

Outbreak

The flu season is upon us, and it's obvious. In our family, we are teetering between two outbreaks of illness. Last week, it was hand, foot, and mouth disease (not to be confused with its fear-provoking counterpart, foot and mouth disease, which is only found in animals). The kids had little bumps on their hands, and a general feeling of being unwell, known as malaise as I learned on the internet. This is an extremely common (in children anyway) viral illness that usually runs its course in most kids. When my mouth erupted in sores last week (it's like having 10-20 large canker sores at the same time), I was shocked because it's supposed to be very rare in adults. We contacted 3 different health professionals to make sure that our trip to Illinois could go on as scheduled, and they all assured us that if there was no fever, we were not contagious. We ventured across the state of Indiana, and I don't know if I was more fearful of what we were bringing with us or what we were going to take home, what with the many recent flus reported in Illinois and elsewhere, H1N1 and otherwise.

More on the really great parts of the trip in the next blog post – I need to get this out of my system so to speak, haha – a sick post and a fun post. So for the sick part...

My husband woke up today feeling awful – the flu. My morning started pretty much like the past 2 or 3 mornings now – tremendous pain in my mouth, worse than the day before. One of my favorite things about visiting the Chicago area is the food – despite the city's drawbacks: the aggravating traffic, the inflated prices, CROWDS; Chicagoans do have a talent for their intolerance of crappy Sysco food – ie, Chicago food is fantastic! Last week, anticipating our upcoming trip, I remember thinking that it was only Wednesday, surely my mouth would heal by Friday so I could indulge in some of my favorite Chicago treats. But alas, Thursday's pain was worse than

Wednesday's, and Friday's was worse than Thursday's. Actually, as I said before, it's gotten worse every day since it started. Somehow, I was miraculously able to enjoy my [Italian beef sandwich](#) Friday night, but pain-wise things just went downhill from there. We had a wonderful breakfast at the [Uptown Cafe in Arlington Heights](#), quite possibly the best breakfast restaurant *in the country*. They have the best eggs benedict I've ever had, but unfortunately I came very close to sinfully wasting my eggs benedict when I could not eat them (let alone carry on a conversation with relatives) without my eyes watering from the pain in my mouth. My little boy saved me from wasting half my order (I knew I should have gotten soup or at least a half order of eggs benedict, but I literally could not resist – we get to this place less than once a year!) – but my toddler ate *half* my eggs benedict – he is his father's son!

The weekend ended with my sister making us wonderful homemade lasagna, of which I had about 5 small very painful bites. I did not try any of the appetizers, the steamed vegetables, the salad, the garlic bread, or any of the desserts ☐

I also did not get my usual crave case of White Castle cheeseburgers to bring back to Ohio, although generous relatives supplied us with some Chicago beef for sandwiches, homemade soup and Grammy's out-of-this-world homemade spaghetti sauce, all frozen and ready to be thawed as soon as I'm better! Talk about something to look forward to!!!

We ventured home at 2 am this morning, and arrived safely, however painful (and tiresome for my husband) the ride home. And a special thank you to Officer Friendly of the Ohio State Patrol, who did not issue even a warning for my husband's "hovering around 60 in a 55." I'm glad he seemed to take the 4 sleeping kids and the grumpy wife in the passenger seat into consideration – this police stop was completed very quickly and only blocks from our house.

This morning I awoke in a lot of pain, and it's gotten worse

throughout the day. I think if it continues its trend and gets even worse tomorrow, I'm going to have my husband call the doctor to make an appointment. I am so thankful that my kids seem to be over it, and as horrible as it's been for me, I'm still happy I got the most of it in the family. I pray for my husband, and I'm really nervous about swine flu, but he seems to be feeling better, unless he's just putting on a braver face than I. This illness for me has been characterized by bouts of severe pain sandwiched between constant regular pain. In the past hour, twice that I've talked brought on the most severe bouts of pain and was enough to make me start typing on the computer and making my husband read it in order to communicate. Whatever works, it's amazing how easily the threat of tremendous pain can train a person to keep her mouth closed (like [Pavlov's dog](#)). My husband joked that it's the "shut-up disease". That brought a smile; it doesn't hurt to smile – just the talking, eating, drinking, and sleeping. And that reminds me, being in constant pain has made me an insomniac. I couldn't sleep in Illinois at our hotel and ended up listening to an hour-long Larry King interview with Suzanne Somers – even that did not put me to sleep. Did you know that Suzanne Somers never actually had cancer even though 4 different doctors told her to get her affairs in order because they had mis-diagnosed her? That's a tangent that doesn't need to be taken...

Well, anyway, that's enough from me for now. Sorry about the rambling, but this really sucks, and typing is my voice right now. Hubby is watching the Bears game, so it'd just be rude of me to constantly interrupt by making him read my ramblings. I wish I could take care of my husband while he's sick, but for now we're helping each other. Let's really hope this gets better – if I have to go to the doctor, I can't tell them what's wrong with me because I can't talk, and I don't really want to bring my family with me to the doctor's – who knows what else we could get?!? I guess I'd have to write a note, but I feel kind of silly...

A real Halloween horror treat tonight would be for us to watch the movie [Outbreak](#) – now that's just TOO scary!!!

At least we have a good part of a week to whip these things and get ready for fun Halloween activities abound next weekend! Super-fun blog post about the awesome parts of the Illinois trip – including haunted house ratings! – to follow this depressing post, I promise!

This Town's Got Talent AND Faith

I already wrote about our 3D movie-going experience in my previous post, so I will skip that part of the weekend here, but I neglected to mention the cool restaurant we found because I didn't want to enlarge an already lengthy post...

Friday night after seeing My Bloody Valentine 3D in Maumee Ohio, a suburb of Toledo, we noticed a restaurant across the street called Nick's Cafe who advertises breakfast all day. My husband and I are both Eggs Benedict connoisseurs – we really appreciate a great-tasting serving of Eggs Benedict, which is a breakfast dish consisting of English Muffin halves topped with Canadian bacon, poached eggs, and a layer of Hollandaise sauce. In our pre-parenthood days, we explored the country and sampled various versions of the dish along the way to our traveler's goals; whether they were destinations of business or pleasure. A requirement of great Eggs Benedict is homemade Hollandaise sauce, and by 'homemade', we (unlike many of the restaurants we tried) don't mean mixed up in the kitchen from a package. You need a double boiler to make it, and good Hollandaise sauce has nothing to do with a powder or

a package. In all of our travels, we never found anything that even compares to the Hollandaise sauce at Uptown Cafe in downtown Arlington Heights, Illinois. We've visited numerous restaurants in our quest, and we've called some of them ahead of time, but even if you ask if their Hollandaise sauce is homemade, many will say yes, even if we don't agree on the definition of homemade. Such was the case Friday night at Nick's Cafe in Maumee, Ohio. They said their hollandaise sauce was homemade on the phone, but oddly, when we arrived, they wouldn't let us taste a sample. That was a first! Of the dozens of restaurants we've visited in search of the perfect Eggs Benedict, no restaurant had ever denied us a sample! On Friday night, my husband bravely ordered the Eggs Benedict at Nick's Cafe without trying the Hollandaise sauce ahead of time, and disappointingly, it was of the non-homemade, out-of-the-package variety. He did say that the Canadian bacon on the Eggs Benedict was great, but it unfortunately cannot rescue the dish if it uses packaged Hollandaise. So negative Eggs Benedict experience aside, the reason I would highly recommend this place is for their Mediterranean cuisine. And regular readers of my blog (and of those email forward all-about-you quizzes) know that this is my favorite type of food, therefore I am a huge critic. But Nick's Place in Maumee has excellent gyros, Tzatziki sauce, and Greek salads. Gyros are only good when they're off the spit and even then, it's easy for them to taste too salty. Not the case at Nick's Place; if you like Mediterranean food, I **highly** recommend their gyros and Greek salads – incredible.

But I must move on to Saturday afternoon, when we took our kids to see the movie, [Hotel for Dogs](#). I've been waiting for this movie for months, which is probably why we didn't want to cancel our planned outing there on Saturday even though Kid #1 went off her rocker. Seriously, the kid went berserk and I was really tempted to give her "the talk", especially after I noticed a pimple on her cheek... (well, one of 'the talks' anyway – the one about womanly bodily changes – she's 9 years

old and I would rather we talk about puberty stuff *before* it happens to her). But anyway, she'd probably be *mortified* if she knew I was posting this on the internet (what are mothers for?), so I better get off this tangent... After the episode Saturday morning, our oldest really didn't deserve to go to the movie, but it's difficult in a large family to not 'let the bad apple spoil the bunch'. Our younger girls had been very good all morning, so why keep them (or me!) from going to the movie? Our oldest was punished for the tantrum by having to go without a Kid's Pack (popcorn, pop, and candy) at the movies, and to her credit, she was mature about the consequences of her actions. However, soon after our arrival at the movie theater, the tide changed and our 2-year-old became the problem. I don't know why we keep trying to take a 2-year-old to the movie theater, but every time, it's regrettable. Actually, it's been this way since even *months* before she turned two... I guess we keep hoping that one of these times, she'll actually settle down enough to enjoy an entire movie without driving anyone crazy. So anyway, I'm trying to keep our 6-month-old busy and quiet while attempting to watch Hotel For Dogs and not disturb our neighbors, and my husband is busy with our handful of a 4-year-old, so next thing we know, our two-year-old is drinking my Mountain Dew. Of course she loves it, but even *before* the Mountain Dew she's had a sugar-infused Kid's Pack, and now she's practically bouncing off the walls. She smiles and announces in a loud voice, "**I take clothes off!**", so now I'm trying to put my son back in his car seat so I can stop his sister from stripping off her clothes right there in the movie theater... Too late. She is down to her diaper by the time I get both hands free, so my husband covers her with a coat. For some reason, she's willing to wear nothing but a coat and a diaper in the movie theater, and somehow we make it through the rest of the movie without having to leave. So as for Hotel For Dogs, I liked it (I think – I actually didn't see much of it)... it's a cute, predictable fun movie, and if you're a dog lover, there's plenty of canine eye candy.

Following the movie, I went to a local talent show based upon the popular "American Idol" TV show. Some great friends graciously stayed with the kids, and my husband also stayed home to catch up on the work he missed last week during the 2-hour-school delay and the school closing we have on Friday and Monday. He works from home, and it's all I can do to keep the two little ones out of his hair every day – add the older two to the mix and all Hell breaks loose – any chance of getting anything productive done flies out the window. So, a strange occurrence at the talent show – me, myself, and I for a change. I did attend with friends, but it's not like I would bother Carol next to me with my philosophies on music or the tone of one's voice; that would be something to make my husband endure. And it was bizarre to simply sit back and listen and watch the show... For those hours, I had absolutely **not one thing** else to do besides enjoy the show... such a change of pace for me and much appreciated. Not that I would want to experience that all the time, but it was very nice for one night...

Adding to the relaxation for me was the spiritual tone of the evening. I had known the event would be sponsored by a local church, but I didn't realize that we, the audience, would be praying to both open and to close the show; as well as the fact that the majority of the acts were religion-themed. As I said, for me, it was refreshing and relaxing, but I think they should properly advertise such a theme if they do this again next year. Less open-minded people may have been displeased. My dear friend and the entire reason I was a part of this concert experience in the first place, performed wonderfully and I was pleasantly surprised to be able to pick out her voice from the rest of the delightful group with whom she performed. Despite my best efforts to vote for them, however, they didn't win the competition, and the top prizes went to a drama group from the church who sponsored the event (!), a very talented violinist, and a well-known local talent who is only a Junior in high school but who has already been a

vocalist with the Toledo Opera going on her 3rd year. Besides seeing and hearing my friend perform, my favorite part of the evening was when a boy who was part of the drama group that won burst into tears. Their skit was acted out to music, and it portrayed a young girl being bullied by 'temptations' but ultimately triumphing over sins and choosing Jesus. The group got a standing ovation after they performed and because they were from the church that sponsored the event, it was no surprise when they won first prize in the competition, but the kid asked the crowd, "I just want to know that everyone was moved – was everyone moved?" There was applause and verbal affirmations, and the next thing I knew, the kid had burst into tears and it slightly reminded me of the movie [Leap of Faith](#)... But it was sweet and real, and I was glad to be a part of it. Even though the talent show did a poor job of advertising the theme of the show; thereby the religion kind of snuck up on its patrons, it was a welcome and calming change of pace – at least for this member of the audience. And even though I wasn't aware that I needed it, the evening restored my faith while proving to me yet again what a great place it is in Northwest Ohio to raise kids – we have so much talent and so many opportunities here for our youth!

Windy City White House

"Windy City White House" is more of a reference to our visit to the Windy City rather than a blog post about the recent election – it's over and done with, and although I won't talk much about the outcome, I am happy to not have to hear about it on the news anymore. While in Illinois, my mother-in-law kept talking about what huge news it is that Obama was elected and how his pick for Chief-of-Staff, Rahm Emanuel is a fellow Chicagoan – making it a 'Windy City White House'.

But back to our family – it's my blog, after all. We scheduled an early Christmas with our family in Illinois this past weekend (the early Christmas theme is something that seems popular with tangents.org bloggers), and overall, it was great. There are a few reasons we decided to do things this way – 1) We're sick of the hustle and bustle of opening our presents from Santa and then rushing off to Illinois on Christmas Day – add to that having the flu during this trip twice and UGH. Best to travel *before* flu season. 2) My daughter was off school Friday for parent/teacher conferences 3) We wanted to beat the rush and other travelers. Overall, it was a really great decision, although the trip was last minute, and so we did forget a few of the presents which we'll now have to send. We left Ohio on Friday morning and after a bit of traffic-sitting (of course), we got to my grandparents house about 40 minutes past schedule. But no matter, they're fully aware of the traffic problems plaguing their area. We were treated to a delicious lunch of my grandma's sloppy joes (love 'em), and the girls got to open presents. My grandpa gets tired really quickly, and so we didn't stay too long there, and then it was on to our hotel. My husband uses hotwire.com and got us a suite at the Sheraton for \$49 – a nice price for the area. When we pulled up to our hotel, we were pleased to see it was the same hotel where we spent our wedding night – that was a nice surprise. My mom and my sister brought her two boys over for some swimming, and we all had a blast even though their indoor pool was chilly. Luckily, I had thought to turn up our room's thermostat so when we got back to the room we didn't freeze, although it was quite crowded trying to get 10 hungry people changed out of bathing suits and trying to order pizza at the same time. It was a suite, but it was probably the smallest suite I have ever seen, and we had 6 little kids and 4 adults in there. My mother and sister wisely decided that they couldn't wait for the time it would take to get pizza, and they got something to eat on the way home. That was a good idea because my mom had to get up early the next day and didn't want to be out too

late. They know their area well enough to realize that pizza delivery on a Friday night would take over an hour – and they were right. My poor kids were starving and I had to raid my diaper bag. I found a little bag of oyster crackers and two small bags of peanuts, so I divied everything up 3 ways (Survivor-style) and it quieted them a little until the pizza came. Overall, the kids were kind of spastic all day, especially my oldest for some reason... My husband blames the tension of the Chicagoland area, but then again, he hates it as much as I do. We love seeing family, just wish we could visit them somewhere else!

Saturday morning we were up bright and early to meet my mother-in-law for breakfast at Uptown Cafe in Arlington Heights – the place has the best eggs benedict in the nation. And I know this because way back when, before we had all these kids, my husband and I used to travel constantly, and one of the things we would look for was good hollandaise sauce. We never found any that came close to Uptown Cafe's. And the owners remember us – we used to go there a lot when we lived in the area; I was pregnant with my first daughter. They are surprised every time they see us because we usually have a new baby or two. After breakfast, we went back to my mother-in-law's house, and I felt badly for dropping in on my husband's sister and her family without any notice. This is one of the details that was overlooked in the last minute planning. But it was ok; I didn't have my gifts for their 3 kids, so I'll have to send them. But our kids had lots of fun playing together, and it's important to me that my kids know their extended family, especially since a lot of hatchets have been buried over the years on this side of the family.

Next, it was time to see our good friend, the author of the sublife blog on tangents.org. It was great to see him, especially on his own turf, but he's right in his blog – there really wasn't much time for chatting. The kids wouldn't have allowed us to just sit and talk peacefully, and we wanted to

take them somewhere fun, so we went to an overflowing Chuck E. Cheese. After waiting in line to park, I realized that I hadn't seen our camera since I took a picture of the kids on the luggage rack at the hotel that morning. Sound familiar? Yes, I have terrible luck with digital cameras. And worse, this one was not mine – I had borrowed it from Jamiahsh for the trip, so I was sick about losing it. Luckily for me, it turned up when we got home though – YAY! I was especially upset because I knew that I had put it in my diaper bag – I really thought someone had taken it. Pessimistic of me, you'd think, except that we did have our tokens stolen from our table at Chuck E. Cheese with my husband less than 5 feet away. Takes all kinds to steal game tokens from little kids, doesn't it... at least they didn't also steal my digital camera. We got lunch at a Vienna Beef hot dog place in Arlington Heights called Jimmy's – highly recommended you get real Chicago-style beef sandwiches and 'dogs if you're in the area – YUM!

The ride home was uneventful – the kids slept most of the way, thank goodness. We did manage to stop and get me my crave case of White Castles, and so our car reeked of steamed onions – thank goodness we weren't pulled over or we may have gotten a ticket for disturbing the peace. Maybe I wouldn't have stopped if I'd known what White Castles would do to a 2-year-old's diaper. I tried to deliver some to my friend Carol who graciously pet sits for us, but for some reason, she neglected to pick them up. My husband says that not everyone likes White Castles. We picked up the slyders (as White Castles are known) in Dolton, Illinois; not the best area, but it just off the expressway so we made it unscathed. Ironically, something made me talk about Dolton just before the stop; I was telling my husband how it's gotten to be a really bad area and that I knew a family that had left there in the '80's because it was getting so bad, so imagine it now. Then we saw a sign that said "Dolton Bowl" right across the street from the White Castle, and we laughed at the irony. But overall, a nice

trip, especially considering the area where we had to take it. One positive thing I will say about the area is that they have excellent food.

Three quarters of my kids on the luggage cart:

