

An interesting weekend.

Saturday started out with a quick trip to [Wild Winds Buffalo Preserve in Fremont, IN](#). My youngest and I didn't take the truck trip into the preserve, but we were able to visit the 1850's Rendezvous and talk with a few of the 'trappers'. The main goal of the trip was to pick up some bison burgers for a gaming night at my oldest's house. Good food, good fun and a wonderful afternoon and late-late evening. More Dungeons and Dragons was played.

Today, I made a recipe that I submitted to our Theater's cookbook to serve at the final production of "Kitchen Witches". Fun little show and the audience/guests seemed to like my samples. The recipe is on page 6 of our cook book. (Just wondering if we could sell that on line? – E-Book???) .

I'm going to try a recipe or more from the book, they all look pretty good to me. My oldest daughter got to be the on stage "guest judge" for the show today. She seemed to really enjoy the small bit of stage work. Another day of good fun.

And finally I see that some dear friends are all back from their Florida vacations. Someday, when I can get more than a day or two off, I will need to do something like that.

That's all folks...

Fall Back

It's been over a week since we've been in NW Ohio, and really, not much has changed. There are many less leaves on the trees than there were when we left for Disney World last Friday, but

other than that... We haven't yet had a chance to check in with friends, so hopefully all is well everywhere. I have to admit that I was a bit scarred from our last vacation – we returned to the horrible news that my beloved kitty had passed away. So this time, I was nervous about coming home. I told our pet-sitter that if anyone dies this time to not tell us while we were in Florida, thinking, what good would that do... but that decision ended up backfiring majorly because then the whole time I was worried that something had happened and I didn't know about it because I had left the instructions not to call us... But nothing catastrophic occurred, at least not to us or any of our pets, and we had a wonderful time. Now more than ever I know what people mean when they say that they need a vacation from their vacation. After taking 4 little kids on a 1,000+ mile road trip each way and returning with the trashed car and the dirty laundry and housekeeping catch-up for a family of 6, I could really use a vacation!

Oh well... we had a great time and I wouldn't trade our experiences for the world – or all the laundry in the world. More to come about the trip after I unpack some and get used to the fact that I did not gain an extra hour this weekend like Jill my GPS friend told me I had – guess she (along with my alarm clock – glad I noticed that before tomorrow morning) is pre-programmed for the "fall back" switch for daylight savings time. The only problem is that Jill and my alarm clock were programmed before the daylight savings hours were adjusted thanks to President Bush. So they are now an hour behind... but no matter, they can stay that way for another week or two, whenever we change the clocks... and then, I will get my extra hour of sleep – always fun!

Giving Memories...

I just got back from a gathering of friends. This gathering was celebrating the 2nd birthday of a wonderful little girl. Now of course the parents said that gifts were not required, so I didn't buy any. Instead, I handed out memories to the 4 children of my friends. These were very specific memories for me and my children. It is hard to pass on memories when only one side knows what they are. So I am writing about those memories so, if the parents desire, these memories can be passed on to their children.

My wife collected three things during our marriage. One collection was pets, mostly chinchillas. Another was raccoons. When it got tough to find different raccoons, she started collecting Eeyores. Yes, that little gray (blue) donkey that Disney made so popular. The one from the Pooh Bear stories. For those who don't know it, Eeyore was a gloomy little donkey, who had the most down to earth, sad, outlook on life. Except for the rare occasions when he found good in the bad things that happened. It is that rare gift to find the good during the bad times that captivated my wife with this character, other than the fact she thought he was just sooooo cute.

Our house was filled with Eeyore things. Eeyore jewelery, clothes, dishes and cups and of course the stuffed Eeyores. There was an Eeyore for winter, Christmas, Summer, Fall and spring. There is even a Halloween Eeyore. Eeyores of every shape and size. These filled the house and our lives.

After my wife died, some of the Eeyores went to family members. I gave her sister a dress Eeyore watch, since she likes Eeyore too. I gave some stuffed Eeyores to my daughters and niece, so they could have something to hold on to. I gave at least 1 Eeyore sweatshirt to each daughter, so they could have something warm to wrap up in. Most of the stuffed Eeyores

I kept and I held onto them for me. The Eeyores never left the family until today.

I gave 4 small donkeys to the children of my friends. 1 was especially for babies, so their youngest could have one too. Two were identical donkeys, (not quite Eeyores) that were bought by my children (ok, it was Dad's money) to give to their Mother for some special day. A fourth was one my wife would carry with her to give a little comfort in times of stress, this one was given to the birthday girl.

These were gifts of fond memories that we had as a family. These were not expensive, but they are gifts most rare. These were gifts of the heart. From one family to another, a shared blessing of the good things in life: Love, commitment, honor, trust and just a bit of pessimism.

Always looking for hope, and sometimes I happen to find it

Purple, I like purple...

Since I can't seem to sleep (to be fair I did sleep away most of the day, and now I am bothered by my raw throat again) I thought I would blog a bit. Continuing in my countdown of the original 8 crayon colors I had in my first box of school crayons.

I had crayons before school of course, in fact I had my favorite crayon. I would take it with me where ever I went.

Me and my purple crayon. I would use this crayon to write my name. For some reason, I liked to write my name. I'm not sure if this is the first word I learned to spell/read or whatever, but I wrote my name a lot. I wrote my name on bookshelves, pool tables, coffee tables, dining room tables,

furniture, in cupboards, and of course on paper. I always wrote with my purple crayon. The funny thing is except for the pool table and paper, I never wrote where others could see. I wrote under tables and shelves, in cabinets and cupboards, on the back of the furniture. I would write my name in all of my 'places'.

I used the dining room table as a fort, I wrote my name. I would 'camp' under the coffee table, I wrote my name. I would hide in cabinets and cupboards and I would write my name.

Kind of like "Kilroy was here" only I wrote my name.

Until we moved, my parents never knew how many places I wrote my name, and since we left the house, I'm sure they didn't find it in the permanent places in our old house. Mom removed all traces of my name from any place she found it. I'm glad she didn't make me do it. I still wonder if my name isn't out there somewhere in purple crayon still hiding after all these years.

And even when the [Crayola company](#) calls the color Violet, the crayon color has always been purple to me....

A day with Family and Friends

I spent most of the day at the home of my eldest daughter and her husband. They were having an Open house for friend and family. Since it was close to 90 today, and they have a pool, it was a good day to be there. I spent too much time in the sun, I ate too much, and I had a wonderful time.

I met more of my daughter's in-laws (again for the first time, the wedding doesn't count). But since her husband is 1 of 17 children, I don't try to keep them all straight. I would just

get them mixed up anyway.

I didn't count how many of the siblings were there, but there were a couple of faces I didn't recognize. There was also a friend or two that I didn't recognize either. So putting people into families was difficult. The funny thing I don't think it matters much at my daughter's house. It seems like the people who are invited in are family. They may be that long lost cousin you sometimes wish was still lost, but they seem to be family. It is a very inviting place to visit.

Now, over the years I've had reservations about my daughter's choice of friends. I don't recall mentioning this too often. This was of course due to fear of having her cling to them more than she was. We all know how some teenagers can get. If the parent approves, avoid. If the parent disapproves, attach. My eldest had this little quirk. If she still does, well when/if she reads this blog, she may avoid a lot of friends. You see, I approve of her friends. They are characters to be sure, and they would tend to agree with that statement. But they are good friends to my daughter. And as with everything in my family, that is important.

It doesn't really matter what I think, or don't think of the people my girls hang around with. What is really important is how they treat my daughters, and what my daughters thinks of them. It has been that way for as long as I've had daughters. This is one of the reasons I never said anything about my daughters' friends. As long as they were happy, it was good. Even if I noticed something a little off, it was good. Now that 3 out of the 4 are legal adults, and 2 out of 4 are actually of legal drinking age, I've noticed that this way of thinking about things really paid off. All 4 can make very wise decisions on who they want to hang with. They know who they like, and they try to avoid those they can't get along with. It's good to see parenting work out right every now and again.

Now I guess I should write about the food. They really did it right. Burgers, dogs, chicken, salads, deserts, chips, drinks, everything for a summer gathering was available. (except nobody brought watermelon, I should have gotten watermelon, why didn't I get watermelon... Oh yes, the last one I brought was turned into a vodka-watermelon slushy.) We ate well. There was one funny thing. I was thinking of having an iced coffee today. Normally I think iced coffee is to be left somewhere, not to be ingested. Every once in a while I get a taste for it. My daughter had some freshly made when I walked in the door. What a lovely coincidence. I couldn't have planned that better if I had called ahead. So today was a good day...

It's Amazing How Different They Are...

I think that "It's amazing how different they are" is something that you hear many people say when they're talking about their kids, and I'm no exception. My two oldest daughters have the most contrasting behaviors between each other; it's probably because my youngest two don't have fully developed personalities yet, so it's hard to say about which siblings differ the most from each other. But here is the example that made me reflect upon this:

Tonight the kids were given glow sticks to play with. The glow sticks came with a plastic wheel. Our eldest, Taylor, who is 8, used her wheel to make a flower out of her glowsticks. Really, it was quite creative and also pretty cool-looking and beautiful. Her 4-year-old sister, Sammie, put her plastic wheel on her face and used it to make funny faces. Both creative, but Taylor's idea was so much... well,

it was a better idea, let's be honest. And you might be saying, well, that's the difference between 8 and 4. A perfectly logical response, but if you knew my girls, this wouldn't surprise you, and I'm not convinced that it's their age difference more than their personalities. Taylor is much more artistic while Sammie is a clown. We love them both equally of course, but it's really fun to note their variety. It's amazing how different they are...

So Far Away

Sometime in the life of a parent, you have to let your little ones go out on their own. For the most part I am very good at that. There are times, however, that I just want to be by their side. I have two daughters living at home, and one about an hour away. I can, if needed, drop just about everything to be with them. I can see them face to face at almost any time. It is both a blessing and a curse. After they are out of my house, I want them to grow and thrive on their own. I think that is very important.

There is my other daughter. She got married just 1 year ago. In this marriage, there are also two wonderful children of my son-in-law. I know my little girl loves them as she would her own (even though she did not know it at the time, she saw this kind of thing every day see [here](#)). Tonight I want to be with my daughter. She was and always will be my little girl, and I have a feeling she would like me there. "There" is many states away. I can't just hop in my car and drive there overnight. It just isn't possible to go visit whenever I would like, things like one minor child still at home, work, finances get in the way of traveling. I wish I could, but wishing seems to be all I can do. Don't believe the phone commercials, a phone call

isn't like being there, as much as I wish it was.

Sometimes, parents just can't let go...

The Phantom ...

Tollbooth.

The current wonderful production by the [WCCT](#) children's workshop, is [the Phantom Tollbooth](#)". Performed entirely by young people between the ages of 7 and 17, this little production is quite charming. While it is the culmination of 1 month of hard work by children and parents alike, the show is not the whole story. The children learn a little bit about the workings of live stage productions (Yes, things go wrong... more on that later) both on and off stage. They get to work at finding some of their own props, costumes. They help build (sometimes) and paint the set. Most of the kids I talked to think it is a great experience and many come out year after year.

They find out, year after year, that sometimes people forget their lines, and someone else needs to do something to help out (Good life advice there too). They find out that sometimes the props they need aren't there, and they have to improvise something (sometimes this works, other times it doesn't—sounds like real life again doesn't it?). They find out that sometimes things break, and you have to get along without it for a while (More life lessons...). It looks like in a one month period of time, they learn a lot about the theater, and even more about life. Most of them don't realize they are learning anything but their lines. Good for them and their futures.

I should have written this sooner, so some of the background

readers would have had a chance to see this show. Tomorrow is the last show, and I'm not sure how many seats are left.

I wouldn't be a father if I didn't say the best Humbug I ever saw was the one portrayed by my youngest. Not so young anymore, this is her final Childrens' theater workshop. Now she will have to earn her roles if she decides to stay active in Community Theater.

More on Pancakes and Waffles...

... and other food stuffs. I mentioned [IHOP](#) in the previous post. It was always a favorite place to stop when the girls were much younger. Especially on Sundays. Sundays used to be "Kids eat free" day. Now, you had to buy 1 adult meal for each free child's meal, but any amount we could save would be a good thing. Things like this made going to [IHOP](#) the same cost as going to a fast food place. We were waited on too. Many other restaurants also offered the same type of deal. It was a great way to be able to have a good meal for a very reasonable cost.

Anyway, my lovely wife really liked [IHOP](#) . A favorite of hers were the blueberry waffles or pancakes. Topped with more blueberry syrup. I preferred the boysenberry. What got me was the last time I was in a [IHOP](#), they didn't have the boysenberry syrup. They also didn't bring the Hot maple flavored syrup to the table. The four flavors of syrup at the table were Maple, Walnut, Strawberry and Blueberry. I missed the boysenberry and the hot syrup. I'm not sure if this was a local restaurant thing, it now covers all [IHOPs](#)

And that brings me to another pancake house, [Perkins](#). In my younger days, my friends and I would spend many hours in that

establishment. As long as we kept the blueberry pancakes away from Bill, everything was fine. Bill hated anything to do with blueberries.. And we loved teasing him about it too. That Perkins Restaurant is closed now, and it looks as though I would have to travel many a mile out of my usual range to get to one. Maybe on some cross country trip, I'll have to find one on the way, just to relive old memories.

Pancakes, waffles and french toast

You'd think that these three foods would be easy to serve for a meal. Not so fast in these times. You can get all three in the frozen food section, but outside of toaster waffles, I don't care for any of them. Pancakes should be easy, but there are different recipes for these and some the girls like, and others they don't. You have your Bisquick pancakes, blueberry pancakes, Buckwheat pancakes, corn fritters, apple fritters, and so on. We generally stick to our tried and true recipe. I guess I should copy that out of the cookbook before it falls completely apart.

Waffles, well you have to have a special device (the waffle iron) to make them, or just buy the frozen toaster waffles. I said I like the toaster waffles, but I do like the home made better. Then you could always get a Belgian waffle iron if you want waffles with deeper pockets/holes. Do you want round or square waffles? Hmm, seems like you can have as many choices as the pancakes.

But french toast, I grew up with one and only one type of French toast. Mom would either cook it on the griddle or she

could bake it in the oven. Both ways, the french toast tasted exactly the same. Then I got married, my lovely wife's family had a different version of french toast. It was a heavy batter dip, compared to the Egg and milk dip used by my family. It was tasty, but very, very filling. I found it was cheap to make too. So my little family grew up with my wife's family recipe for french toast. Now they don't care for the kind I grew up with (tastes too much like egg!!). Oh well, they are getting older now, and soon I'll be able to make it the way I want. Or better yet, go to [IHOP](#) and order the stuffed french toast. Good eating, and now I'm hungry.

No toaster waffles, so I guess I can wait till morning...