the little guy anyway (ever hear the country music song "Little Man" by Alan Jackson? It's a good one and I highly recommend listening to it if you're frustrated about Wal-Mart's world take-over). And that brings me to why I'm blaming Wal-Mart for the awful economy...

They're putting all the little guys out of business, so there go the jobs and the competition in the retail world that was keeping product and services prices reasonable. Wal-Mart sets the pricing trends, unfortunately. Mark my words, as soon as the little guys in town get wind that Wal-Mart upped their oil change prices, they will follow suit and you won't be able to touch an oil change for under \$30. And worse yet, I read in the newspaper just yesterday that Wal-Mart is the only retail place that posted profits for January. In fact, they're doing even better than Wall Street predicted for them, which in this economy, makes them stand alone in that respect.

The state of our economy is so bad right now that I suppose it's not logical to blame just one entity. But moaning about

Walmart is a good venting tool, and they p*ss me off!

The Prize

In my previous post I was looking for the title of a song and the artist who sings it, and I promised a prize to anyone who could provide me with the info. Two readers and fellow bloggers, [justj](#) and derek, successfully completed the challenge. So what's their prize? A blog post of recognition, of course!

Alright, that's dumb. It's going to make sure that people never take any challenges I offer again. Isn't just knowing that you helped a friend enough? Of course it is, but you were promised a prize. Maybe I can treat your ears to a round of *Senorita Mas Fina* (that's the name of the song I was looking for in case you're wondering, and it's sung by Kevin Fowler).

Just kidding! I won't make you listen to the song. It really seems like something only a country music lover would like – cheesy lyrics, hokey theme, obscene amount of twang – the kind of song I can really use to tease my friends who hate country music!

Well, thanks again derek and justj for playing and for coming up with the info I was looking for. And it's ironic, I did do searches myself, and I did come up with the name Kevin Fowler, but before I was able to listen to the song, I had to do something else (the baby has been crying for 3 days straight – teething), and I guess I forgot I was close to a result when my computer crashed. So thanks for helping me, and you will get more than the blog post recognition I had planned – I will have a real prize the next time I see each of you – something

small, but maybe a little better than blog recognition and being made to listen to an extreme lesson in the country music technique of twang. Thanks for playing!