

Independence Day And That Other Nashville

Well, it's been a long week and a half – which is probably how long it will take you to read this super-long blog post I'm about to write. Hey, it's been awhile since I've been able to blog, and I have lots to say! Tons of fun since the 4th of July weekend, but go-go-go constantly, and I am so tired, it's unbelievable! A quick (well, kinda, sorta) rundown...

July 3 – my birthday, so we dragged the kids down to a larger town down south to see their fireworks, one of my favorite birthday activities. The only problem is that the fireworks didn't start until 10pm, and we wanted to get there by 2pm because we had tickets for a raffle at a party thrown by a store. Even with our 5 tickets, we did not win any one of the 50 prizes (no surprise there; our luck is terrible when it comes to things like that). But the party was lots of fun with airbrush tattoos for the kids, sand creations they could make, free coloring kits, and also free hot dogs, pizza, and baby water bottles. We had no trouble killing time for the next 8 hours, although it did exhaust all 6 of us. We had a nice birthday dinner at Bob Evans (have you tried their pot roast stroganoff? It's yummy!!), even though they forgot to sing to me or my little boy, whose birthday is 8 days after mine (so we were celebrating both). No matter, I usually hate stuff like that anyway (like it for my kids – for me, not so much), but I was willing to give it a try just for the free dessert. Oh well. This larger town's fireworks were much better than our hometown's, though the kids would not let me forget that they are starting to find fireworks boring. Might have to find something new for next year's bday celebration, or maybe a babysitter so Hubby and I can enjoy fireworks alone for a change...

July 4 – After church, we packed all day long for our upcoming

camping trip. This involved doing lots of last minute laundry and preparing the house as best I could so that it wouldn't be too much of a mess when we got back. Although we were exhausted, this turned out to be a good decision because when we got back from the 3 day camping trip, my mother-in-law and her sister and kids were here waiting for us – that was SO not the plan. They were supposed to be at their hotel, and we were going to change into our bathing suits and go meet them at the hotel for swimming, giving me a chance to pick up my very messy house. But more on that next post...

July 5-8 – July 5 was the day the kids had been waiting for – we left for Nashville. Not the well known country music capital of the country in TN, but the lesser known, population 800 Nashville in Brown County, southern Indiana. What a beautiful place! I can understand why it's a very popular destination in the fall, the scenery must be nothing short of gorgeous when the leaves change colors. As for visiting in July, that was nice too. Never mind that the weather was above 90° all 3 days of our vacation – we barely noticed, thanks to the accommodations my husband was able to find for us: an over 3,000 sq ft fully furnished house that fit all 13 of us comfortably on its secluded 10 acres. I made a video tour of the house, but I haven't figured out how to put in links to youtube.com playlists yet, so you lucked out – a video tour of a house you've never been to would probably bore the pants off of you, and now you don't have to sit through it. You'll have to settle for the ultra-exciting text version I'm going to describe below (some of which you can skip if it gets dry – remember, I use my blogs as sort of a family diary as well. Years into the future when I'm long gone, I'm hoping my loved ones will enjoy reading my ramblings. If not, hey, my feelings certainly won't be hurt!).

The long, tree-encircled, steep hill of a driveway ended at a garage with a basketball hoop, grill and table and chairs for grilling out, which we did a lot! Hubby and I played a few

games of H-O-R-S-E with my dad, which quickly became a championship when all 3 of us were tied at one win apiece. Unfortunately, Hubby and I were not able to win a title for our family name, but we still had lots of fun. Just off of the driveway, there was a swing that overlooked the pond area, which was a short way from the house, down a steep hill and past the firepit area. We had lots of fun cooking our lunches over the campfire and making smores at night. My 10-year-old daughter also revealed her hidden talent as a master fisherman, er fisher-person! She found a bit of line on the ground with a hook, and proceeded to use it – **without any bait** – to catch no less than 5 fish, and they were larger fish than we had caught with my nephew's fishing pole and using bait!!

Upon entering the house, the living room (2 couches and large tv with over 100 movies from which to choose, as well as a bookcase full of board games, books, and magazines) was to the right, and the kitchen and breakfast nook was to the left. Off the back of the living room was a washer / dryer (who wants to do laundry on vacation? But in case of emergency, it was very nice to have, especially if you were going to stay longer than the 3 days we were staying) and a half bath. On the 2nd floor, directly at the top of the stairs was a bedroom with a bathroom (where my sister, her husband, and their 2-year-old slept), another living room (this one with a couch, futon, and billiard table), and a wrap around 4-season room with CD player and CDs (no country music?!? Don't worry, this is the only suggestion I could think to make on my comment card – everything else was perfect) and a Foosball table. Off of the 4-season room was another bedroom with bathroom (this is where Hubby and I and our 2-year-old slept), and then outside of the 4-season room was a yard with a deck with swing, chairs, picnic table, hammock, hot tub, swingset, sandbox, and outdoor fireplace. And oh yeah, my sister's room and our room shared an outdoor patio as well.

We also had a cut-throat pool game championship with my dad,

but we didn't do very well at that one either... and since we're on the subject of lost games, I might as well get it out there that Hubby and I came in last on the Cornhole tournament as well. How funny is that when the Illinois family had never heard the term 'cornhole' anyway? □ Must be an Ohio thing, but that didn't seem to help our Cornhole skills... So we lost H-O-R-S-E, we lost cut-throat, and we lost Cornhole, but in what must have seemed like an even exchange, we made our reluctant family play some party games against their will – Mafia and Partini. I can't say they were big fans of either game, but at least they gave them a try and gave us some hilarious memories in the process. Here's what happens when people reluctantly play a normally very fun game called Partini:

Back to the house... from the 2nd floor living room was a staircase that led up to the 3rd floor master suite, which boasted a master bathroom with whirlpool tub. My parents slept up here, and lucky for them (?) there was a huge walk-in closet right next to their bed, which the 4 older kids (my 3 girls and their cousin) immediately eyed as a “clubhouse” where they could sleep right next to Grandma, who of course agreed. Also on the 3rd floor was a little nook with another queen bed, huge closet, and a little couch and chair – this is the bed where Uncle Bud slept. And off of the master suite was a huge outdoor wrap-around deck, where Hubby, my dad and I spent the first night watching the hilarious comedy The Goods in the fresh woodsy air (on our laptop – didn’t want you to think there was a tv outside or anything. There were an abundance of cool bugs – huge moths and a different sort of firefly than I’m used to, but no outdoor tv).

Overall, a wonderful trip; I don’t think we could have asked for it to be any better... well, perhaps the weather could have been a bit cooler, but what else can be expected in early July in southern Indiana than three 90°+ days in a row? That made our trying out the hot tub interesting – here we are packed in like sardines; we did try putting some ice cubes in it, but that didn’t work so well. It kind of felt like being meat in a stew for a giant’s brew:



And with that kind of weather, it made us even more thankful that we had changed our original vacation plan which was Jellystone campground in Fremont Indiana. It still sounds like a fun place, but the cabins there were very tiny and didn’t have bathrooms, plus it was going to be mobbed on the dates we had to go – July 5-8. I will take our secluded, 3000+ sq ft, air conditioned house with plenty of bathrooms

any day! It was a bit further than Jellystone – 4 hrs vs. 45 minutes, but it worked well because our Chicago family had basically the same travel (distance-wise, anyway – they made a lot more stops than we did and so the trip took them longer to complete).

Whether you're looking for a fun place to have a family get-together, a vacation with friends or with co-workers, I highly recommend checking out the houses and cabins for rent in Brown County Indiana. If you would like to know which cabin is the one we stayed at, just leave me a comment, and I can send you more info!

That Candle Smells Like WHAT?!?

Something to put on my birthday list?



The White Castle slider-scented candle. That's right... if you are familiar with [White Castle restaurants](#) and their famous products, be warned – they have made a White Castle-scented candle. Yes, the steamed onion scent of the famous little burgers can now be brought into your home!

According to an article that ran on [nydailynews.com](#):

“The candle has a top note of diced sweet onions and crisp pickle, the middle notes are beef patty, cheese and ketchup,

and bottom note is a warm burger bun. It all comes together to create this amazing aroma of a White Castle Slider.”

Ok, so I don't really want the White Castle scented candle for anything other than a conversation piece. I am curious about how it smells, but for my birthday I would much rather have a terrifically fun weekend, which is always probable thanks to my wonderful family and the awesome local 4th of July events that are usually planned. On my birthday, the 3rd of July (please don't remind me that I share my birthday with one of my least favorite actors), we will probably catch some fireworks somewhere, as that is one of my favorite thing to do every year. Since the 4th of July is on a Sunday this year, we will be going to church, so we have to find a way to get out to the airport as well for the annual fly-in breakfast which is always a lot of fun. After church, probably during the little dude's nap, we have a lot of packing to do for a super-fun week in the woods of southern Indiana with the extended family – more about that when we return in a week or more.

HAVE A VERY HAPPY AND SAFE 4TH OF JULY WEEKEND!!!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA!!!



Work And Fun On The 4th

As with last year, I had to work on Independence Day. I usually flip-flop Fridays and Saturdays with a co-worker. This was SUPPOSED to be my Saturday off so I did not feel the need to ask for it off. Sure enough, I was informed that I was going to be closing. Funny thing is, I was told that the worker I alternate days with told the boss that it was indeed her Saturday off...hmmm. When I got to work, I was delighted to discover that we were closing at 7 instead of the 8PM I was scheduled until. However by the time 6PM rolled around, my co-worker and I agreed that we should have closed then. At 6:45, one of our regular customers came in and grabbed a cart. At 7, I locked the door and we waited in the office until the couple was finished.

After finally getting out of the store, I ventured to pick up some friends to check out some AMAZING fireworks. Getting to the site was a great adventure. I was armed with my mapquest directions and Megan had "Vera" with her, so we were sure to arrive with little problems. Before getting out of town, the adventure began. I misjudged the city limits and began to accelerate maybe a mile before acceptable. We did see the state patrolman as we made our way along. He pulled out of his parking location, began to follow us, and I don't know why it took soooo long but he turned on his lights and pulled us over. Megan had brought along some beverages but we were all of legal age and none were open, so we were safe there. The officer asked why I was going so fast and I "innocently" explained that I was not sure where the limits were. We were mere feet from it. However, the generous officer asked when my last violation was (about three years ago) and he sent us on our way.

As we approached our destination, my companions informed me that they had to visit the facilities and to stop at the next available location. We passed a rest area and then came up to

a nice, clean port-a-potty (thankfully, there were no planes in the area in danger of crashing into it). OOPS... did I say that I would not mention this?

After we finally found our friends (which was not too far from the location at which we found the restroom. We watched some GREAT fireworks. I saw something I don't believe I have before. Some began as if a machine gun was being fired, rapidly spurting out in a back-and-forth motion. Really cool.

Around 2AM, it was time to drive back. Coming home was an adventure as well as some fog had developed (pretty thick in spots) but I don't think it added a great deal to our return trip. So about 3.30, I got to bed in preparation for work at 9. But definitely worth a few hours lost.

Hope everyone had a fun and safe holiday weekend.

The Fourth, Fireworks, and a False Alarm

We had a wonderful Independence Day – happy birthday USA! Went to the local airport where they have a fly-in breakfast every year. There are lots of planes to look at; some grounded, some taking off and landing... and they even have a few that give rides. My middle daughter, the daredevil, was the only one who wanted to try an airplane ride, and she went up by herself! My husband doesn't like to fly, our older daughter is scared of everything including her own shadow, and I've developed a fear of flying over the years that left me frightened for my daughter on her airplane ride. But it turned out ok, she had a blast, and the pilot and other people there were very surprised that she was so unfazed for a 4-

year-old going up in an airplane for the first time by herself. I'm really glad she got the opportunity to do so because I really don't want to pass down my fears to the kids. Seems our oldest somehow got the fear of flying, but its hard to tell from where since she is afraid of EVERYTHING. Maybe I can convince her to go up in our friends' plane next time he comes to visit... though that won't be any time soon because he was actually on his way here a few weeks ago and had engine trouble. Had to set down in South Bend and the airplane has been out of commission ever since... oops. At least nothing catastrophic occurred.

At night on July 4th, we spend the evening at the country home of some friends for a barbecue and fireworks. It was really nice chatting under the stars between the cracks and pops of the fireworks. I'm so glad we were able to have fireworks on the 4th because one of the things I just cannot get used to about rural life is their affinity around here to celebrate Independence Day with fireworks in late June. It drives me crazy because my birthday is on the 3rd of July, so my whole life it's been birthday and fireworks together, and that's the way I like it! And speaking of birthdays, they turned the barbecue into a birthday celebration for me... it was SO nice! It was supposed to be a chance for us to get together, and I kind of invited ourselves over because my husband has had fireworks sitting in our garage that he's been waiting to use for years, but we couldn't find a place. So when they mentioned last week that their son likes to blow off fireworks on the 4th at their house... opportunity knocks. But then they got me a birthday cake and presents (including such CUTE little boy outfits for the baby and also some things just for me), and it was all very nice. So thanks so much to everyone who reads this blog who was there – it was lots of fun!

Saturday we took the kids swimming at a local hotel's pool since my husband has a business acquaintance staying there and had a meeting. I love being in a pool while pregnant – all

the extra weight just melts off and I can't describe how wonderful it feels to actually be able to move my legs again... though I'm still paying for it today with soreness... but oh well, I think this is what I can look forward to from here on out – and it won't be long, at least that's what I keep telling myself. I really thought it wouldn't be long Saturday after I went swimming because I started having contractions. We were about ready to go to the hospital when I got up and walked around and they stopped. I think after being in the pool all day, I was so hungry and thirsty at dinner that I ate and drank a lot and just filled myself up too much... my body wasn't ready to sit down I guess and when I did, muscles began to protest. Such fun. But I did learn something... after I finish this blog I better go and finish packing my hospital bag... just in case!

The Lights Filled The Sky

Ok... so I am a few minutes late posting a 4th of July entry, but I had an absolutely wonderful end of my day. I started out by putting in a fun-filled 10 hour day at work. Somehow for the most part it went by relatively fast especially when we had those few major rushes when I had 4 people in my line with carts and needed to call for reinforcements. Finally, the shift ended and I got to rush home (not before I overheard a few opinionated people loudly complain that we were closed already). Clearly marked on the door that we would indeed be closing at 6PM and it was 6:05 when we stepped out.

I ran home, changed into some other more comfortable clothes and headed to the country home of some other theatre cronies where we congregated, had a cookout, and enjoyed watching the sky light up with some very cool fireworks. I missed our local

display last weekend for some strange reason. They usually run them the SUNDAY before the hoilday. This year, they decided to have a two day celebration and had the fireworks on Saturday night. However, I think the display presented tonight was quite exceptional and rivaled some of the best I have seen produced in our local park. I think the only thing missing was some great accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* with its thundering cannon or John Phillip Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever*, *Liberty Bell*, *Washington Post*, or any other grand march. Maybe next year we can have the sound system hooked up. But the chance to congregate with a large group of friends to celebrate our freedom, a birthday, and the coming birth of a special guy was such a thrill.