

# And the rain comes down

As I sit here and type this blog, it seems that there is a bit of rain falling. I can hear it hit the windows, roof and echo on the metal chimney. To me, this is a comforting sound. As long as the wind isn't too strong, or the lightning too intense, I enjoy hearing it rain at night. I'm warm and dry in my house, and I know that we are receiving needed water.

It also brings back memories of walking in a warm summer rain with my wife. Not really worrying about getting wet or cold. Feeling relief from the summer's heat. And feeling the warmth of our relationship.

I also remember hurrying from building to building of our local zoo when the cold spring or fall rains hit during one of our many excursions. Maybe stopping for a warm drink at the cafe or spending extra time in the warm tropical exhibits. And finally getting back to the van and putting the heat on.

Or back at the zoo during the Christmas Lights exhibit during those bitter winter rains. We actually enjoyed those evenings more, since the crowds would be much thinner. We would be dressed and ready for the rain with waterproof or repellent outerwear and umbrellas. We would look at the lights and the raindrops falling would reflect a variety of color. Of course the evening would include hot chocolate, coffee or tea.

And of course there are always those first spring rains that bring the green back to the area after the long grey and white winters. Memories of fun, love, laughter and light remind me that even during the coldest times, the hope of spring and new life can be found in the same rains.....

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# FOOTBALL! Time To Blog, Except...

... I've gotten engrossed in another video game. And because I'm a mom of 4 and don't have a lot of extra time, my blogging frequency is going to suffer while I divide my spare time with mindless gaming, oh well. With the start of the NFL season and back-to-school-time, I will have more time at home for my favorite quiet activities like reading the newspaper, blogging, and playing video games while my husband watches football (Go Bears!). I thought I'd be rolling out blog posts, but then my husband put an N64 emulator on my computer, distracting me with what is quite possibly the best video game ever made – in my opinion, anyway: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. It's an adventure game, which is my favorite genre of video game, but I'm very picky – there has to be large 3D worlds to explore, as well as a variety of puzzles peppered with the perfect combination of inventory, fighting, and weaponry. This version of Zelda has everything, and this is actually my second time playing it through. Currently I'm in the second dungeon (Dodongo's Cavern) which is probably my least favorite in the entire game. Once I get past it though, I have lots of fun ahead – there are plenty of areas left to explore; including an underwater colony and the inside of a volcano. This game also skips ahead 7 years, and you get to see what Hyrule (the country you are defending) looks like in the future when your character has grown into a young man from a little boy. Here is a screen shot:



...which makes me want to get back to it so I can kick some Dodongo a\*\*!

GO BEARS!!!

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## Silent Politicians

What an oxymoron this post title presents, doesn't it? Silent politicians... is there such a thing? The proof was sighted in NW Ohio last weekend – here it is:



*That's Obama on the left and McCain on the right – true to real life politics. Hillary is in the middle... the display must have been designed months ago...*

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# Warm Fall Days, Cool Fall Nights

These are days I now enjoy. Just a couple of years ago, this time of year was devastating to me. It was a time of year I called the beginning of the end. Somewhere around this time of year is when my wife started having neck and shoulder pain. No known cause, it would come and go. Sometimes severe, and sometimes not. It wasn't until mid November that we actually knew the cause of the pain was Cancer. I don't dwell on that as much now, I am now able to see some of the good times from that last year and other fall days and nights.

This was always the time of year for hot beverages in the evening. Tea, hot cider, coffee on occasion, and when it got just a touch of frost in the air hot chocolate would be made. This was also a time for Chili, Stews and Soups. The heat of the summer was fading, and hot meals were more desirable. Cooking didn't seem like the chore it was in the summer. Sitting close on the couch huddled under a throw, because we just didn't want to turn on the heat just yet. Making that first fire in the fireplace. Sharing wine, laughter and our own comforts. These days are fondly remembered.

Walking in the fallen leaves, breathing in that fall smell. Listening to the crunch of the leaves. Watching animals prepare for winter. Taking in a corn maze or two. One more trip to the local zoos before we had to bundle every one up. Unscheduled days off, just because the weather was beautiful that day. Memories of a special time of year.

This year finally removed some of the shadow that had fallen hard on this time of year. Maybe, just maybe some of the

shadows will be lighter as the year comes back to that one fateful day.

Life goes on and some peace makes its way back in.

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## **Back To School And Redirection**

Today is the first day back to school (already?!?), and it's really quiet around here. I guess my oldest two are my loudest two, and we have reduced the traffic in the house by 50% since half the kids are now at school during the day. Thank goodness for school; I'm enjoying myself already. So far, I've gotten two loads of laundry done – folded, put away and everything, and I have somehow also found the time today to put away most of the clutter that's been haunting our dining room table for the last week and a half. I even got to work on my e-book a little bit, and it's not even 1 o'clock! And, the kids at school are learning stuff, getting exercise, and socailizing with their friends; they're not vegged out in front of the tv or outside fighting in the wading pool. Everyone wins!

While the oldest 2 kids are in school, I also have time to focus on my toddler, Disney, while her baby brother is napping. Today, I got to sit on the floor and play puzzles with her; something we haven't done together in months, almost a year because of my pregnancy and c-section. And she was down for her nap by 12:30, which not only means some quality time together for me and baby Christopher, but also that my toddler should be to bed at a decent hour tonight. Win-win! While I was on the floor playing with my daughter, I was

getting up to tend to the laundry and whatnot. My daughter was following me around the house, and this is where my day becomes challenging – trying to keep our clingy almost 2-year-old out of my husband's home office so he can work. The home office isn't a room where he could close the door and utilize the out-of-sight-out-of-mind tactic. The office is on the landing on our second floor, so if my toddler begins to head up the stairs or even looks up the stairs, she sees her best friend, Daddy, and it's over. She tantrums until he holds her, and he can't get any work done. Today she got upstairs and in the clutches of Daddy, so when I chased her down, of course she was upset. But I used one of my favorite child-rearing techniques: redirection. I taught her how to clean the toothpaste off the kids' bathroom counter, which she happily did. We went downstairs for a popsicle, puzzles, and Barney, and all was forgotten. Wow. I had totally forgotten about the magic of the redirection technique because the last 2-year-old I had in the house was our "spirited" child, Samantha. Sammie was **never** re-directable. She has always been so strong-willed that it's literally impossible to re-direct the kid, let alone being able to trick her into helping around the house. To this day, she will fight for her cause, whatever it may be, until she gets what she wants or she passes out. And now that she's older (she's 4), the crying doesn't last as long, but she will remember what it is she wanted and bring it up throughout the day (or week or month) until she gets it. So I am actually *enjoying* Disney's terrible twos a little bit – it's so refreshing to have a kid who listens. I know, she's not yet 2 and things could get worse – so much worse. But I've been there, done that, and after what Sammie put us through, no wonder Disney seems like a breeze. And even if she does get completely crazy, soon she'll be old enough to go to school, and we'll start the terrible twos all over again with Christopher. After 3 tantruming girls in their terrible twos, I'm curious to see what a boy will be like. Probably no big deal, at least compared to Sammie ☐

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# Saturday Slobber

Well, school starts on Tuesday, so for one last summery hurrah, we ventured over to the coastal cities in Ohio on Lake Erie for some fun. First stop was the African Safari Park in Port Clinton, which is really more of a drive-thru zoo than anything having to do with Africa. They do have zebras, giraffes, and camels, but most of their animals hail from North America. It's always an extremely fun experience, and we try to go every year. Since this summer was very busy with the new baby and all, it didn't occur to me that we hadn't gone yet until I struck up a conversation with a really nice elderly couple at a restaurant the other day. When I asked where they were from, they replied, "west of Cleveland", so that got me thinking about the Safari Park in Port Clinton. On the way home from the restaurant that night, I said to my husband, you know, we haven't been to the safari park this year... An idea was hatched, and there we were on Saturday with 6 of our closest friends.

Saturday morning was almost like a one-act play with all of us standing there on our front porch, trying to figure out who was going to ride with whom; we were trying to find the best way to do things to be as economically (and environmentally) friendly as possible... We ended up taking just 2 cars for the 12 of us, and then once we got to Port Clinton, it was like musical chairs (cars) once again while we tried to figure out how to position everyone to get the most bang for our buck, so to speak, since the safari place charges by carload *and* by individual...

So anyway, after a stop at Cheese Haven In Port Clinton – and now I have to go off on yet another tangent because Cheese Haven is SOOO good and totally worth a stop if you're in the

area. And what I mean by “in the area” is anywhere up to 100 or even 1000 miles, depending on how much you like cheese. They have so many varieties, along with fresh jerkies and beef sticks and other yummy treats. We stopped there to get our lunch of corned beef sandwiches – and they have the **best** corned beef sandwiches, yum. Unfortunately, I was not willing to take 4 kids into the cheese store to run around, so I was stuck in the car with the kids, but my oh-so-thoughtful hubby talked the worker into making me a sample bag (which they’re not supposed to do, you only get the free samples if you go into the store, but hey, I was stuck in the car), AND he made my sandwich for me – how sweet ☐

Ok, tangent aside... now we’ve arrived at the Safari Park, and it is SO crowded... Makes me think twice about going there again next summer unless it’s near their last weekend of operation like it was when we went last year... I mean, I just can’t stand waiting in line to go to the bathroom, of all things... Waiting in line is not much fun at all, but when you’re waiting in line to do something as necessary and as unrewarding as going to the bathroom, it’s really annoying. So, because it was so crowded, it took us forever to get through the drive-through zoo part; although not as long as it took the other vehicle in our caravan because they were stuck behind an obscenely slow white van the whole time... So while we got out of the drive-through section, they had barely just begun... But the whole park is a really cool place; even more so if you don’t care about the vanity nor cleanliness of your car since there are some rather huge creatures (including deer, elk, elands, buffalo, zebras, giraffe and longhorns) who drool, head-butt, lick, slobber, and basically invade your car as you drive through *their* habitat. I think you must truly be an animal lover to appreciate the place since you come out filthy... This was the first time we had been there in our new car, but I’m happy to report no major damage, that I know about, at least; but what’s this about driving our car through a pond, jamiahsh?!?



We'll get to the bottom of that later... when you come out of the drive-through part, it's time for the walk-through zoo section, and there they have monkeys, macaws (military, not green-winged as the sign said), ocelots, warthogs, alpacas, and tortoises; not to mention rides for the kiddies: ponies and camels. I noticed that they had 2 camels for riding; one was resting while the other gave the rides. But interestingly, one was a Dromedary and the other a Bactrian camel, the difference between the two species being mainly in how many humps they had... My daughters rode the Dromedary (1 hump), and they really seemed to enjoy themselves – I wonder if riding the Bactrian (2 humps) would have been any different? I was envious because I'm nowhere near the 125 lb. weight limit, so I'll probably never get to ride a camel... After that, we got to check out an animal show, ironically titled "Laugh With the Animals". It was ironic because our host for the show was so dry – she had the audience doing everything *but* laughing... It was a fun show, though, and something that we hadn't yet done at the park in our previous visits. Overall, an interesting day... as it is anytime you have 12 people on an outing together!

If you liked reading my synopsis of the day, check out my fellow tangents.org blogger and get Jamiahsh's take on the whole thing. I'm going to take a lesson from him and blog this in 2 installments... got to leave the readers craving more, so they say! Check out my next post for a full summary of our visit to a year-round haunted house – Ghostly Manor in Sandusky, Ohio! Until then...

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# A Miracle for Every Season

Today when I was putting away laundry, it occurred to me that it's almost that time of year when I need to pack away winter clothes and see if I have enough spring / summer clothes for the kids in the right sizes. And, since I'm going to have another little bundle of joy, I started thinking about what I already have in the way of baby clothes... Since this is my 4th girl, I have plenty of pinks and purples. However, I really do need to check if any of these clothes are fitting for a July baby – I've never had a summer baby before! Come to think of it, my girls were born in December (winter), May (spring), October (fall), and now, July (summer) – giving me miracles for every season! We are so blessed!

Since #3 arrived not even 2 years ago, I still have ALL of her baby clothes, and my friends at the time were so nice to throw me a baby shower, even though she was #3... I think it had something to do with my friend Sue insisting baby #3 (Disney) was going to be a boy, but it was very thoughtful of her at any rate. This next part is weird, I'm warning you... The problem is, all of my baby clothes are in the basement, and I have put myself on strike from going in the basement for awhile... It's a long story, but I probably won't be ready to go down there until the end of summer or fall – it's just not something I want to deal with these days... maybe I'll go into it in another post. So, I guess I'm going to have to bribe my husband to dig around in the basement to find all of our newborn baby clothes in time for me to wash them and see if there's any shopping to do before our new arrival. The good news is, since it will be July, I shouldn't need too many clothes off the bat... some onesies and blankets will do it until fall, and maybe by then I will be basement-ready!