

Fall Back

It's been over a week since we've been in NW Ohio, and really, not much has changed. There are many less leaves on the trees than there were when we left for Disney World last Friday, but other than that... We haven't yet had a chance to check in with friends, so hopefully all is well everywhere. I have to admit that I was a bit scarred from our last vacation – we returned to the horrible news that my beloved kitty had passed away. So this time, I was nervous about coming home. I told our pet-sitter that if anyone dies this time to not tell us while we were in Florida, thinking, what good would that do... but that decision ended up backfiring majorly because then the whole time I was worried that something had happened and I didn't know about it because I had left the instructions not to call us... But nothing catastrophic occurred, at least not to us or any of our pets, and we had a wonderful time. Now more than ever I know what people mean when they say that they need a vacation from their vacation. After taking 4 little kids on a 1,000+ mile road trip each way and returning with the trashed car and the dirty laundry and housekeeping catch-up for a family of 6, I could really use a vacation!

Oh well... we had a great time and I wouldn't trade our experiences for the world – or all the laundry in the world. More to come about the trip after I unpack some and get used to the fact that I did not gain an extra hour this weekend like Jill my GPS friend told me I had – guess she (along with my alarm clock – glad I noticed that before tomorrow morning) is pre-programmed for the “fall back” switch for daylight savings time. The only problem is that Jill and my alarm clock were programmed before the daylight savings hours were adjusted thanks to President Bush. So they are now an hour behind... but no matter, they can stay that way for another week or two, whenever we change the clocks... and then, I will get my extra hour of sleep – always fun!

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...

Vacation!

In case you've been wondering where I've been lately (or even if you haven't) – Grandma has helped us get one last little vacation before baby arrives. We were going to head to New York, but decided not to do that, thank goodness. Admittedly, the gas prices were the original deterrent, so then we explored taking a Greyhound bus there, but in my huge condition, I didn't see any opportunity for good rest on a long bus trip. I am really glad we declined the big trip, though, because my feet have been killing me, just from everyday tasks, like cleaning or shopping. I would have had to cut short all of our sight-seeing in New York or rent a wheelchair for the week. And staying home had afforded us time to do much needed catch-up work around the house. We've been making landscaping plans, and I will be very excited to see how that turns out in a few weeks when it's finished. We cleaned out the famous closet o' games, and we didn't even need to knock down the wall to expand the closet as I was talking about in another post. We found enough room for all of our games by sending all the kids' games upstairs to their room. Our house has lots of built-in shelving and drawers, and the kids had a huge cabinet in their closet that wasn't even being used. So, up went all the kids' games. I am a little concerned that they will tear apart their game collection and scatter pieces and whatnot, but they will have to be taught somehow that this is not going to be tolerated. Most importantly on our vacation without the kids, we achieved the cleaning of their room. It is a huge bedroom, and we have all 3 of our girls sharing it, but until we cleaned it, they could barely fit in there because they had so many toys. Whenever we'd make them clean it, we noticed that they would play in there for such a long time afterward because they actually liked having all the open space. So we donated about 90% of their toys to charity while they were visiting with Grandma. It might sound mean, but we kept the important

stuff, and like I said, they actually enjoy their room and the things in it much more when everything is picked up and they have fewer things to appreciate. I will keep you posted on how well (or not) this is received when they get home. They will probably forget exactly what toys they once had, and by donating everything, more kids can enjoy them.

Even though it took an entire day of cleaning to reach the bottom of the toy pile in their room, we have managed to fit in lots of fun for just hubby and me. We've gone shopping several times, and yesterday we were in Toledo all day getting good food, seeing a movie, and taking in a [Toledo MudHens](#) game. If you're not familiar, the MudHens are minor league baseball. I've been wanting to get to a [Chicago Cubs](#) game last year or this year, but with the baby coming, I've ruled it out until at least next year. So, minor league baseball it was, and we had a blast – I got my live baseball game fix for awhile... there's just something about hearing the crack of the bat, the slap of the ball in the glove and the other sounds of a baseball game in the beautiful summer night air. And it was a great game. Seems a player from the [Detroit Tigers](#) was rehabbing with the MudHens, so we got to see a major-leaguer pitch for a few innings. The Hens were up 3-0 early in the game, then they let Indianapolis tie it up, only to hit a walk-off homer in the 9th with 2 outs to win the game – awesome! And if you're not from the area and want to experience food that is uniquely Toledo, I recommend a restaurant called [Tony Packo's](#) to you. Their menu is somewhat limited; there aren't very many choices, so pass on it if you're a picky eater. But if you're like me and you like to try all different kinds of ethnic food, give it a whirl. They serve Hungarian food, namely sausage, cabbage rolls, and chili mac over dumplings. It's really good and a unique dining experience. It's also really interesting how we heard of the restaurant in the first place. We were in a thrift store and I saw this stuffed baby in a diaper with a tomato head. I thought it was really cute, even though it creeped my husband

out, but it was only 5¢ so I bought it. Turns out, it's a character from Tony Packo's as labeled on the rear end of the baby tomato. I googled Tony Packo's, found out it was a restaurant an hour away from us in Toledo, looked at the menu, and we decided to give it a try. The guy who works their marketing in the gift shop really liked that story. What's weird though, is that while gutting my kids' room this week, the baby tomato never surfaced. Hmmm, I wonder what happened to it?

Sometimes you get more of what you want from a vacation by staying home. In this age of the horribly high gas prices, the media has even coined a new word for the 'vacation taken at home', but I can't recall what it is. If you know, post it in my comments – it's bugging me that I can't think of it. Anyway, by staying home, we saved a ton of money on gas alone, and we got some things done around the house that we will appreciate for months or even years to come, all while having a great time with just each other, no kids! Thank you, Grandma!

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!

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? ☐

Mediocrity

Two things I was looking forward to watching today turned out to be disappointing. The first, a new horror movie in theaters called "[The Ruins](#)", I wouldn't classify as a bad movie. It was entertaining, at least... I say that a lot about movies, I know. But if they hold my attention, aren't boring (like [The Night Listener](#)), and don't disgust me too much (like [Doomsday](#)), then I generally don't consider the movie a waste of my time because I really like watching movies, spending time with my husband, and I just overall enjoy the movie theater going experience.

But as far as horror movies go, "The Ruins" is not my idea of a good one. I won't even go into the acting skills; it's so unimportant when talking about this kind of movie. No one stood out as horrible or unwatchable, and that's all that matters in a movie like this. I did lose a side bet with Hubby about whether or not one of the actors was also in the [Texas Chainsaw](#) remake – he was – but no matter, I really wasn't too sure about it anyway. The premise was interesting; 4 twentsters (people in their early twenties. Hey, I just made that up because as far as I'm concerned, many of them still act like teens, might as well give them a goofy name to go with their attitudes. Maybe it'll catch on...) on vacation in Mexico follow this German guy (actor with a fake accent. Why they couldn't just find a German actor is beyond me, but whatever) they just met on a trek miles into the jungle to see some ancient ruins. When they get there, they end up trapped on top of the pyramid thing by the natives who believe the ruins are cursed. That's basically it. The movie was pretty fast-paced, however, once I realized that the "monster" of this horror movie was plant life, somehow it wasn't very scary... Also, everything creepy was already shown in the previews – I HATE when they do that to movies! None of the characters were very likable, so when some met their demise,

it wasn't all that shocking nor disappointing. I don't know why the movie was rated R – I've seen much scarier PG13 movies, they could have cut out the nude scene, and the gore in this movie was all (POTENTIAL SPOILER ALERT – IF YOU CARE) mercy limb cutting. I was thinking the movie could redeem itself with a good resolution, but that was not to be. I can't see any replay value of this movie. Worth seeing once but not again. One good thing though, it didn't have you leaving the theater feeling like crap about humanity, like Domsday or some other movies I've seen – that's always a plus.

On to disappointment #2 – Secret Talents of the Stars. A show about “celebrities” – and some people who call themselves celebrities who I've never heard of – who try their hand at other talents than what they've become famous doing. What was I thinking you ask? What would *this* shameless attempt at yet another celebrity reality show have that made me want to watch it? The answer – hype. It was hyped so much that I actually fell for it. And I really wanted to see [Clint Black](#) (I'll forgive you this once if you don't know he's a major country music star) attempt stand-up comedy. That was until I actually saw Clint Black attempt stand-up comedy. Not very funny. And the show seems fixed too... ok, what show like this isn't, but still... the “judges” all loved Clint Black's comedy... probably because he was the most hyped star of the show, and they wanted to make sure he'd be in the semi-finals. And then there was [George Takei](#), of former [Star Trek](#) fame, now most famous for coming out of the closet, sad to say that has overshadowed his years on Star Trek, but I for one had never heard of him before he came out... So, in between several obvious and Clint Black-ish (meaning not very good) type gay jokes, George sang “On the Road Again”, originally by Willie Nelson. And if you don't know who that is, you're on your own, I'm not going to spell it out for you! Needless to say, he butchered it and got kicked out of the show – big surprise. The other 2 contestants tonight –

Sasha Cohen and a singer called just Mya, were trying for talents that were somewhat related to their profession anyway – something I did not think was fair. Figure skater Cohen was being an acrobat, while singer/entertainer Mya was tap-dancing! The show is stupid, the format is obvious, the judges lines are scripted... but why will I be watching next week? Another country music star, [Jo dee Mesina](#) will be trying her hand at something other than country music and rehab. Low blow there, and I apologize... it's late, and I seem a wee bit crabby, maybe I should have gone to bed instead of staying up until 11 to watch this dumb show...