

Last Call For Haunted Houses!!

This weekend sees the last of the Halloween season of 2010. I always try my best to do as much Halloween and fall-related things as possible; I just love the season. This year I've been lucky enough to have gotten to try THREE haunted houses, and I will rate them here in case anyone has time to check any of them out. I would really like to fit in a few more or even a repeat visit to one I've already been to, but I have a jam-packed weekend planned with other fun stuff like Halloween parties and Trick-or-Treating.

A few weekends ago, we visited the Chicago area and were able to get to two haunted houses, both in the area where we were staying – Aurora. We would have liked to check out some other of the MANY haunted houses in the suburbs (as well as other entertainment offerings), but alas, we quickly ran out of time. So the haunted houses visited were:

[BASEMENT OF THE DEAD](#) – 42 W. New York St. Aurora IL 60502 - This is by far the best haunted house that I've ever been to. I've been able to visit here 2 years in a row, and it's gotten better with time. The makeup on the creatures is incredible – horror movie caliber – and the characters waiting to scare people waiting in line are great. They ALWAYS stay in character, which is very important, and they are creative in their scariness – much more than the typical monster or “BOO!” yelling psychopath. I tried to get video of the ultra-impressive 7+ foot tall monsters that hang around outside, but Basement of the Dead is located in downtown Aurora, so I had to help my husband navigate around the tricky one-way streets instead. A MUST SEE for any haunted house enthusiast! We will probably be making the trip next year, if not just for this haunted house alone; it's that good! 4!'s for fright out of 4.

MIDNIGHT MASSACRE – 3440 Odyssey Court Naperville IL 60540 – Well, there really isn't much to say about this lame attempt at a haunted house. I don't even think it was made less scary by our visit to Basement of the Dead before this one – it wouldn't have been any better even if we hadn't just visited a spectacular haunted house first. The scariest thing about Midnight Massacre was the hour and a half we waited in line, which was hidden from view when you buy your tickets. We got a bad clue when we saw a snack stand in line – you know they won't want you taking food or drink into their haunted house, so if they let you buy food and drink in line, you know you're going to have a long wait. And in this case, a long wait for what? The haunted house was not scary. This one did consist of actors (?) yelling cheesy things like "BOO!" There was a guy dressed like Freddy from Nightmare on Elm Street, and his "scare" was jumping up from a bed and yelling "Freddy!" We even had one actor apologize to us and say, "Hey, I tried." Talk about breaking character! But in a haunted house as bad as this one, it didn't really matter that he broke character, that wasn't the only thing wrong with it. The first part of it was a black light maze that was so obviously part of a lazer tag course – they didn't even try to hide it. But there weren't any monsters in it or anything. They had a couple of cool robots and animatronics, especially this one large dinosaur thing, but it was just a head, and they didn't do anything to cover up the robotic looking body. And the actors were terrible. Enough said about this one, not recommended – well, maybe for a kid's first haunted house. One ! (for effort I guess) out of 4!'s

[Leader's Family Farms](#) – near the intersection of Ohio State Route 24 and Henry County Rd. 16 near Napoleon, Ohio – I got to go into this haunted attraction with one of my youth group girls, and she was a screamer. It was a lot of fun, especially since the ghouls and monsters focused their attention on the screamer and left me alone! We did not have the time to check out their new haunted attraction,

PanDEMONium, but Screamacres was a nice haunted attraction as always. 3! out of 4! – Lots of the same old haunted house effects, but being outside and in the middle of nowhere certainly adds to the effect. I should also note that Leader's has activities for the entire family, every age group. Great fall fun to be had here.

Well, there you have it – those are the 3 I've gotten to this year. If you have the time and are looking for a good scare, I highly recommend Basement of the Dead in Aurora Illinois or Leader's Family Farm's Screamacres in Napoleon Ohio. I wish I had more time to visit more and get some reviews. Maybe some day I'll be able to get down to Columbus Ohio to go to [Dead Acres Haunted Hoochie](#); it looks very scary and really cool!

Anyone else think haunted houses should extend their seasons into November for those of us who are very busy in October taking kids trick or treating and to fall parties, etc?? I sure wish they would!!! Have a GREAT Halloween!!

Furry Babies Sucks!!!

We began our trip to Chicago last Saturday, and the 3-state, 4-kid, mini-van trip went pretty smoothly. At some point, we achieved the quadruple-kid-pass-out which is never anything short of a great thing!

We arrived at our hotel in Naperville, Illinois on Saturday afternoon, and we decided to take the girls swimming in the outdoor pool which was really refreshing on an 80°+ day. It's been a long time since I've been swimming outdoors, and it was nice of my mom to meet us there for a swim instead of us driving the girls to her house for their week of fun with Grandma. After the girls left with her, we wanted to meet

with a friend, but we were staying in the west 'burbs rather than the north 'burbs this time. Both parties had just endured long car rides, so we settled on a halfway point – a mall in the west 'burbs. Not really knowing what to plan on doing, we ended up finding such a great parking space at the mall that we just ended up going in to bumble. And it was fun! Partly because I haven't been in a real mall for years, so it was really interesting to see the different techniques that have evolved to try and entice shoppers to buy and visit... But I also enjoyed my mall visit because of the company we were keeping; it was nice to chat and catch up. And as you might have read in [derek's blog](#), we happened upon a glow-in-the-dark indoor mini-golf course that was less than a week old! It had 56 holes, but I don't think I could ever play that much mini-golf at once, so we stuck with the traditional 18 holes. I guess I should add in that I won the round and also had a lucky day with two holes-in-1 ☐ And I must comment on how good the baby was – he just sat in the shopping cart and watched the glow-in-the-dark golf balls throughout ALL 18 holes! There were these small contraptions sprinkled throughout the golfing space – you put your ball in, and it rolls around and comes out glowing brighter – those were fun! And it was fun to see the mall again. It wasn't the same mall I hung out in all the time as a teenager, but I had still been to this one a lot growing up, and it was neat to see how much (or how little, compared to most things in the area) it had changed over the past decade and a half. That reminds me, speaking of change... when we arrived in Chicago, err Naperville on Saturday, we took the Naperville Road exit off of I-88 which is an area with which I am used to be very familiar. Back in the day (did I really just say that?), I would commute through that same intersection to work and back every single day, yuck... but apparently they've completely re-done the entire area in the past few years because the intersection was unrecognizable. I mean, they added new roads and everything – it was the most bizarre feeling, it felt like I had gotten dropped into the middle of the twilight zone. We

exited I-88, and all of a sudden, we were on Freedom Drive. Where now? Freedom Drive? I had literally never heard of Freedom Drive, they created the street from scratch and plopped it down into this area where I worked and played so many years ago. As much as I thought I knew where we were going, Jill the GPS was actually quite helpful during this twilight zone adventure, and she got us to our hotel, even though I knew where it was – WAS being the key word here. But back to the mall... we bumbled around some more after getting some pretzel dogs (yummier in Chicagoland, of course, what isn't?) at the food court. I heard some lady talking on a cell phone about the "puppy store", and sure enough, we happened across it. I'm an animal lover, so I love to see and visit with animals, but I think a side effect of my tenderness toward animals is my loathing of pet stores. And the pet store in the Stratford Mall in Bloomingdale Illinois is just about the worst I've ever seen. It's no secret that many of the major chains of pet stores get their "wares" from puppy mills; ie dog breeding facilities with cramped quarters, little food, and animal abuse. The huge chain famous for bad press, Petland, just closed a bunch of stores, which I believe is a good thing for dogs and dog lovers everywhere. I strongly believe that people should adopt animals, namely dogs and cats, from humane societies and other animal shelters. There are so many homeless pets, so how can it be justified to buy a puppy who is bred for selling when there are so many others bred accidentally who are also looking for love? I strongly support spay/neuter programs as well, fyi...

So anyway, the new pet store at the mall is called "Furry Babies". Their website calls it an "upscale puppy boutique, not just a pet store", but I call it disgusting. The puppies were in cribs, for goodness sakes, and along the walls they had a large variety of dog clothes for sale, no doubt at prices that I wouldn't pay to clothe my human kids. We inquired about one particular puppy, who was cute but looked to be slightly cross-eyed. We found out that she was a "designer dog" – they pretend like they meant to mix two

breeds together (in this case a golden retriever and a poodle, thus giving us a “Goldendoodle”), but where I come from (the reality land of logic), we would call it a “mutt”. And mutts tend to be better with kids, live longer, and are cheaper than purebreds – at least they were until a few years ago. Now mutts are these “designer dogs” and they cost **a lot** of money – in the case of the furry baby Goldendoodle – a cool \$1600. I cannot denounce this place loud enough! I also don’t want to spend a ton of time going off about animal welfare nor lose readers by getting political. This just happens to be an issue I feel strongly about, and I plead that if you are in the market for a family pet, you consider adopting your animal companion from a shelter and also realize that you are entering into a life-long committment! That being said, Furry Babies sucks, but the good news is that I can’t see them lasting that long. Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that the employees wear mock scrubs, in order to imitate delivery room nurses, I guess, which to me is even more sickening. But there I go again... get me going and I will never stop... so if you want to read more, [here is a link](#) to the forums about Furry Babies on the bestfriends.org website, which is an awesome organization – the country’s largest animal sanctuary for homeless pets of all kinds! I hope to visit them someday in Utah, but until I get over my fear of flying I will just persue their website and I suggest you do the same...

Now that I’m actually leaving the homeless pet tangent behind... we left the mall at a decent hour since we wanted a good night’s sleep to rest up for the Cubs / Sox game the following day – the entire reason we were in town to begin with. Poor us – that did not happen! We got back to the hotel (which was pretty crappy for a Naperville Hampton Inn – see my [Small Separate Side Post](#)), and the baby decided he was going to go nuts and stay up until midnight. Then the little booger awoke at 6 the next morning, and he crawled around and caused mischief like dipping my drying bathing suit into the toilet, thanks for THAT. My husband was nice enough to take

him in the bath for awhile and do other various quiet activities with him in the small room so that I could get a little more sleep, and then we all went down to breakfast – my poor husband was a zombie. I decided for us (he could not make decisions at that point) that he would go back up to the room while I drove our son over to my mom's for the day while we went to the Cubs game. We did that, and it took me about an hour to get all the way out to Aurora (not much traffic on a Sunday morning, but 5000 many stoplights!) and back. I thought we had plenty of time, but if you read my "A Patch of Blue In A Sea Of Black And White" post, you'll see why I should have stepped on the gas a little...

MISSING

I like to read the news stories on dailyherald.com – probably because they have much more interesting news than my local newspaper. But hey, that's not a complaint since more interesting news = more crime to write about. But I grew up in the Chicago area, so when there are interesting stories on dailyherald.com, I know where the town is they're talking about, which is another reason why I frequent the site. Today's edition had an interesting (but sad) story:

Naperville police are desperately searching for a missing 12-year-old child who allegedly took the keys to his family car and left the home.

Cmdr. Dave Hoffman of the Naperville Police Department said the child is 5-feet, 8-inches tall, about 140 pounds, has wavy brown hair and brown eyes. He is believed to be wearing gray cargo pants and a white T-shirt and a green winter Army jacket.

Hoffman said the boy allegedly took the keys sometime after 2 a.m., left his house, backed the vehicle out of the garage.

Hoffman added the boy also has a history of sleep walking, but has no history of taking the family vehicle for rides when sleep walking.

The vehicle missing is described as a light blue, 2008 Hyundai Santa Fe with an Illinois registration number of A744198.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the Naperville Police Department through 9-1-1 or contact your local law enforcement agency.

Hopefully this kid is going to be alright. Does a 12-year-old know how to drive, especially in his sleep? At that age, it's quite possible that he decided to run away also, but he does have a history of sleepwalking. The article fails to mention how they KNOW he took the keys and left – was there a witness? I know where Naperville is; in fact, I used to live there. It's a nice town, but it's a dangerous world. I am hoping they find this kid safe and sound. It's a sad story, but let's hope there's a happy ending. I know some of you loyal readers know people who sleepwalk and have interesting tales – let's hear them!

**UPDATE* – The kid was found safe and sound at O'Hare airport. Apparently he was not sleepwalking but was trying to run away. How a 12-year-old was able to navigate the expressways to get to O'Hare I don't know – but thank goodness he is safe.*

When “Good” Towns Go Bad

I guess it depends on what you would call a good town. A place we used to live called Naperville Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago, was once considered a good town. It had lots of fun things to do, relatively low crime, good schools, and lots of money. It was never my ideal place to live, however, because it was always way too crowded and had way too much traffic for my tastes. But I never considered it a *dangerous* place to live... until yesterday. Being from the Chicago area and having friends and family who still reside there means I maintain an interest in keeping up with their local news. Yesterday I came across the following newspaper article about a murder that was committed in the neighborhood where we used to live: Man Shot, Killed in Naperville

In a city the size of Naperville (about 10 square miles, with a population of over 140,000 people), this incident might not appear to be as shocking to the normal reader as it was to me. However, having lived in this neighborhood only about 7 years ago, I can't believe how much it has changed. We lived in a small townhome; it was very nice and backed up to a school. It seemed like the perfect picture of suburbia at the time. It was VERY over-priced for what I would expect to pay for a 1.5 bedroom where I live now, (we paid \$1380 rent a month, and our place was not more than 650 square feet), however at the time I thought it was worth it because it was a “nice” area and close to family in a place I thought would be safe to raise kids. Needless to say, I was wrong on that account. In the article about the crime, the newspaper drew a nice little map. Turns out the victim (who had an arrest record himself – not that I'm judging, just noting) lived not more than 2 blocks from our old home. The victim's body was found 5 blocks from our old home. We used to take our daughter for walks around the area all the time; there was a Walgreens we used to walk to right near where the body was

found. Readers who posted in the comments section of the story say how the area has become “seedy”, and in the article itself, they state that the victim’s home was a “high traffic area”. All of this adds up to a place where I would NOT want to raise kids, let alone pay through the nose for a small place to live, only to have to worry about protecting my family from the violent crime that seems to have invaded the area. Some might say this is an isolated incident; they can say “this can happen anywhere.” That IS true. Anything can happen anywhere. However, one can now say that it can happen anywhere, but it DOES happen there.

It truly makes me thankful every day that we’ve now found such a wonderful place to call home; away from the city and its crime, pollution, and expenses, not to mention how superficial and just downright unfriendly the residents of a town like Naperville can be. It’s baffling to me that they charge EXTRA to live in a place like that! It makes me feel really good knowing that when my kids grow up and want to raise children of their own, they will have the option to stay in the wonderful town where they grew up. I did not have that option, since I grew up in a town next to Naperville, and it is no longer a good place to raise children. If my kids want to spread their wings and fly away to explore the world and see what else is out there, that is fine. I will miss them of course, but I am quite confident that if all else fails out there, they will always have the option to return to the place where they grew up to live safely and prosperously. Country living is not for everyone, I guess, but I don’t think I’ll ever understand those who choose to pass up utopia for city life ☐