

Before and Afters

As you might have read in my blog before the impromptu camping trip, we've been putting a lot of effort into a bunch of home improvement projects lately. Here are a few of the latest pictures:

Backyard, before and after the new fence:



Not from the same angle, but hopefully you get the idea. We now have a fenced-in play area for the kids, and the dogs have their own little area for their gross natural business.

Even the rats have moved on up into posh digs. Here is their new cage, where all 4 of them live together – harmoniously, I might add!

BEFORE:



AFTER:



Northwest Ohio Is Cracking Up!

So much for my blogging break – I had a pocket of time and blogged like a maniac the other day! I knew that would happen, as soon as I wrote about how blogging is going on the back burner, I would find time for it again. That’s actually part of the reason why I wrote the “blogging break” post! ☐ Not that I’m promising my 5 posts a week anymore, but I will do what I can – I do love to ramble on and on and on about everything while sharpening my typing skills!

Back to the point of this post. A few months ago, we noticed that our front porch is crumbling away to nothing! It’s a rather large cement porch, and parts of it have started falling off, seemingly overnight! We called various construction places to get estimates, and according to them, it’s a common problem around here this spring. Something about a moist winter, then it got really cold while there was a lot of moisture, so water that was in the cracks of the concrete expanded as it froze, causing things to crack and

crumble. I've noticed it every where in the area – other houses, strip malls, parking lots. But it really stinks. I love my front porch, and it's going to cost over \$2,000 to fix it! It's kind of something that needs fixing asap before it gets any worse. Replacing it with a wood deck is cheaper, but I really love it just the way it is – well, before it started crumbling to bits anyway. The concrete where the garage meets the driveway is even worse, and I don't think repairing that was even in the estimate! Ah, the joys of home ownership!

Dr. Sanderson's Game Library

I could kick myself for not taking a "Before" picture of our game closet. For those of you who don't know, my husband and I have a hobby of collecting board games. We go to area thrift and Goodwill stores, and we buy every game in sight we don't (think we) have. It's gotten out of control, really it has. In our defense, we have a semi-regular game night with friends where we try out many of the games we obtain. But the game collection outgrew its closet, and we began stacking games on the floor of the closet until even the floor started to overflow with games. So, after we cleaned up what used to be the craft room in our house (gonna call it the 'East room' for now I guess – we can't decide if we want it to be a family rec room or a kid-free parents' cave), we decided to move the game closet into the closet of the East room because it's bigger. And now that phase of the project is complete! And it's awesome!

We threw all of our props and memorabilia from the community theater shows we've worked on in the East room. Since my husband was the handsome 'Dr. Sanderson' in the show *Harvey*, we somehow ended up with the name plate for his office door.

We stuck it to the closet in the East Room, and that is where our game closet now resides. Therefore, I'm announcing the opening of Dr. Sanderson's Game Library! Pick a game... ANY game*! However, the following picture is just a sample of the library – a fraction of the closet. Not only could I not rotate the image (so imagine the scene as 90° to the right), but I couldn't get much of the library in the picture!



**unless you are certain game night regulars who are known for kicking butt at the Disney Trivia game – we have “accidentally” misplaced that game, hehe!*

Collecting... or Hoarding?

When does a collecting hobby cross the line? I've heard of people who collect things and sometimes get kinda crazy about it... Like this one guest on Dr. Phil who collected Star Wars stuff. No problem there, but once he started talking about the details of his obsession, it became obvious he had an unhealthy problem. His wife felt like she came in second place to the Star Wars stuff all the time, and he even had a storm trooper costume he wanted to be buried in. When Dr. Phil pointed out the fact that the guest would never fit into

the costume, he insinuated that he would be dismembered or whatever it took to get his body into the costume for burial. I guess it's easy to say you've crossed the line when your spouse or the people you live with start to get annoyed and ask you to give them more room for *their* stuff and to get rid of the things you collect. Or maybe it's obvious you have an unhealthy addiction when you start to spend more money on your collection than things you should be spending it on to ensure a healthy lifestyle, like food or clothing. Anyway, the reason I'm bringing this up is because my husband and I are developing an extreme board game collecting hobby. It started years ago when we visited a few garage sales and saw some games we both had as kids, so we picked those up. Then we started visiting thrift stores in the area, and we enjoyed doing that so much that we visit often and pick up several games each time we go... it's kind of like treasure hunting – you never know what you'll find. Games are anywhere from 25¢ to \$3 and since they usually have all the pieces, it's a pretty fun hobby to check out all kinds of different games.

Now, we've moved to a bigger house and have allowed ourselves a big game closet. The problem is, we're getting so carried away that we've outgrown the game closet – there are games now stacked on the floor since we've gotten so many that they no longer fit on the shelves. When we go out to thrift stores, I can't even remember what games we have and I'm always tempted to buy more, but my husband says, "we already have that one". It's really not that big of a problem, I guess we just need a bigger closet... we do invite friends over nearly every weekend to play games, so we are getting use out of them; it's not like they just sit on the shelves (or floor!) collecting dust... And the only family member whose living space is getting crowded because of all the games is the parrot. He's been screaming at me while I fold laundry so much lately that I don't mind if he gets crowded out! But I can just tell that it's becoming an addiction because when we're at the thrift stores, I always feel like getting new games, even if we

already have them apparently... I don't see an end in sight, but I think it's still in the collecting stage; it hasn't graduated to hoarding yet. After all, the duplicate board games we have are only for spare parts, and the other day, I had a brainstorm: If we knock out one of the walls in our game closet, we can combine it with another large closet and have more than twice the space for all the games! For some reason, my husband doesn't share my enthusiasm for this idea...