

At Least I Have No Regrets

Spring break is over, and for me it flew by- and it was wonderful. I had my concerns about being so tired and keeping 4 kids from getting bored and restless, and those fears mounted last week when I saw the weather forecast – 40s all week, scarce sunshine, and maybe even a little snow. I was especially concerned that spring break would be my own personal forecast to what summer break will be like because hard as I try not to, I have times where I dread the summer a little bit.

For one thing, there is a wonderful Christian camp that we've been hearing about from a friend, and we've been trying to let our kids go for years now, but it hasn't worked out for one reason or another. This year, it seems that the dates will work, but the fees are a little steep, and the 45-minute trip to the camp x4 (there-back-there-back for two kids) might hurt the wallet a little bit with the price of gas the way it is. Add to that a trip to Nashville Indiana with extended family – SO fun, but 8 more hours of driving, plus groceries and supplies to buy, plus 4 round-trips to South Bend Indiana, and I calculated my mileage from July 4-23 at 1388 – That's one thousand eighty-eight miles in 20 days. Factor in our van's crummy gas mileage and all the pregnant lady bathroom stops, and OUCH. But then I got to thinking about it, and I think I'd rather spend my July driving around the tri-state area than locked away in my air-conditioning with 4 rambunctious kiddos. As I said, the trip to Nashville will be lots of fun, and most expenses have been paid thanks to a generous Christmas gift. So what if I have to miss the 4th of July fireworks for one year (next year we do have to pick a different date though guys if you are reading this ☹ 4th of July is one of my favorite holidays!). And the trips to South Bend mean that Grandma is taking the kids – so that means fun for them, and a break for us. So what if it's not all 4 kids

gone at the same time anymore – that’s just one of the small trade-offs for having such a large (wonderful) family. And I’m STOKED that the kids finally get to go to this camp – they are so excited too! So what if we have to leave Nashville at 5am just to drive the 4 hours to get Sammie there on time? But the main reason for optimism for summer vacation was spring break – it was awesome, and it flew by.

For me, the month of March dragged on and on, and I think much of it had to do with my prenatal dr. appointment on the 31st. I just could not wait. Part of it was excitement – this stage of pregnancy is tough in a different way than the rest of it because many of the changes are internal, and you have nothing to show for it. I spend my time looking up sketches of what my baby might look like these days, but unless you count fatigue, nausea, moodiness, or tears, there aren’t any outward signs to get excited about – and no, leftover baggage from previous kids does not count as a “baby bump”. Also, I’ve been extra worried about this pregnancy – I can’t put my finger on it, maybe it’s that stupid stat I heard somewhere that keeps sticking in my brain – “1 out of 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage”. This is my 5th pregnancy, so that panics me. I wish I didn’t read the news so much. Maybe the worry is because of how incredibly difficult this pregnancy has been on me (and my family) compared to the others. Whatever it is, I’ve been especially panicked, but I’ve been building a great relationship with my new doctor – she is very understanding and so much more of a problem solver than my previous doctor. But either way, spring break saw me at my prenatal, and everything looks great! Baby is measuring at exactly 12 weeks, right where s(he) should be. AND... I got to see her (him) dance!! The baby keeps sneaking us ultrasounds – I wasn’t scheduled for one, but the heartbeat couldn’t be detected (my understanding doctor warned me of this ahead of time, or I would have panicked. Again.), so she took me into the ultrasound room. There, we saw baby on the screen, and my little 2-inch miracle was *dancing* – I saw her legs moving and

everything! I keep thinking and saying “she” and “her”, but don’t place any bets – I’ve been known to be wrong about my children’s genders in the past – *before* they’re born, of course, sheesh.

So I took the kids to the zoo on Monday of this spring break, and last night I’m still on cloud nine from seeing my baby dance, and the more I thought about it, the more I realized that I could not resist going back to the zoo on the last day of our season’s pass. We aren’t going to renew because as much as I love the zoo, it feels like a waste to renew right before summer, especially when I’m pregnant and (probably?) won’t feel like going as much. And I know I won’t be able to go after my surgery for a month or so... So I took the kids to the zoo not once, but twice this spring break, and I didn’t even feel like I was going to keel over by the end of today, which means that my first trimester fatigue *might* be fading (afraid to get too excited). I even took an extra kid with me to the zoo both days, a gamble that paid off both times since we all had a blast – even if I was late getting Ellyn home today (that’s why I didn’t stop to chat Justj – I’ve been kicking myself ever since. I really wanted to see your daughters! But I was late, and you just don’t expect to run into a friend 60 miles from home so I was caught off-guard).

So yes, I missed the Chicago Cubs opening day game taking my kids to the zoo, and I’m proud of it! Nevermind that I was looking forward to that game for months. Hubby recorded it for me, and I watched it as soon as I got home anyway. And I’m telling you what, the Cubs did not play badly (except for Dempster – if I still cussed he would be on my you-know-what-list), but they lost. But as I said, they did not play badly, so there is MUCH hope for the season – you can’t tell anything decisive on opening day. Well, except for last year but we’ll leave that out of it. But the best part is, I have no regrets. I can’t imagine how I would have felt had I missed my last chance to take my kids to the zoo in order to watch a

game where the Cubs lost.

Super decision on my part, and if this spring break was any kind of predictor for summer vacation, BRING IT ON!

Walmart Saves The Day

What?!? Believe it or not, the title of my post does not have the slightest hint of sarcasm! Walmart really DID save the day for us yesterday! It almost makes me sorry for my many rants against Walmart and their shady practices designed to put small companies out of business... almost sorry, but not quite there.

It all started when we decided to take the kids over to Fort Wayne, Indiana, which is about an hour away. We pulled into a stall at the Sonic drive-thru for a light lunch and some slushies (Sonic has awesome slushies and drinks), when we realized we had forgotten my husband's wallet, which left us without money or credit cards. Luckily, we had picked up the mail before we left the house and brought it in the car with us. And luckily², we had gotten a commission check in the mail. So we braved the 'big city' Walmart customer service line on the Saturday after Thanksgiving to see if they would take pity on us and cash the check even without my husband's ID. We were gifted with even more luck when they accepted my driver's license to cash my husband's check, and we were able to eat lunch. Except now it had gotten really late and we were all really hungry, so we decided to skip Sonic and go to the Golden Corral that was in the Walmart outlot instead. If you braved my posts about our vacation diary, then you know how much we like Golden Corral. And I'd say that the one in Fort Wayne is of the best quality out of any of the others

we've been to. After lunch, we took the kids to a McDonald's Playland, but it had only one little tunnel and one small slide; prompting our 4-year-old to proclaim, "Dad, this is *boring!*" But our 2-year-old loved it, and soon there were more kids to play with and everybody had lots of fun – including mom and dad since there was also a foosball table. When we left the McDonald's, we noticed there was a Burger King across the street (when isn't there?), and that Burger King had a 3-story play area! Oh, well, we had fun where we went and we can remember the BK for next time. We quenched our thirst with drinks from Sonic, and there was a cool looking car wash next door, so we treated the kids to a car wash also -they love watching the soap, brushes, and water cascading off the car. The second we pulled out of the wash –*ding ding* – our low fuel bell rang – uhoh. My husband and I just looked at each other because it wasn't like we had unlimited money with us. In fact, we had spent the last of the check money at the car wash. Thank goodness gas prices are decent these days because with the change we were able to scrape together from my wallet and the car, we had enough to get us gas to get home... whew! Perhaps it can even be considered a blessing in disguise. When you compare the variety of shopping Fort Wayne offers to our hometown choice of Super Walmart and... well, just the Super Walmart, unleashing us in a larger city with all those shopping varieties could have been disastrous to our bank account!

And by the way, the Walmart customer service line wasn't too bad, all things considered. Most of the line consisted of a family who had 6 kids and one on the way -wow. And I thought I had a lot of kids!

Train, Train, Go Away

There are some really busy railroad tracks that run along the north border of the town where I live. There are basically 3 roads that go out of town to the north; only one of which has an overpass for the tracks so cars don't have to stop for every train that passes by. This morning on our way back into town, we got stuck by a train. Taking the route with the overpass is not an option right now because the other road we would need for that route is currently under construction and closed. So we were stuck by the train, and it was a lengthy freighter (aren't they all when you live in the country?), and it decided to stop – it was at a standstill on the tracks. Not knowing how long the train was going to be stopped and because we were running low on gas, our only option was to turn around and try the third route. Thank goodness it wasn't being blocked by the stopped train also, which could have very well happened given the way these roads are laid out. And talk about timing – right as we were going over the tracks, the bells and whistles on the gates sounded because yet another train was coming! So if we had waited just a few more seconds to turn around, we would have gotten stuck by *another* train and probably run out of gas. I didn't realize we were so low on gas – I think there's something wrong with our gas gauge because it fluctuates a lot. But anyway, the point of this story is not to keep a full tank of gas – at today's gas prices, who could afford that? But I really hope they finish the construction soon so we can go back to taking the route where you don't have to bother with the train crossings – I'm so not used to sitting in traffic, even if it is just waiting for a train to pass!

UPDATE – This afternoon as I traveled toward the north edge of town, the construction seemed to have been completed, thus opening the route that goes under the railroad tracks! Maybe ODOT read my blog...

Rollback, Shmollback

Now that I'm well on my way to full recovery after being unable to do normal things for so long because of the pregnancy and cesarean, I've resumed my big grocery shopping days at Walmart. And since I haven't been there much in the past few months, I was shocked to find how much many of the prices have raised. So this inspired me to make a list of all the prices I remember from when our Super Walmart opened 26 months ago. I did some math, and this is what I came up with. The first price is how much the item was for the first few months the Super Walmart was open. The second price is how much the item is now, and the percent is the percentage the price has increased in 26 months.

parmesan cheese – \$2.94 to 4.18 = **42%**
american cheese singles – 1.98 to 2.58 = 30%
shredded cheese – 1.98 to 2.58 = 30%
garbage bags – 1.67 to 2.98 = **78%**
bananas – 19¢ to 58¢ per pound = **almost 49%**
toilet paper – 1.00 to 1.24 for a six pack = 24%
baby wipes – 1.44 to 2.16 for one pack = **50%**
baby formula – 10.64 to 11.88 per can = 11%
milk – 2.00 to 3.80 = **90%**

I'm no math whiz, but if I did the calculations correctly, this is insane. I realize there is inflation, the economy is terrible, and food comes in on trucks which use gas whose cost has also skyrocketed, but this is still ridiculous. I used to love Walmart for their one-stop shopping concept, but now I hate them for ruining the little guy and for always changing their prices. It makes it impossible to shop around for the best price unless you have no job or kids – and they know it. **WALMART SUCKS!** But I will keep shopping there, and they know

it. Why? Because with 4 kids, I don't have time to go to a bunch of stores trying to find the best price. I need to go where I can get it all under one roof.

Ok, I'm done venting... at least until my next Walmart trip...

Random Celebrity Death And The Sunshine State

We are very fortunate to be able to visit the Orlando area in Florida (read: Disney World!) yearly, but during our past two visits, CNN has been overrun with news of unexpected and shocking celebrity deaths. In February 2007 during our visit, the breaking news was of model/actress Anna Nicole Smith's early demise. It was widely speculated that she was on drugs, but her death was still very surprising especially considering her 20-year-old son, Daniel Smith's shocking death just 3 months earlier.

During our latest outing to the Sunshine State in late January of this year, it was Heath Ledger's accidental overdose that ruled the news. At the time, I have to admit that I didn't know exactly who he was or what movies he was in, but I did recognize what a big name he had in show business. His death took everyone by surprise; so much so, that the event completely dominated the news while we were in Florida. With gas prices the way they are, I don't know if we'll make it back to Orlando this October as planned; we might have to push it off until early next year in January or February or even wait until the kids are older altogether... But if we do decide to go, I'll put out the word to watch out for a random celebrity's unexpected passing...

Fun in South Bend Indiana

Of all the places to find fun, who would have thought that middle of nowhere, IN would be such a sight? Every summer, we meet my mom there about 4 times to swap the kids. She'll take them for a week, twice a summer, so because South Bend just happens to be about as close to halfway for each of us to drive, that is where we meet. We used to meet at a Wendy's just off the expressway, but our horizons have broadened, and my husband and I have been venturing off the beaten path to discover new things to see and do in the area. We found a good restaurant called Eleni's with amazing gyros and saganaki, two of our favorite dishes. We also found an authentic Greek restaurant called Elia's right down the street, but oddly enough, they are almost never open. They have more exotic Greek food like stuffed grape leaves, moussaka, and baklava, YUM! Their food is excellent, though we've only been able to eat there once because of their strange hours and seemingly constant family vacations. After eating and getting the kids back from my mom, we headed to the [Potawatomi Zoo](#). The zoo is a really cool size, perfect for our family of 3 small children and a now VERY pregnant woman. Not much walking to do at all, yet it has a good amount of animals, native and exotic, all types and sizes from lions, tigers, and bears, to monkeys, bison, alligators, parrots, and red pandas. I will have to mention that the Potawatomi Zoo did not seem very well-kept. A gardener in that place could have done wonders as there were many overgrown weeds, trees, and shrubbery, some even blocking what could have been better views of the animals! One tree was so untrimmed it was blocking a drinking fountain! But as I said, it's a very cute little zoo, and they reciprocate with our home zoo, the Toledo Zoo, so our admission price was free and they don't charge for

parking. I was surprised to see that the zoo wasn't very crowded seeing as how it was a Saturday in June under 90°... That zoo could really use a Jack Hanna to fix it up and get the publicity rolling – I see a lot of potential for it, but it does need some work.

After the zoo, we had kids begging for 'one more fun thing' (remember, they had been used to the fun of Grandma's for just short of a week!), my husband whips out Mr. GPS, and apparently he has a phone book feature on him, so from your car, you can find gas stations, restaurants, and most importantly, fun places and attractions to visit!

So KUDOS belong to Mr. GPS this time! Instead of getting us lost and chuckling at us electronically, he led us right to this strip mall that was like a step back in time, it was really strange. It looked like it was right out of 1983. I don't know how to explain it – we should have taken pictures. It would have been a great place to film a movie set in the early '80's, took me right back to my childhood. Anyway, in this strip mall was a place called Mega Play. From the outside, it looked closed down – they really need to get themselves a big bright 'open' sign. But once inside, it was a huge space where they had tons of video games, pinball machines, indoor minigolf, bouncy castles and tunnels for the kids, lots of ride-ons for toddlers, and right out of 1983 – a ball pit! The ball pit had a pyramid in the middle of it that the kids climb up with ropes and once they got the hang of it, they had a ball – cheesy pun intended. That pyramid gave me a flashback of playing on the same thing when I was little. I think they used to have them in KMarts, and my husband agreed. It was neat to see vintage video games and pinball machines also. The arcade ATARI games they had in one bouncy castle area were free to play – they had Kangaroo, Pole Position, Asteroids, and some shooting game I hadn't heard of. I walked over to the pinball machine area because days earlier, we visited this cool pinball shop in a suburb of

Toledo. The guy started it as a hobby, but it grew into a store, and he had all kinds of pinball machines, new and mostly vintage. He had titles on display like Demolition Man, Star Wars, The Shadow, and Hercules (an older game – it was HUGE!). He even had this Looney Tunes racing game (not pinball) that was really vintage and one-of-a-kind... it was cool to see. I wonder if the pinball guy outside of Toledo is familiar with Mega Play? But anyway, back to Mega Play... it was a huge, wide-open strip mall space that had tons of games, ride-ons, and bouncy castles packed into it – lots of fun there, but still spacey so you didn't feel closed in. It was the exact concept my husband and I had in mind for our own business of the same type we started a few years ago. We ended up having to sell the business because it was too labor intensive for the time and staff we had however. Too bad Mega Play is all the way in South Bend, or we could challenge our putt-putt-ing friends to the mini-golf course ☐

After Mega Play, it was time to find something to eat, and before we knew it, we were out of South Bend and into the country. The kids started getting crazier and crazier, and we vowed to stop at the very next restaurant we found before someone passed out or went insane – and some of us were close to either condition! So, we stopped at a restaurant called Dakota's in Elkhart IN, and I highly recommend it if you're ever out that way. They had the best cornbread, and their steak and cheese sandwich was simply AWESOME! They also have barbecue items, and they happened to have karaoke the night we went... it wasn't too intrusive though. They were in another room and we didn't even know it was karaoke at first until the audience began applauding. The DJ hosting the karaoke was singing a few songs also, and he was pretty good, so he actually sounded like a recording with a live quality. I don't how often they have karaoke there, but their food is great, prices reasonable, nice atmosphere, and the staff is amazingly friendly. Keep in mind I say this coming from a super-friendly town myself, so we're used to the usual chit-

chat when we go out to eat – but people in Elkhart were *exceptionally* friendly.

Overall, not a bad place to spend a day – fun and very inexpensive to boot. Too bad with gas prices the way they are we can't consider South Bend for a normal day trip for our family – there is plenty to do! Maybe we'll wander around some more the next time we meet Grandma there in July...

To Do

This seems a little strange to me, but the other day my husband suggested that I should put everything into my blog. Every to-do list, shopping list, etc. Anything I'm putting into my computer should be in my blog, he says. I'm a person who makes a lot of lists. I've even been known to make a list of the lists I need to make! It might sound dorky or anal, but it makes me feel better and more organized – I'm a busy person with a terrible memory, so any way I can feel a little closer to keeping my head above water when daily life becomes overwhelming is worth trying for me. And often I do so with lists. So, upon the advice of my husband, a person whose knowledge of everything seems to know no limits (and no, I'm not being sarcastic!), here goes – hope it doesn't bore you too much, but here is my To-do List for when Grandma has my kids for just under a week – an event I am anticipating so anxiously that it seems to have SLOWED the passage of time... We were going to take a trip to New York, but we declined it because of gas prices and in favor of getting things done around the house, sigh. Besides, I don't know how a woman who is 35 weeks pregnant would fare walking around such a big city! Such a shame, though, it's the LAST time we will be kidless for a long period of time because Grandma can't fit 4

kids into her car to take them all at the same time ☐

To Do While Kids Are Gone

RELAX!

clean game closet

organize kids room – clean out their toys, add toddler bed,
create play room

hook up hose

clean out laundry basket o' junk

clean out playpen

~~wash baby's clothes~~ – *(now that we just found out we're having
a boy instead of a girl, I have no boys' clothes to wash!)*

pack away Disney's clothes *(now that we won't be needing them
for the new baby!)*

fix pipe in upstairs bathroom – and the light that got broken
and flooded because of the pipe!

MOTORcycles

Typing in CAPS is considered yelling, as far as computers and text messages go. And I'm yelling MOTORCYCLES because that's what you have to do in order to be able to hear yourself talk or even think while one is nearby. With the horrible reality of gas prices these days (holding "steady" at \$3.99 in my area currently), it seems that people are turning in their minivans and SUVs for more fuel efficient vehicles, especially motorcycles.

This is unfortunate for me because I can't stand the things. Normally I'm all for people doing their own thing; if someone wants to ride a motorcycle, why should it bother me? Because simply put, it DOES affect me. I can't stand when I'm walking down the street, talking to my husband or my girls, only to

have one of us drowned out by the awful noise of a motorcycle. Some moron on a motorcycle revving his engine even startled one of my kids so badly that she cried! It affects us even when we're in our own car, and the noise of a motorcycle drowns out our conversations, the kids' movie, or even wakes the kids up. Sure, you can roll up the window, but oftentimes it's too late, unless you want to drive around with the window closed. And why should I have to do that? It's MY car; I shouldn't have to be so negatively affected by other people's actions in my own car! And the fact is, these effects come from just one motorcycle. The situation can be especially compounded when there are a whole pack of motorcycles, and they do often travel in packs, which means even louder interference. I don't understand why it is that cars can be ticketed for having loud mufflers, yet motorcycles can drive down the road, revving their noisy engines and being as deafening as they please.

The main reason why I hate motorcycles doesn't even have anything to do with the fact that their racket makes their owner seem very discourteous and not aware of others at all... I also have a major beef with the safety issue motorcycles present. It would be one thing for a rider to drive down the road on a motorcycle, not wearing a helmet – as they often do – if it only affected him... But unfortunately, that is not the case. If any type of car accident were to happen involving a motorcycle, no matter who was at fault, any driver involved would have to live with the guilt for the rest of their lives that someone got hurt. And if a motorcycle is involved in an accident, it is relatively easy for the cyclist to get injured – it's a proven fact, plus I've witnessed 2 such crashes – neither were pretty, and one ended with the motorcycle's *helmeted* occupant being airlifted by helicopter to the trauma center. His helmet was smashed almost flat, and If he hadn't been wearing it, my kids and I and whoever else happened upon that scene would have witnessed a fatality, no doubt.

So now that I've sounded off, I feel better. It's not like I think motorcycles should be banned or anything like that... though if my kids or I get interrupted by the clamor of a motorcycle and I'm having a bad day I might feel differently. And in this age of \$4/gallon gas with no end in sight to the price increase, I can't say I blame people for wanting to lower their transportation bill. I just wish it didn't affect other people so extremely! So if you're a motorcyclist, please be considerate, don't rev your engine unnecessarily, it makes kids cry! Please always have safety as your #1 priority, and ALWAYS wear a helmet – not just for you, but for the rest of us! Helmets and other safety gear a motorcyclist might wear look much cooler to me than the idiots who wear do-rags or shorts while riding... What's a do-rag gonna do for you anyway in case of an accident, soak up the blood from your head wound?

Teacher's Pet – All Grown Up

While serving on the board of a local community agency, a certain personality type came to my attention: teacher's pet. Yes, these people are alive and well and living as adults. Surprisingly it's not something one grows out of when he or she leaves school; rather, the behavior seems to evolve and follow the person into adulthood. I use the term "teacher's pet" loosely here because I don't know how else to describe it, so I will try my best to give examples. Back to this person on the board – it starts when the person stops the flow of the meeting to contribute to every item on the agenda. I think it's good when people participate and share their ideas, but there is a fine line when their comments and "helpful" suggestions cross the line into being disruptive. Case in point – at a meeting recently, an item on the agenda involved

discussing traveling to Chicago for a board training seminar. The teacher's pet of the group spoke up and went into great detail about how the board of this organization should actually be taking more than one vehicle on trips like these in case something happens to the vehicle. He explained that if the vehicle carrying the entire board of the organization were to crash or something else horrible were to happen, we would no longer have a board if the President, Vice President, etc. were all riding together. Good point, but a little extreme, I would say... This board is not in charge of running a country or anything close to that scale. I'm not saying that it's not important or that steps should not be taken to safeguard the staff involved, however, I don't think dividing up into 2 vehicles has anything to do with preventative safety and actually seems like it might put a strain on the budget (**insert another gas prices gripe here**). It's a good idea for the President and Vice President of the United States and other heads of government to travel separately but when talking about this particular group it just doesn't seem like a logical idea, especially not an idea that should have taken 20 minutes or longer to discuss.

A second example of adult teacher's pet behavior happens often in community theater. My husband and I are active in our local theater group, and while directing a few plays together, we've come across at least one individual who was a bit over eager to please the directors. Again, don't get me wrong, enthusiasm, especially for community theater, is a great thing. But when you interrupt the process of producing a play in order to offer "helpful" suggestions that aren't really helpful at all and just keep the entire group waiting for you to finish talking, then it's probably better if you just let the director do what he or she needs to do. It's also especially annoying when people offer things to help with the show; be it labor, props, etc. only to not follow through and actually deliver the work and/or goods. Makes me think they were just sucking up to the directors!

So when I say 'teacher's pet', I guess I just mean those people who are so overzealous about showing and proving to others that they are participating in the group that they come forth with ideas that aren't always well thought out. Like I said, it's not that I discourage contribution, and by no means should people be made to feel that their ideas are stupid, however, they should use discretion in bringing up topics that are relevant to the conversations at hand and also make sure that they are going to follow through with what they say they will contribute.

POST DISCLAIMER: None of the above comments have anything to do with anyone who is a regular reader of my blog!!! ☐

Happy Mother's Day!

I had a wonderful Mother's Day weekend. We decided to celebrate Saturday in order to avoid the crowds at all the restaurants and other establishments; also it worked out well because my kids often need all of Sunday as a rest day to recuperate from the previous week and the weekend before returning to school on Monday. So, I slept in Saturday until I was awakened by the idyllic crow of a rooster... wait a minute... we do live in a rural area, but that was no rooster – it was a screaming parrot and it wasn't the least bit idyllic, just horribly annoying and not a fun way to get woken up. But, it was nearing 10 am, and I figured I had left poor dad with the kids long enough.

I was making myself some oatmeal for breakfast when I was greeted in the kitchen by cute little girl #1. "Happy Mother's Day Mom!", she said, and gave me a stuffed animal she had found in her room. I find the re-gifting really cute;

it's her way of sharing what she has and also displays her thoughtfulness in wanting to get me something but being too little to go out shopping on her own. She also gave me the most adorable essay she wrote in school – I will share, though it's much cuter to see it in 8-year-old handwriting:

Happy Mother's Day! I love my mommy for many different reasons. One reason is that sometimes she gives me what I want at the store. Another reason is that she helps me do stuff around the house like make soft crunchy cookies. The last reason is she lets me have fun a lot like at the park! I think that my mommy is triffic, wonder ful, and vary funny.
by Taylor

Daughter #2 was next, and she handed me a singing gorilla from her room. "Happy Val-tine's Day, Mom!", she said, hugging my leg. She is almost 4 and apparently forgot the name of the day, only remembering that she was supposed to give me something and be well-behaved, but that's all that mattered to me! Don't be fooled, however... they are not perfect angels ALL of the time – my kids' Mother's Day sweetness was promptly followed by a HUGE knock-down, drag-out, screaming at the top of their lungs fight... The first of many throughout the weekend. We still had a great time though – my husband always does a great job of keeping his cool which is more than I can say for myself... but there was something going on with my oldest this weekend, and it showed!

Next, we decided to go to a neighboring city to go swimming in a hotel – my husband can get GREAT hotel rates online for most places, and the overnight getaway was exciting for the kids and around the same price as driving somewhere far away (**insert gas price gripe here**) and spending \$ for other entertainment. Besides, being in the water felt WONDERFUL for my aching pregnant body... I would love to have access to a pool during a whole pregnancy sometime; it's amazing how the sensations of all the aches, pains, and extra weight just melt away when under the water. The kids had a great time, and we

all got some exercise also, plus when we got home on Sunday, they all took at least a 2 hour nap – can't put a price on that! My husband of course, catered to their needs all day too, so really I got a whole Mother's Day weekend out of it – 2 days when I was supposed to get 1! I only hope I feel up to it enough to give my husband as great a Father's Day as I got a Mother's Day. But since I'll be even more pregnant by then, we might have to reschedule... ever heard of Father's Day in August? ☐